

Community of Practice: Sexuality and Gender Identity

14:00 – 15:30, Wednesday 6 March 2024

Minutes

Attendees: Holly Cooper (Chair - Crisis), Moud Goba (Presenter - Micro Rainbow), Laurel Uziell (Presenter - The Outside Project), Alexandra Duffy (Presenter - Stonewall Housing), Sandra Kennedy (Probation), Nathaly Quezada (Probation), Shanta Brindle (Advice For Renters), Karolina Michalczyk (SHPS), Affiz Rahman, Ellie Bush (SHPS), Alexa Rice (Salisbury World), Abigail Ashford (SHPS), Aaliyah Brown-Peters (Probation), Jaba Kaplanishvili (SHPS), Sara Denton (Cooperative Property), Yasmin Warsame (Advance), Keke Koko (Via), Vanitha Arol Dass (Via), Zareena Mody (Via), Catherine Nevill (Crisis), Sharon Loving-Charles (Brent), Vaani Kuganesan (SHPS), Sam Raju (CNWL), Louise Foley (Probation), Zarinabanu Macci (Probation), Bridie Lane-Williams (Crisis + Brent), Yolanda Venter (Probation), Cristiano Ragni (Via), Iliess Macani (AIR Network), Justina Mickute (Refuge), Komal Beveridge (Brent), Mojisola Ojikutu (CNWL), Manjit Bance (Brent), Chanel-Lyn Karikari-Senkyere (Probation), Beverley Smith (Probation), Ebony Mingle (Via), Bilal Shabazz, Laura Potter-James (Crisis), Josie Stein (CVS Brent), Miles Brown, Sophie Murray (Crisis), Lily Winter (Via), Jatin Patel (Social Interest Group), Adama Fregiste (Brent), Zubeyda Hussein (CNWL), Michael Mtemeri (Probation), John Lewis (Probation), Sunita Patel (CNWL), Amisha Babla (NHS), Lydia Dowling-Clarke (Crisis), Patricia Johnson (Probation), Zoe Pye (Crisis), Mahbooba Shirin (Probation), Chris Fox (SHPS), Angus Brown (Crisis), Caroline Croghan (Crisis), Alberta Nika (Brent), Sinead Henry, George Wilks (Crisis), Sophia K (Advance).

Apologies: Kalpna Kerai (Brent), Penny Karioki (Nia), Noah Okunromade (Brent)

Time	Item	Actions
14:00 – 14:10	Welcome and Introductions	
14:10 – 14:25	<p>Micro Rainbow</p> <p>Moud presented slides. Ghana has just passed a law criminalising homosexuality. Home Office have started keeping statistics on their website in the last few years. Brazil is known for the most killings of trans people despite it being legal there. Moud referenced her own experience as a refugee and difficulties faced. If placed with other people from their home countries, LGBTQ+ refugees are often faced with the same challenges they fled from. Refugees often get support from people of the same country and/or church – this is often unavailable for LGTBQ+ people.</p> <p>Micro Rainbow has up to 23 safe houses in London, West Midlands and Leeds where support is also provided to navigate immigration services. Run lots of social activities as well as a specific women’s group and a trans+ group. They also provide transport to activities. People and services often forget that refugees are normal people who</p>	

