

Bisexual issues

Report on consultation with bisexual people

March 2009

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1. Introduction

The Equality Network is a national organisation working for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality in Scotland, including through our network of several hundred LGBT and other people and groups in Scotland.

During 2008, we conducted a consultation aimed specifically at bisexual people. The aim was to identify the most important changes needed to deliver greater equality for bisexual people. This report covers the results of that consultation.

2. Background

Diversity monitoring indicates that approximately 10% of the Equality Network's individual network members identify as bisexual (compared to more than 70% who identify as lesbian or gay). Similarly, about 10% of respondents to each of our network surveys typically identify as bisexual; that is, around 10 to 15 respondents to each survey.

In the past few years, the Equality Network has conducted specific consultation with transgender people, and with LBT women, which has informed our policy work.

In 2004 we held a consultation workshop for bisexual people, but it has been clear to us that we need to engage further with bisexual people, and this work represents the first stage of such engagement.

3. Previous work

In preparation for this consultation, we examined existing work on bisexual issues in Scotland. We identified only two sources:

- Exploring Biphobia – a report on participatory appraisal research workshops in Glasgow and Edinburgh (Nick Laird, Beyond Barriers and NHS INCLUSION Project, May 2004) – available here: www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/Bisexual_Participatory_Appraisal_Research.pdf
- Bi Celebration – report of a consultation workshop (Equality Network, September 2004) – attached as Annex A

The Exploring Biphobia workshop involved 19 people, while about 10 were involved in the Bi Celebration.

From these sources we identified the main issues and needs that had been raised:

Issues raised

- The problem of needing to be labelled (Bi, queer etc)
- Biphobia and monosexism¹ from the general population
- Biphobia and monosexism from lesbian and gay people, groups and venues
- Invisibility of bi people, lack of positive images and role models
- Stereotypes and prejudices (promiscuous, can't choose, HIV risk, etc)
- Non-inclusion of bi in LGBT work, or token inclusion

¹ 'Biphobia' is used in the broad sense of prejudicial attitudes towards bisexual people. 'Monosexism' means an assumption, explicit or implicit in practices, that everyone's sexual orientation is heterosexual, lesbian or gay, that is, everyone is oriented towards one gender only.

Needs raised

- Support on mental health and self esteem issues
- More bi groups and resources for them, and venues
- More research into the lives of bi people and their needs, eg health
- Bi-proofing policy
- Promoting sexual freedom rather than equality; recognising poly relationships (relationships with more than one other person)
- Freedom to choose appearance and clothes
- Education – bi inclusion and equality in schools
- Freedom to come out as bi
- Bi-inclusive training and awareness-raising for public services etc
- More visibility – bi-positive stuff in the media, out bi role models
- Representation by bi people
- Challenge the binary division into gay and straight
- A paid bi rights worker in Scotland

We wanted to explore further which of these issues and needs were the most important, and to what extent views on this differed within the bisexual community. We also wanted to ask a larger number of bisexual people what else they felt needed to change to make Scotland really equal and welcoming for bisexual people.

We did this through a survey, and a conversational event held in partnership with Bi Scotland, the national bisexual group.

4. The survey

The paper version of the survey form is attached at Annex B. The survey is in three parts.

For the first part of the survey, we identified, from the results of the previous consultations described above, nine different potential ways to deliver greater bisexual equality. The survey listed these and asked respondents “To get greater bisexual equality, how important do you think each of the things listed here are?” Respondents could rank the importance of each from 1 to 6 where 1 was ‘Least important’, and 6 was ‘Very important’.

The nine things listed were (in this order):

- More out bi people in positions of influence, eg MSP, councillor, etc
- A paid bi rights worker in Scotland
- Challenge biphobic attitudes from the general population
- LGBT groups to include bi issues properly, not token inclusion
- Challenge stereotypes about bisexual people, eg “they’re promiscuous”
- More bi groups and resources for them
- Challenge biphobic attitudes from lesbian and gay people, groups and venues
- Greater positive visibility for bi people in the media; out bi role models
- Move away from labels such as lesbian, gay and bisexual

For the second part of the survey, we asked an open question “What else needs to change to make Scotland really equal and welcoming for bisexual people?”

The third part of the survey was a set of diversity monitoring questions, asking people about their gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion/belief, nationality, ethnic identity and postcode.

The survey was conducted between August and October 2008, via three channels:

- Paper survey forms were available for filling in at our stall at Pride Glasgow on 30th August. 25 forms were filled in.

- We posted a paper survey form to all members of our postal network at the start of September. 51 forms were filled in and returned.
- We made the survey available online on SurveyMonkey from the start of September through to the start of October. We emailed details to our email network. 70 respondents filled in the online survey.

The total number of survey responses was 146. On 76 (52%) of these, the respondent identified their sexual orientation as bisexual (or, in three cases, bisexual and one or more other sexual orientations). This is a much greater proportion of bisexual respondents than our surveys usually get (around 10% is typical). This reflects the targeting of the survey. The remaining 70 respondents identified as gay (26), lesbian (16), heterosexual (14), or other sexual orientation (11), or did not identify their sexual orientation (3).

We analysed the survey results separately for respondents who identified as bisexual and those who did not.

Part 1 results – bisexual respondents

Bisexual respondents ranked the nine suggested ways of getting greater bisexual equality as follows.

Most important (most respondents ranking it as very important or important):

- LGBT groups to include bi issues properly, not token inclusion

Close behind in importance, and almost equal in weighting:

- Challenge biphobic attitudes from lesbian and gay people, groups and venues
- Challenge biphobic attitudes from the general population
- Challenge stereotypes about bisexual people, eg “they’re promiscuous”

The next three responses averaged a rating of important, and were, in order of slightly decreasing importance:

- Greater positive visibility for bi people in the media; out bi role models
- More bi groups and resources for them

- More out bi people in positions of influence, eg MSP, councillor, etc

Rated somewhere between less important and important was:

- A paid bi rights worker in Scotland

And finally, rated as often unimportant as important:

- Move away from labels such as lesbian, gay and bisexual

Part 1 results – non-bisexual respondents

For non-bisexual respondents, the importance rankings for the nine ways of getting greater bisexual equality were broadly similar, but differed in two respects from the rankings by bisexual respondents.

There was one difference in the order of importance ranking. The issue that was placed as most important by bisexual respondents, “LGBT groups to include bi issues properly, not token inclusion”, was placed in 5th place by non-bisexual respondents. The most obvious explanation would be that non-bisexual people do not recognise the extent to which bisexual people experience exclusion from LGBT groups.

The other difference was in the importance given to the issue “Move away from labels such as lesbian, gay and bisexual”. Both bisexual respondents and non-bisexual respondents placed this as the least important of the nine issues. But while bisexual respondents rated it on average between less unimportant and less important, non-bisexual respondents rated it on average between less important and important. Labelling seems to be rather more of a concern to non-bisexual people.

Part 2 results – bisexual respondents

Annex C gives the complete list of responses to the open question “What else needs to change to make Scotland really equality and welcoming for bisexual people”, separated into responses from bisexual people and responses from non-bisexual people.

Of the 76 bisexual respondents to the survey, 41 answered this question, and a number of themes emerged from the answers.

A number of responses referred to biphobic attitudes in society:

- More awareness that you actually can be bisexual. It's more acceptable/more pressure that if you're bisexual (or are unsure) then you should be either gay or lesbian because you either need to be heterosexual or else gay or lesbian - you certainly can't like both sexes. We need to work hard to change that view.
- Ignorance and fear in the general public is a huge issue and prevents many bi people from coming out at all. An acceptance of and willingness to at least discuss the possibility of non-monogamy might also help with bi acceptance, as many people who are bi are also non-monogamous. (Although assuming that a bi person is by default non-monogamous is of course biphobia.)
- General better attitudes towards sexuality, orientation and diversity and an understanding that sexuality as fluid. I think biphobia exists because people want to put others in boxes - if you are straight you sleep with these people, if you are gay you sleep with these people - bisexuality makes people nervous! "I don't know who you're going to sleep with next!" This is also about gender. Just as people are 'happy' with gay relationships that conform to gender norms ie feminine men and butch women, many people are uncomfortable with those who don't conform to those norms or stereotypes whether L, G, B or T.

Several responses referred to issues of discrimination against bisexual people within LGBT communities, and lack of real inclusion within LGBT organisations. Comments included:

- I think the main problem is combating stereotypes generally, and biphobia within the LGBT community specifically. It's hard enough coming out in the first place - to do so and then have to face non-inclusive attitudes from the community that's supposed to embrace you, is just ridiculous.
- It needs to be recognised that bisexuals face the same discrimination and hatred that homosexuals do from the straight population - but we also face discrimination from the LGBT community. This really means bisexuals have no safe haven. To tackle this, we need to tackle biphobia in the LGBT community. e.g. how can a group calling itself "lesbian and gay" anything claim to also represent bisexuals.

- Less tokenism from LGBT groups about including the 'B'. Equality Network being the best example of a group that DOESNT do this!
- Reports and policy refer to 'LGBT' but are really only looking at 'LG' -> research and policy need to take B and T into greater consideration and not see them just as extensions of L and G.
- Pressure other LGBT groups ie Stonewall. They had a successful campaign 'I'm gay get over it' but where was the Bi inclusion? If we cannot get lobby groups to include Bisexual people properly it becomes internal Biphobia and they are not leading by example.

The need to challenge stereotypes of bisexual people, and assumptions about sexual orientation, was highlighted:

- Challenge stereotypes from all groups. We get it from everyone!! We are not seen as a viable population - more people that are greedy or can't make their mind up!
- Bi people have to work hard to counteract the idea that really all they want to do is star in some guys 'mental porn movie', or really want to be gay, if only they would be honest to themselves. So maybe Bi people need to be shown up for what they are, as boring and ordinary as everyone else!
- Less assumptions that someone's sexual orientation can be determined by their partner's apparent gender.
- Awareness in the media that the gender of your partner doesn't automatically mean you're gay or straight.
- Challenging the tendency to assume that if a person is not straight, they must be exclusively gay, something which is prevalent in public institutions such as the NHS. Challenging the assumption that a person in a motos² relationship must be straight. Encouraging people to understand that the inclusion of the term 'sexual' in the term 'bisexual' doesn't mean that it's all (or, in some cases, even partially) about sex.

The importance of visibility, including on television, and the value of out bisexual role models was also mentioned by a number of respondents:

- Recognition of bisexual as an identity; use of the 'B' word. I repeatedly read, watch or listen to media coverage of individuals

² 'motos' = member of the opposite sex

who have had relationships with both women and men but who are categorised as 'lesbian' or 'gay'; not necessarily by themselves but by others.

- It would be great to see more examples among politicians and in the media of bi people, right now about all we have is Captain Jack Harkness, who is awesome, but sadly fictional!
- I think the challenging of stereotypes is very important, and particularly in both the context of stereotypes held by straight-identified people and by gay-identified people. I also think more (some?) people in the public eye in Scotland, beyond than Alan Cumming, bless him, who identify as bi, would be a great help.
- TV representation, beyond 51st century guys. A hell of a lot more bis to come out and the press and LG community to treat them seriously, and it not just to be pretty young girls doing so (fab tho that might be).
- A valuable weapon against homophobia has been characters in soaps and mainstream TV, chat shows etc, where people can find a connection to that character. The same needs to be done for bisexual people.
- Maybe a positively-portrayed bi character in a soap opera. A positive bi posters campaign.

The need for education and improved awareness was mentioned by some respondents:

- To recognise and educate on the different partnership and relationship types that Bisexual people may have. Some Bisexuals are in monogamous relationships, some not in relationships at all, some are in multiple relationships with people of more than one gender and some in multiple relationships with people either of the same gender or opposite gender.
- Educate people!
- Greater awareness, there are more grey areas than black or white. Therefore there is more likely to be more bi people of varying degrees than straight or gay.
- An education project on the gay scene in Scotland challenging biphobia.

A number of respondents mentioned the need for bi-specific services and support:

- A well-advertised point of first contact for bisexuals (men especially) to supply them with sex advice and education, and support. They need to know there is a community of likeminded individuals who are on their side.
- I think it would be useful for people to have some kind of space (whether online or in real life) or policy making or literature that approaches things from that perspective.
- I would like to see a symbol that folk can recognise (like the rainbow flag) but for bi people, as a sign of being bi-friendly. For it not to be seen as something that just "emo" kids do to be cool.
- Also a venue for bisexual people would be good, clubs, cafe, meeting place - talk, counsellor, sexual health clinic times (like gay / lesbian women).
- A worker with a remit to make sure that all health and lgbt organisations actually work on our behalf and we are not just an add on would be a huge improvement.
- The Bi Scotland group is well-established and networked, but needs development - funds for a bi worker would be desirable.

Other responses focussed on the need for inclusive and non-discriminatory public services, both mainstream and LGBT services:

- Bi's are not split personalities - better mental health care.
- Acceptance of bisexuality as a valid sexual identity by health practitioners, especially counsellors, most of whom still seem under the impression that bisexual identified service users are somehow "confused" or are "afraid to come out as lesbian or gay".
- Official forms, equal ops forms, public policy statements etc not to assume there is only straight or gay.
- Proper training for organisations re bi issues & inclusion when delivering diversity/equalities training. This is as crucial for LGBT organisations as it is for 'mainstream' ones.

Some responses raised issues around the labelling of sexual orientations:

- Some bi people find the 'bisexual' label empowering - others find it frustrating and would welcome a move to more inclusive terminology eg 'same-sex attracted people', so don't think "labels" is a priority, though it should be addressed.
- The labels attached to sexuality are still the biggest problem and barrier, as that is where the stigmas arise from. People in 2008 in Britain should be free to enter relationships with whoever they like without fear of persecution. That these labels and associated stigmas still exist is the reason I am still not 'out' as a bisexual.