	<p>have ambitions – Micro Rainbow provide support with employability for refugees to pursue ambitions.</p> <p>LGBT+ Special Report: Stories of the persecuted people forced to flee their home countries 5 News - https://youtu.be/P_JELhXTHil</p> <p>Referrals via email: Contact us - Micro Rainbow. The safe houses are just for people seeking asylum but other move-on support is available for refugees. Micro Rainbow run a foundation to support with fundraising. Asked how clients can prove their sexuality to services – Micro Rainbow support with solicitors and write advocacy letters to Home Office. Lawyers suggest clients write a personal statement or obtain supporting letters from people they know – this sometimes boils down to credibility.</p>	
<p>14:25 – 14:40</p>	<p>The Outside Project</p> <p>Laurel introduced The Outside Project. Service originated as a crowd-funded winter night shelter for LGBTQ+ people. Currently runs as a community centre and they have a 7 bed crisis house for stays between 3-6 months with daily support for move-on. Their sister service has a 12 bed refuge. Community centre acts as a hub with 3 housing advice drop-ins per week. Predominantly led by people with lived experience. Also have a homelessness recovery group which is peer-led.</p> <p>Laurel echoed what Moud discussed, that any experience for a trans person is often double as difficult for trans migrants. In the UK there is technical acceptance of trans people i.e. they aren't facing direct legal oppression, but they are facing indirect and ideological oppression. People come to the UK to feel safe and often don't, and support often comes with hurdles and gatekeeping. Often trans people are not seen to be in priority need for housing despite likely having experienced a lot of trauma and harassment due to their gender identity.</p> <p>In order to get systems that work we need to get the environment to work for LGBTQ+ people. There are often hurdles even to accessing basic healthcare e.g. if you miss a letter from your gender clinic due to having no fixed abode, you may have to wait another 5+ years to access treatment. Improved monitoring is seen as one answer but Laurel advised what we really need is better funded services built by and for LGBTQ+ people.</p> <p>The Outside Project is Southwark based, some services are drop-in and others aren't, can email laurel@lgbtiqoutside.org to be added to the mailing list or to request the timetable as not every session is a drop-in.</p>	
<p>14:40 – 14:55</p>	<p>Stonewall Housing</p> <p>Alex presented slides. Stonewall run housing drop-ins in London, Birmingham and Brighton. They do have a very small amount of</p>	

	<p>supported accommodation, but it is limited and only in an East London borough. Their service is getting busier and busier each quarter. Albert Kennedy Trust found that 77% of young people experiencing homelessness had experienced rejection from family or those close to them. They often see themes of hate crime and domestic abuse. Research into LGBTQ+ rough sleepers showed disruption at school later affected their housing/employment. Alex recounted a service-user being advised by outreach to move to somewhere more visible, but the service-user was mindful of knowing people in the area and feared repercussions from family if seen.</p>	
<p>14:55 – 15:25</p>	<p>Deep Dive and Discussion: Having Conversations on Sexuality and Gender Identity</p> <p>Alex agreed with Laurel that monitoring is important, but we need better service provision and for workers to challenge discrimination against LGBTQ+ clients. On the census 10% people didn't answer question on sexuality and 8% didn't answer gender – it's important to note that the census is done in households and people may not want to answer these questions due to not wanting to share this information with household members, or a family member may have answered the census on their behalf. LGBTQ+ people therefore often a hidden population. Most important thing is how do we build trust and creating a welcoming and inclusive environment – how person-centred and trauma-informed is the support we provide?</p> <p>Discussion: <u>What conversations are you currently having?</u> <u>Whats challenging and what works well?</u></p> <p>Sophie advised that during the first assessment with someone, she will ask their gender and sexuality and advise them that this is both due to monitoring and to see if there's other services that could support them. Also mentioned struggles when speaking via third party interpreters and asked what are the best way to phrase the questions for interpreters? Alex provided some links: Tips for interpreters working with LGBTQI asylum seekers - Micro Rainbow, https://inee.org/resources/sexual-orientation-gender-identity-and-gender-expression-essential-terminology .</p> <p>If someone says prefer not to say to begin with, are there opportunities to discuss at a later time when they are more comfortable and trust has been built?</p> <p>Jaba suggested being honest, give them some space and let them know that you are here if they need to talk to you. When it comes to ask directly questions on SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity), he would usually let them know that he will ask more personal questions before proceeding.</p> <p>Alex's advice on what works well:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flagging/signposting that more questions are coming, and clients can choose whether to respond can be helpful. • Important to ask questions confidently and openly to avoid awkward build up and extra stigma. • It's best practice to list options alphabetically on forms - heterosexual is often at the top and seen as the assumed option. • Demonstrate that it is not just a paper exercise, if they disclose that they identify as LGBTQ+, thank them and ask if they would like any further support around that. • Should have a 'prefer not to say option' with any monitoring questions, not just attached to gender/sexuality questions. • A lot of it is about tone and body language to support people to feel comfortable – no matter their answer, they will be respected. • Can use visual cues to indicate that our services are inclusive but cannot be the only solution, policies and procedures must pair this: One service introduced rainbow lanyards and it led to more service-users coming out. Things like pronoun badges can help but cannot be tokenistic and must apply practice as well. 	
15:25 – 15:30	AOB and close	