One response was about the law:

- For those who are in multiple relationships with a partner of either gender, recognition that this is part of someone's sexual orientation being bisexual isn't recognised by law in that Bi's can't marry and have a civil partnership at the same time, as such isn't legal recognition based on partnership rights, and this may result in inequality in all aspects of life, from the provision of goods and services (Hotel rooms etc), Hospital visitation rights, tax, inheritance, work place rights etc.

Part 2 results – non-bisexual respondents

There were 18 responses to the question from the 70 non-bisexual survey respondents (6 gay, 4 lesbian, 3 heterosexual, and 5 other sexual orientation respondents answered the question). Many of these covered similar issues to those raised by bisexual respondents, including:

Issues with LGBT organisations and communities:

- LGBT groups/organisations need to take the B into account more (other sexual orientation respondent)
- I think it's definitely important that bisexual people (and their interests) are not marginalised in the overall struggle for LGBT dignity and freedoms (other sexual orientation respondent)

Education and awareness raising:

- I am gay but I am surprised to consider that I have almost no experience/knowledge of bisexuality. So awareness is necessary (lesbian respondent).
- Yes, much more education about sexuality. I meet/speak to many young teenage guys who have difficulty coming to terms with their sexuality. Ie putting themselves into gay bi straight category. Most people are not totally one of the 3. They have tendencies on a broad spectrum. ie sliding scale. I define myself gay/bi (more gay).

Bi-specific services:

- There needs to be more literature which is aimed at bisexual people. A lot seems to be just for lesbian and gay people, and although it may well include bisexual people, this often isn't clear (heterosexual respondent).

Labelling:

- Having terminology that is appropriate and agreed by all and doesn't leave those who are straight feeling guilty if they don't get/use the right terms (gay respondent)
- The question about moving away from labels is interesting. I believe that ultimately this should be the goal, that there would be no need to categorise people and that people could be truly free to be themselves without feeling limited by our own and other people's perceptions of what the labels mean. However, without equal respect and recognition for all sexual orientations there is probably a need to label to highlight where and how the inequalities between sexual orientations manifest. I think bisexuality is often so marginalised and invisible that losing the labels could possibly mean even less recognition and respect for bi equality. I have another contradictory view though. I don't believe there are only two genders, or only two sexes, so I feel the label bisexual is inadequate to describe my own sexual orientation. I am unsure if it would be of benefit to add more labels, like pansexual for instance, or if it is better to use a definition of bisexual that is inclusive of broader sexual orientation identities and experiences.

As the term transgender is a broad and inclusive term in relation to the Scottish Transgender Alliance, I believe if there was a bi rights worker that their role would have to be inclusive of the broader range of identities outwith the binary model. Ultimately in an ideal world of gender freedom there would be no need to categorise sexual orientation, but until then I think we still have to label ourselves in order to be recognised as existing equal human beings (other sexual orientation respondent).

- Move away from labels would be great - when it's all equal! And not assuming hetro! (gay respondent)

Two responses mentioned the issue of community safety, which had not been raised by any of the bisexual respondents:

- Make it safer for LGB or T people (gay respondent).
- A more combined approach from public authorities to promote equality and diversity and combat hate crime (gay respondent).

In addition, some responses from non-bisexual respondents placed the subject into a wider context of equality for all:

- It's the overall development of diversity as something to celebrate, not to hide away - and the challenging of ignorance, prejudice and discrimination (other sexual orientation respondent).
- Be more open-minded towards people regardless of their sexual orientation. Equality for all! :-) (lesbian respondent)

Part 3 – diversity monitoring results

For the 76 bisexual survey respondents, the diversity monitoring revealed the following mix. (Where figures add up to less than 100%, it is because a small number of respondents did not answer some or all of the diversity questions.)

Gender identity: Female 67%, Male 26%, Other 7%. 20% of respondents had identified at some time as transgender.

Age ³ : Under 20: 5%, 21-30: 28%, 31-40: 41%, 41-50: 17%; 51-60: 4%, 61-70: 1%, over 70: 0%.

3% of respondents reported that they were disabled.

For religion/belief, 51% reported they had no religion. Other responses were: Christian: 16%, Pagan: 9%, Buddhist: 5%, Humanist: 3%, Jewish, Wiccan, Druid Universalist, Spiritualist, Atheist, Multifaith: each 1%.

For nationality, 47% defined as British, and 42% as Scottish (including 5% overlap defining as both). Other definitions (again with some overlaps) were English: 11%, Welsh: 5%, Northern Irish: 3%, Irish 3%, Other 5%.

For ethnic identity, 78% were White Scottish or White British. Other responses were White Irish: 5%, White other: 12%, Black African: 1%, mixed ethnicity: 1%, and other: 1%.

26% of respondents had Glasgow postcodes, and 25% Edinburgh. Between 1% and 5% had postcodes in each of: Lothians (outwith Edinburgh), Fife, Central, Lanarkshire, Ayrshire, Dumbarton, and Dundee. 14% had English postcodes.

For the 70 non-bisexual respondents, the diversity mix was as follows:

Gender identity: Female 49%, Male 44%, Other 4%. 7% of respondents had identified at some time as transgender.

Age: Under 20: 3%, 21-30: 19%, 31-40: 21%, 41-50: 27%; 51-60: 14%, 61-70: 3%, 71-80: 1%, over 80: 1%.

11% of respondents reported that they were disabled.

For religion/belief, 47% reported they had no religion. Other responses were: Christian: 30%, Spirituality: 3%, Atheist: 3%, Pagan: 1%, Humanist: 1%, 'Not titled religion': 1%.

³ An error in the age tick box labels on the survey form meant that there was no box for people aged exactly 20 to tick

For nationality, 37% defined as British, and 54% as Scottish (including 9% overlap defining as both). Other definitions (again with some overlaps) were English: 4%, Northern Irish: 1%, Irish: 1%, Other: 6%.

For ethnic identity, 83% were White Scottish or White British. Other responses were White Irish: 1%, White other: 3%, Black African: 1%, Black other: 1%, mixed ethnicity: 1%, and other: 3%.

26% of respondents had Glasgow postcodes, and 26% Edinburgh. Between 1% and 5% had postcodes in each of: Lothians (outwith Edinburgh), Fife, Central, Lanarkshire, Ayrshire, Dundee, Aberdeen, and Highland. 4% had English postcodes, and 1% Northern Irish.

The diversity mix of non-bisexual respondents was similar to that of respondents to other surveys we conducted in 2008-9.

However, there are some interesting differences between that mix, and the diversity mix of the bisexual respondents. Amongst bisexual respondents, there were more than 2½ times as many women as men. We do not have an explanation for this.

20% of bisexual respondents had identified as transgender at some time, compared to 7% of non-bisexual respondents. This is perhaps not surprising given that recent Scottish Transgender Alliance research ⁴ indicated that 39% of transgender people in Scotland identify as bisexual, pansexual or queer – a larger proportion than in the non-transgender population.

Interestingly, a recent survey of LGBT people in Brighton ⁵, which included 47 bisexual respondents, found somewhat similar results for the gender and gender identity of bisexual respondents. In that survey, 62% of bisexual respondents identified as female, and 19% as no gender or a gender other than male or female. 9% identified as trans.

⁴Transgender experiences in Scotland – research summary, Scottish Transgender Alliance, March 2008
www.scottishtrans.org/Uploads/Resources/staexperiencessummary03082.pdf

⁵ Bi People – Count Me In Too additional findings report, Kath Browne and Jason Lim, University of Brighton / Spectrum, December 2008
www.spectrum-lgbt.org/cmiiToo/downloads/CMIT_Bi_Report_Dec08.pdf

Three quarters of the bisexual respondents to our survey were under 40, compared to fewer than half the non-bisexual respondents. Only 3% of bisexual respondents in our survey were disabled, compared to 11% of non-bisexual respondents, and this may in part relate to the difference in age distribution, since more older people are disabled.

Around half of both sets of respondents had no religion, but fewer bisexual respondents (16%) than non-bisexual respondents (30%) were Christian. There were more Pagans, Buddhists and Humanists among the bisexual respondents (17%, compared to 2% for non-bisexual respondents).

Around 10% more of the bisexual respondents were of English, Welsh, Northern Irish and Irish nationality, and a similar number more had English postcodes.

5. Bisexual issues conversational event

The bisexual issues conversational event was held by the Equality Network in partnership with Bi Scotland⁶. It took place in the evening of 26th September 2008, at Glasgow LGBT Centre. The event was publicised through our network and through Bi Scotland, and via flyers distributed to LGBT venues. 21 people took part.

The purpose of this event was to discuss two questions:

- What needs to change to make Scotland truly equal and welcoming for bisexual people?
- How can we achieve it?

The original notes of the discussions are included as Annex D.

In the discussion on what needs to change, the following points were raised:

The nature of bisexuality, including its benefits It is a broad church, can be welcoming, and can act to stop the division and barriers between gay and straight. However, bisexual people often do not feel they fit in, in either heterosexist, or lesbian and gay, society.

Assumptions and stereotypes For example that bisexual people are greedy and need a partner of each sex.

Visibility The importance of being out as bi. Inclusion of bisexual people in advertising and media. Soaps and TV shows include gay and lesbian characters but very few bisexual characters. At present, the media reinforces stereotypes around bisexuality, and should reflect bisexuality in a modern and true way.

The use of labels The use of the word bisexual can be radical. However, it would be better for policy language to focus on the effects of policy rather than the labelling of people, for example, 'same-sex partners' rather than 'gay partners'. The need for inclusive terminology and philosophy, not exclusive labels.

⁶ www.biscotland.org

Better inclusion by LGBT organisations For example, the lesbian and gay switchboards, the lesbian and gay film festival, Stonewall (although Stonewall Scotland was recognised as doing better).

Non-discriminatory services Bi people are often ignored in sexual health advice and guidance. Health organisations should be inclusive. Blood donation rules discriminate against bi people. Dating services often require people to state one gender they are interested in.

The need for **bi-only space**.

In the discussion on how to achieve change, the following issues were raised:

Visibility and awareness Media and advertising: get the idea of bi identity out there through media representation, stories in soap operas, reality TV, but avoiding sensationalism. Small ads and problem pages divide people into gay and straight – challenge this by talking to newspapers. Have bi participation in media diversity working groups (at present LGBT reps on these tend to focus on lesbian and gay issues).

Next year's Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art LGBT exhibition is having difficulty finding bi art and bi artists. Films like 'Brideshead Revisited' could be described as bi films, but actually get described as gay films.

The importance of out bi role models. More visible groups. The importance of education.

Dispel myths – eg that bisexual women introduce HIV to other women.

More inclusive LGBT organisations Forge links with LGBT organisations, offer education and awareness raising, and seek to get their support.

Non-discriminatory services Use the anti-discrimination laws where appropriate, eg to deal with biphobic door policy in clubs. Make sure institutions are aware of discrimination against bisexual people.

The law Civil partnership makes same-sex relationships seem less valued than mixed-sex marriages – there should be the same law for both.

Bisexual capacity building Funding to give us a louder voice. For example, a bi worker at an existing LGBT organisation, or a support worker for Bi Scotland. More needs to be done for bisexual people outwith Glasgow / Edinburgh.

What the Equality Network can do Use the word bisexual and dispel myths. Coordinate education and training for organisations like switchboards, and support bi input to this. Support Bi Scotland's development.

6. Summary

Demographics of consultation participants

- 146 people responded to the survey on bisexual issues, of whom 76 identified as bisexual, the rest identifying as lesbian, gay, heterosexual, or other.
- 50% of bisexual and non-bisexual survey respondents were from Glasgow or Edinburgh, with most of the rest spread around Scotland. There were very few Black, and no Asian respondents.
- There were few respondents aged over 60. Bisexual respondents were younger (74% under 41) than non-bisexual respondents (43% under 41). Only 3% of bisexual respondents were disabled, compared to 11% of non-bisexual respondents, which may in part reflect the different age profile.
- 67% of bisexual respondents were women, compared to 49% of non-bisexual respondents. 20% of bisexual respondents had identified as transgender, compared to 7% of non-bisexual respondents.
- 30% of non-bisexual respondents were Christian, but only 16% of bisexual respondents were Christian, with 17% being Pagan, Buddhist or Humanist. Half of both sets of respondents had no religion.
- Similar differences in gender identity and age profiles, between bisexual and non-bisexual respondents, were noted in a recent LGBT survey in Brighton ⁷.
- 21 people took part in the bisexual issues conversational event.

⁷ Bi People – Count Me In Too additional findings report, Kath Browne and Jason Lim, University of Brighton / Spectrum, December 2008
www.spectrum-lgbt.org/cmIToo/downloads/CMIT_Bi_Report_Dec08.pdf

Issues raised by bisexual people

- Participants ranked the **inclusion of bisexual issues by LGBT organisations** as the most important factor to achieve greater bisexual equality. Bisexual people face biphobia and discrimination within LGBT communities. Organisations that use the phrase 'lesbian and gay' exclude bisexual people by doing so, and the inclusion of bisexual issues by some LGBT groups is tokenistic. Training is needed for LGBT organisations, involving bisexual people, and this should be supported by organisations such as the Equality Network.
- Another key issue identified was **biphobic attitudes**, both in wider society, and also amongst lesbian and gay people, resulting in discrimination and prejudice from both. There is pressure to identify either as lesbian/gay or heterosexual, and a lack of understanding that sexual orientation can be complex and fluid. There is ignorance and fear, in part connected to issues of how bisexuality relates to non-monogamy.
- The problem of **stereotyping and assumptions** is a related issue. Bisexual people are stereotyped as greedy, promiscuous, or unable to decide. There is very commonly an assumption that people are either lesbian/gay or heterosexual, often based on the gender of their partner.
- Important ways of addressing biphobic attitudes include **increased visibility**. Ideas here include more, positive, representation of bisexual people on TV, including in soaps and in non-fiction, more openly-bisexual role models, both on TV and in real life, more accuracy and inclusion in the news media, more inclusion in the arts media, and a poster campaign.
- **Education and awareness-raising** are also needed to challenge biphobic attitudes and myths. This would include awareness that bisexual people may be celibate, monogamous or non-monogamous, and may have relationships with just one, or more than one, gender. One suggestion was that an education project could target the gay scene.
- Participants felt that there should be **better bisexual services**. These services could include: bisexual spaces online and in real

life (such as a café), bisexual literature, and the well-advertised availability of bisexual- specific advice, support and information, including on sexual health.

- The need for better **inclusion in mainstream services** was also highlighted. It was thought to be important to have more out bisexual people in positions of influence, and bisexual input into public policy making. Mental health services, sexual health services, counselling, blood donation and dating services were all identified as problem areas. Across all services there is a need to recognise bisexual identities, for example on forms and in policies. Training is needed for service providers, with bisexual inclusion in equality training. Discrimination by services needs to be identified and challenged.
- It was felt that a **paid worker**, based at Bi Scotland or at an LGBT organisation such as the Equality Network, could support the development of better services, both bisexual services and mainstream services, ideally across Scotland.
- Some participants discussed the pros and cons of using **labels** such as bisexual. Labels can be empowering, but can also exclude people. Participants who commented felt that inclusive terminology and philosophy should be the focus, rather than the label.
- A few participants raised issues related to **the law**. The sexual orientation anti-discrimination laws cover bisexual people, but do not seem to have been used yet to address biphobic discrimination. The segregation of civil partnership from marriage devalues same-sex relationships compared to mixed-sex ones. The law gives financial and other protection to couples, but not to people in polyamorous relationships.

Responses from non-bisexual people

- The responses from non-bisexual people to part 1 of the survey largely recognised the importance of the same priorities, although, on average, non-bisexual people were somewhat less aware of the need to improve bisexual inclusion in LGBT organisations, and somewhat more concerned about the use of labels such as lesbian, gay and bisexual.

- Relatively few non-bisexual respondents answered part 2 of the survey (the open-ended question on what needs to change). Those who did largely identified the same issues as bisexual respondents: that LGBT organisations need to be inclusive of bisexual people and issues; that there needs to be more education and awareness raising; that bi-specific literature is needed; and that labelling sexual orientations can be problematic.
- Two further issues were raised by non-bisexual respondents: the need to improve community safety and address hate crime; and the need to celebrate diversity generally and promote equality for all.

Comparison with previous consultation

- The earlier consultations with bisexual people, in 2004, highlighted the same issues, but also identified three other issues that were not explicitly raised by people in this consultation. They were: the need for more research into bisexual issues; the need for organisations to bi-proof their policies; and issues around freedom: both to choose one's own appearance, and one's sexual life.

7. Other reading

Exploring Biphobia – a report on participatory appraisal research workshops in Glasgow and Edinburgh, Nick Laird, Beyond Barriers and NHS INCLUSION Project, May 2004.

www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/Bisexual_Participatory_Appraisal_Research.pdf

Bi People – Count Me In Too additional findings report, Kath Browne and Jason Lim, University of Brighton / Spectrum, December 2008

www.spectrum-lgbt.org/cmiToo/downloads/CMIT_Bi_Report_Dec08.pdf

Annex A – Notes of the Equality Network’s Bi Celebration workshop 25th September 2004

Following on from the launch of the Exploring Biphobia report ⁸, presented by Nick Laird of Beyond Barriers, we asked participants to help us as LGBT organisations get better at being Bi. Here are the full list of ideas and suggestions from participants. Comments were made on post-it notes.

We have grouped some comments that participants felt went together. These are written together with each new post-it comment on the next line. Where a number of points were made on the same post-it note these are separated with a semi-colon.

The ideas are not listed in any particular order.

Participants’ feedback

Publicity in non-scene and non-L&G places
LGBT orgs talking to the outside world about bisexuality

More to the fore with publicity and adverts, Bi in the telephone directory rather than listed only under “Gay” (note comment was made that since Bi comes before LG or T in the alphabet perhaps orgs should advertise under this first)

On-going dialogue
Regular consultation

Recognise that being open + welcoming to bisexuals means you will be seen as open + welcoming to all members of LGBT community, beware of cliques/in-groups etc

Attempting to change the bi phobic culture that exists in Scotland - tacking “hate-mongers” professional or otherwise

Hold specific events and workshops

⁸www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/Bisexual_Participatory_Appraisal_Re search.pdf

Run bi-orientated events
Integrated events/activity but room to acknowledge diversity

Encourage bisexuals to be meaningfully involved at all levels, of organisations

Make sure all decision-making groups have L, G, B & T

Change names to explicitly include bi people

Use of language shortening to lesbian and gay cause its easier to say is not inclusive LGBT !

Help us get the “b” into groups who are currently “l&g” (back us up!)

Establish/extended research base report as distinct stream

Education about wider bi-issues starting in schools (lbt) then extend to “professionals”

Bi-specific publications

Leaflets, poster campaign

Information packs

Keep integrated/connected gay organisation

Not silence people from talking about their opposite sex relationships

When doing safer sex info - provide info for all permutations of genitals and gender

Don't assume bi is just a stepping stone to coming out as gay

Bi + Gay men's issues are often the same, especially sexual ones. In such cases it's better to address sex as “sex between men” rather than “gay sex” as many “bi” men won't I.D. as gay

Inclusiveness of bisexuals even when they are in an opposite gender relationship and not just a same sex one

Monitoring lgbt groups to ensure that “b” is well-represented

Bi posters and images up in offices

Affirm distinctness without creating another solid line box

Use the Bi Scotland news group to check things out

Audit – Bi proof work

Challenge biphobic comments esp. if they come from prominent lesbians or gay men within the LG(B)(T) community

Recognise "BI" may be the end sexuality. Organisations must train volunteers etc. who accept "BI" may be final sexuality of an individual or perhaps a staging post towards gay/lesbian

Activists confident in Bi issues

Funding for bi awareness training for LGBT and related (eg health) organisations

Educating LGBT organisations

Help with capacity building so we can raise our own issues

Bi workshops/talks

Annex B – the survey form (paper version)



Bisexual Rights – what do we want?

The Equality Network campaigns for LGBT equality in Scotland. We want to make sure that we campaign for what bisexual people want and need. Please let us know what you think by answering a few questions.

To get greater bisexual equality, how important do you think each of the things listed here are?

For each, please mark one of the numbered boxes from 1 (not important at all) to 6 (very important).

Tick 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest importance)	1 - Least important	2 - Not important	3 - Less unimportant	4 - Less important	5 - Important	6 - Very important
More out bi people in positions of influence, eg MSP, councillor, etc	low					high
A paid bi rights worker in Scotland	low					high
Challenge biphobic attitudes from the general population	low					high
LGBT groups to include bi issues properly, not token inclusion	Low					high
Challenge stereotypes about bisexual people, eg “they’re promiscuous”	low					high
More bi groups and resources for them	Low					high
Challenge biphobic attitudes from lesbian and gay people, groups and venues	low					high
Greater positive visibility for bi people in the media; out bi role models	low					high
Move away from labels such as lesbian, gay and bisexual	low					high

Please continue on the other side – what else needs to change?

Please turn over

**What else needs to change to make Scotland
really equal and welcoming for bisexual people?**

We would find it useful if you would agree to complete this diversity section. This information helps us with our work. It is used for statistical purposes only.

CONFIDENTIAL

First half of postcode:

Gender Identity:	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Additional details?	<input type="text"/>		
Have you ever identified yourself as transgender?	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes						
Sexual orientation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/> Gay	<input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="text"/>		
Age:	<input type="checkbox"/> Under 20:	<input type="checkbox"/> 21-30:	<input type="checkbox"/> 31-40:	<input type="checkbox"/> 41-50:	<input type="checkbox"/> 51-60:	<input type="checkbox"/> 61-70:	<input type="checkbox"/> 71-80:	<input type="checkbox"/> Over 80:
Do you consider yourself to be disabled?	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="text"/>					

Please note: for the options Religion and Belief, Nationality, and Ethnic Identity, we would like you to tick as many boxes as feels right to you, or none.

Religion or belief:	<input type="checkbox"/> No religion:	<input type="checkbox"/> Baha'i:	<input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist:	<input type="checkbox"/> Christian:	<input type="checkbox"/> Hindu:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer:	<input type="checkbox"/> Jain:	<input type="checkbox"/> Jewish:	<input type="checkbox"/> Muslim:	<input type="checkbox"/> Sikh:	<input type="text"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="text"/>					
Nationality:	<input type="checkbox"/> Scottish:	<input type="checkbox"/> British:	<input type="checkbox"/> English:	<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Irish:	<input type="checkbox"/> Welsh:	<input type="checkbox"/> Irish:
<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer:	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="text"/>					
Ethnic identity:	<input type="checkbox"/> White Scottish:	<input type="checkbox"/> White British Other:	<input type="text"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer:	<input type="checkbox"/> White Irish:	<input type="checkbox"/> White Other:	<input type="text"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani:	<input type="checkbox"/> Indian:	<input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Black African:	<input type="checkbox"/> Black Caribbean:	
<input type="checkbox"/> South Asian Other:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Black Other:	<input type="text"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed Ethnic Identity:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Ethnic Identity:	<input type="text"/>			

Please return this survey in the envelope provided to: Equality Network, Freepost RLXT-ABXL-THJE, 30 Bernard Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6PR (no stamp necessary)

Annex C – the responses to the open survey question

These are the responses given to the open question in our survey, which asked “What else needs to change to make Scotland really equal and welcoming for bisexual people?”

Responses from people identifying as bisexual

- Increase Bisexuality. Making the "B" more active and visible rather than a token mention.
- Challenge stereotypes from all groups. We get it from everyone!! We are not seen as a viable population - more people that are greedy or can't make their mind up!
- Greater awareness, there are more grey areas than black or white. Therefore there is more likely to be more bi people of varying degrees than straight or gay.
- Bisexual people are NOT greedy! Lose this common misconception!
- Get rid of the rumours about us being greedy.
- People need to stop boxing us into one thing or another :-)
- I think the main problem is combating stereotypes generally, and biphobia within the LGBT community specifically. It's hard enough coming out in the first place - to do so and then have to face non-inclusive attitudes from the community that's supposed to embrace you, is just ridiculous.
- Less tokenism from LGBT groups about including the 'B'. Equality network being the best example of a group that DOESNT do this!
- Some bi people find the 'bisexual' label empowering - others find it frustrating and would welcome a move to more inclusive terminology eg 'same-sex attracted people', so don't think "labels" is a priority, though it should be addressed. The Bi Scotland group is well-established and networked, but needs development - funds for a bi worker would be desirable. / I think the actions identified in the tick boxes overleaf are the priorities.
- Bi's are not split personalities - better mental health care.
- More awareness that you actually can be bisexual. It's more acceptable/more pressure that if you're bisexual (or are unsure) then you should be either gay or lesbian because you either need

- Reports and policy refer to 'LGBT' but are really only looking at 'LG' -> research and policy need to take B and T into greater consideration and not see them just as extensions of L and G
- The same freedoms for bisexual people as for both the heterosexual and gay communities
- Greater acceptance in society.
- A well-advertised point of first contact for bisexuals (men especially) to supply them with sex advice and education, and support. They need to know there is a community of likeminded individuals who are on their side.
- All of the above, really! People knowing that sexuality is not either/or would help, a lot of people still don't know it's an option to be bi.
- educate people!
- Less assumptions that someone's sexual orientation can be determined by their partner's apparent gender.
- The labels attached to sexuality are still the biggest problem and barrier, as that is where the stigmas arise from. People in 2008 in Britain should be free to enter relationships with whoever they like without fear of persecution. That these labels and associated stigmas still exist is the reason I am still not 'out' as a bisexual.
- Get rid of silly labels - gay, straight, or bi! We all just want to love each other and fuck each other.
- Acceptance of bisexuality as a valid sexual identity by health practitioners, especially counsellors, most of whom still seem under the impression that bisexual identified service users are somehow "confused" or are "afraid to come out as lesbian or gay".
- Actually I would say lets get stuck into showing how LGBT are from every walk of life, every colour, shape, every class, able bodied and not, have sight impairments and work for nuclear agencies, from rural areas, urban and travel.....LGBT go to work, bring up children, experience good times and bad....in fact LGBT are so blooming normal! LgBt people do all the things that people do.. they sleep, get up and go to work, they come home and cook the dinner, we are so boring, we don't shag all the time! For Bisexual people sex is obviously the only thing they think about, especially the girls. They must have seen too much porn!! No seriously, Bi people have to work hard to counter act the idea that really all they want to do is star in some guys 'mental porn movie', or really want to be gay, if only they would be honest to

themselves. So maybe Bi people need to be shown up for what they are, as boring and ordinary as everyone else!

- People growing up
- Official forms, equal ops forms, public policy statements etc not to assume there is only straight or gay
- Ignorance and fear in the general public is a huge issue and prevents many bi people from coming out at all. An acceptance of and willingness to at least discuss the possibility of non-monogamy might also help with bi acceptance, as many people who are bi are also non-monogamous. (Although assuming that a bi person is by default non-monogamous is of course biphobia.) It would be great to see more examples among politicians and in the media of bi people, right now about all we have is Captain Jack Harkness, who is awesome, but sadly fictional!
- I think the challenging of stereotypes is very important, and particularly in both the context of stereotypes held by straight-identified people and by gay-identified people. I also think more (some?) people in the public eye in Scotland, beyond than Alan Cumming, bless him, who identify as bi, would be a great help. Bisexuality is a minority sexual identity, so I understand why bi people are often grouped with other minority sexualities such as lesbian and gay, but this relationship is also problematic. Bisexuality is fundamentally different from monosexuality (straight / lesbian / gay). The sexual behaviours (i.e. the possibility of attraction to someone of the same gender) can overlap with those of gay people, just as they can overlap with heterosexuality (the possibility of attraction to someone of another gender) but the fundamental notion of bisexuality (that bi people are attracted to, potentially, people from any gender, and as such do not discriminate along gender lines, like gay and straight people do) makes bisexuality unique from both gayness and straightness. So I think it would be useful for people to have some kind of space (whether online or in real life) or policy making or literature that approaches things from that perspective.
- TV representation, beyond 51st century guys A hell of a lot more bis to come out and the press and LG community to treat them seriously, and it not just to be pretty young girls doing so (fab tho that might be) A glossy colour version of BCN magazine free in venues
- Proper training for organisations re bi issues & inclusion when delivering diversity/equalities training. This is as crucial for LGBT organisations as it is for 'mainstream' ones. Awareness in the

- Recognition of bisexual as an identity; use of the 'B' word. I repeatedly read, watch or listen to media coverage of individuals who have had relationships with both women and men but who are categorised as 'lesbian' or 'gay'; not necessarily by themselves but by others.
- It needs to be recognised that bisexuals face the same discrimination and hatred that homosexuals do from the straight population - but we also face discrimination from the LGBT community. This really means bisexuals have no safe haven. To tackle this, we need to tackle biphobia in the LGBT community.. e.g. how can a group calling itself "lesbian and gay" anything claim to also represent bisexuals.. and we also need more bisexual groups, bisexual community, both within and outside the LGBT community, to allow bisexuals to have a safe haven from discrimination, and to feel accepted by likeminded people.
- Challenging the tendency to assume that if a person is not straight, they must be exclusively gay, something which is prevalent in public institutions such as the NHS. Challenging the assumption that a person in a monogamous relationship must be straight. Encouraging people to understand that the inclusion of the term 'sexual' in the term 'bisexual' doesn't mean that it's all (or, in some cases, even partially) about sex.
- An education project on the gay scene in Scotland challenging biphobia
- Pressure other LGBT groups ie stonewall. They had a successful campaign 'I'm gay get over it' but where was the Bi inclusion? If we cannot get lobby groups to include Bisexual people properly it becomes internal Biphobia and they are not leading by example.
- i think that the continued existence of homophobia across Britain and the sense that complaint is not really taken seriously e.g. lack of coverage in the media of Michael Causer murder, lack of consequences for Chris Moyles continued homophobic language on a PUBLIC SERVICE broadcasting radio station. Bisexuals are effected by homophobia and lack of lgbt role models in the same way as the rest of the lgbt community is. However, there is also a sense that bi people are not adequately represented and get specific biphobia from the lg and heterosexual communities- a worker with a remit to make sure that all health and lgbt organisations actually work on our behalf and we are not just an

add on would be a huge improvement. The idea that biphobia would not be tolerated and that we are respected and welcomed across services would make Scotland more welcoming to our community

- I would like to have that label embraced, accepted, before letting it go. Maybe a positively-portrayed bi character in a soap opera. A positive bi posters campaign. I would like to see a symbol that folk can recognise (like the rainbow flag) but for bi people, as a sign of being bi-friendly. For it not to be seen as something that just "emo" kids do to be cool.
- To recognise and educate on the different partnership and relationship types that Bisexual people may have. Some Bisexuals are in monogamous relationships, some not in relationships at all, some are in multiple relationships with people of more than one gender and some in multiple relationships with people either of the same gender or opposite gender. For those who are in multiple relationships with a partner of either gender, recognition that this is part of someone's sexual orientation being bisexual isn't recognised by law in that Bi's can't marry and have a civil partnership at the same time, as such isn't legal recognition based on partnership rights, and this may result in inequality in all aspects of life, from the provision of goods and services (Hotel rooms etc), Hospital visitation rights, tax, inheritance, work place rights etc
- Your options pretty much cover it. These changes need to be made across the world, not just Scotland. :)
- Media triages. Film Roles. Advertising. Clothes Perfumes etc.
- A valuable weapon against homophobia has been characters in soaps and mainstream TV, chat shows etc, where people can find a connection to that character. The same needs to be done for bisexual people. Also a venue for bisexual people would be good, clubs, cafe, meeting place - talk, counsellor, sexual health clinic times (like gay / lesbian women).
- Same as everywhere else, general attitudes about bi people need to be changed! Also, more bi role models need to be present in society and not just skanks like Rebecca Loos. And more cake!
- General better attitudes towards sexuality, orientation and diversity and an understanding that sexuality as fluid. I think biphobia exists because people want to put others in boxes - if you are straight you sleep with these people, if you are gay you sleep with these people - bisexuality makes people nervous! "I don't know who you're going to sleep with next!" This is also about gender. Just

as people are 'happy' with gay relationships that conform to gender norms ie feminine men and butch women, many people are uncomfortable with those who don't conform to those norms or stereotypes whether L, G, B or T. Bisexual men and women have all kinds of stereotypes attached to them by mainstream society and the gay community mainly because they don't fit into a neat gender and sexuality box. Plus, few bisexual people like the word 'bisexual' because of all of the negative connotations from gay and straight people. Bisexuality is also difficult because it may well be transitional rather than a permanent identity. This obviously has negative connotations - 'they just can't decide what they want', 'bi now, gay later' etc - but also we should acknowledge that sexuality is fluid and this is a positive thing. You might define as gay, straight or bi at different stages in your life and while in different relationships. I think we should celebrate this fluidity rather than see it as selling out or indecisiveness. Maybe just everyone needs to come to terms with the fact that everyone is bisexual :))

Responses from people identifying as “other sexual orientation”

- Peoples Attitudes! LGBT groups/organisations need to take the B into account more.
- The question about moving away from labels is interesting. I believe that ultimately this should be the goal, that there would be no need to categorise people and that people could be truly free to be themselves without feeling limited by our own and other people's perceptions of what the labels mean. However, without equal respect and recognition for all sexual orientations there is probably a need to label to highlight where and how the inequalities between sexual orientations manifest. I think bisexuality is often so marginalised and invisible that losing the labels could possibly mean even less recognition and respect for bi equality. I have another contradictory view though. I don't believe there are only two genders, or only two sexes, so I feel the label bisexual is inadequate to describe my own sexual orientation. I am unsure if it would be of benefit to add more labels, like pansexual for instance, or if it is better to use a definition of bisexual that is inclusive of broader sexual orientation identities and experiences. As the term transgender is a broad and inclusive term in relation to

the Scottish Transgender Alliance, I believe if there was a bi rights worker that their role would have to be inclusive of the broader range of identities outwith the binary model. Ultimately in an ideal world of gender freedom there would be no need to categorise sexual orientation, but until then I think we still have to label ourselves in order to be recognised as existing equal human beings.

I feel like my experience of being a trans man makes me feel like I am also other than just male, which is why I ticked both male and other. I am now physically other than male or female and feel my experience is also other than male or female and I am now completely comfortable about this.

- anything that raises awareness can't really go wrong for the labels questions, labels aren't always kinda but language is power and we need to have words to describe ourselves as best we can, re-define and re-claim don't destroy
- I think a greater understanding is needed. Bi identity is not someone who is 'undecided', for example, or promiscuous. This is predicated on a greater understanding of any identity based (partially or fully) on sexual orientation.
- It's the overall development of diversity as something to celebrate, not to hide away - and the challenging of ignorance, prejudice and discrimination. I think it's definitely important that bisexual people (and their interests) are not marginalised in the overall struggle for LGBT dignity and freedoms.

Responses from people identifying as gay

- Make it safer for LGB or T people
- A more combined approach from public authorities to promote equality and diversity and combat hate crime.
- Having terminology that is appropriate and agreed by all and doesn't leave those who are straight feeling guilty if they don't get/use the right terms.
- Move away from labels would be great - when it's all equal! And not assuming hetro!
- Everyone needs to accept everyone else and their perception/reality about themselves.
- Yes, much more education about sexuality. I meet/speak to many young teenage guys who have difficulty coming to terms with their sexuality. Ie putting themselves into gay bi straight category. Most

people are not totally one of the 3. They have tendencies on a broad spectrum. ie sliding scale. I define myself gay/bi (more gay).

Responses from people identifying as lesbian

- I am gay but I am surprised to consider that I have almost no experience/knowledge of bisexuality. So awareness is necessary.
- Better behaviour by gay community and their awareness that outrageous behaviour by those "out" is the "benchmark view" by society at all of us, out or closeted. The "stereotypes" gay person is based on what the public sees. All this "in your face" - "out and proud" stuff does more harm than good.
- Be more open-minded towards people regardless of their sexual orientation. Equality for all! :-)
- More understanding about what constitutes bisexual. Some people not clean, including myself.

Responses from people identifying as heterosexual

- There needs to be more literature which is aimed at bisexual people. A lot seems to be just for lesbian and gay people, and although it may well include bisexual people, this often isn't clear.
- Greater awareness, hopefully leading to an increase of knowledge.
- (In response to the question about "challenging stereotypes of promiscuous bisexuals") Even if they are!

Annex D – record of the Bisexual Issues conversational event 26th September 2008 Glasgow LGBT Centre

The event was attended by 21 people. Participants split into two groups, for two discussion sessions. These notes are combined from the flipchart sheet records of each group's discussion, in each session.

Session 1 – What needs to change to make Scotland truly equal and welcoming for Bisexual people?

End invisibility – being out as bi.

Policy language less focussed on labels like lesbian, gay & bisexual, and more focussed on the practical effect, eg civil partnership allows same-sex couples to register their relationship, rather than being for lesbian and gay couples. However, recognise that the use of the word bisexual can still be radical.

Not fitting in either in heterosexist or lesbian & gay society.

Get rid of assumptions and stereotypes – eg that bisexual people must have a partner of each sex, are greedy, are sitting on the fence, etc. Polyamory is not the same as bisexuality (not making a value judgment about polyamory).

Bisexuality is a broad church.

The availability of places to have sex – these are already there, eg via the internet, cruising places, saunas etc. This issue is not specific to bisexual people.

Bisexuality can act to stop the division / wedge / barriers between gay and straight. It can be welcoming, The gay community is sometimes too exclusive.

Anyone outside sexual orientation or gender identity norms faces discrimination. We need inclusive terminology and a philosophy of openness, not exclusive labels.

There are a range of organisations that could better include bisexual people: switchboards such as London, Lothian and Strathclyde, the lesbian and gay film festival, Stonewall (although Stonewall Scotland is better), dating websites which don't allow gender flexibility. Advertising and media should be bi inclusive.

The media reinforces the stereotypes around bisexuality and should do more to reflect bisexuality in a modern and true way.

Many soaps and TV shows opt to include gay or lesbian characters but few include bisexual characters.

LGBT help lines should do more to include bisexual people.

Help lines are often advertised as gay and lesbian and neglect to include the Bisexual community in publicity. Bi people should feel included in such help lines.

Lack of Bi only space.

Some Bi people are comfortable in both straight and gay environments, however effort should be made to ensure that there are bi only spaces as well.

Health.

Bi people are often ignored in sexual health advice and guidance. Health organisations should include Bi people and people who have sex with people of both genders.

Blood donation rules discriminate against Bi people.

Session 2 – How can we achieve it?

Dispel myths, eg prejudice against bisexual women for introducing HIV to other women.

Education.

Approach LGBT organisations to get support and education. But recognise that not all may be up to speed on bi issues so may need

education themselves. Forge links and seek to build up a good working relationship.

Bisexual Awareness training for LGBT organisations.

Be more visible – more visible groups and more advertising.

Funding to give us a louder voice – everyone involved at the moment is a volunteer. Maybe tie in with an existing organisation to get a paid bi officer or support worker for Bi Scotland.

Get the idea of bi identity out there: media representation; stories in soap operas; reality TV – but with these last two it is difficult to avoid sensationalism.

Need out bi role models.

Dispel myths and challenge stereotypes. Participate in media working groups which look at diversity issues in the media (LGBT reps on these tend to focus mostly on lesbian & gay).

Next year's Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art LGBT exhibition is having trouble finding bi art and bi artists.

Glasgow Film Theatre – Brideshead Revisited could be described as a bi film, but is discussed as a gay film.

Media issues – small ads and problem pages divide people into gay or straight – challenge this by talking to newspapers.

Civil partnership makes same-sex relationships seem less valued than mixed-sex relationships (which can marry) – there should be the same law for both.

Use the anti-discrimination law to deal with biphobic door policy discrimination by clubs – though there is a problem of proof, and recognise the clubs' need for a safe door policy.

Make institutions aware that bisexual people are discriminated against too, and the solution is not bisexual people choosing one gender or the other.

Work outside the central belt.

More needs to be done for Bi people outside of Edinburgh/Glasgow.

What the Equality Network can do: Use the word bisexual, stress that it's not about sex, swingers, or 'lifestyle choice'. Coordinate education and training for organisations like switchboards; support bi input in training. Support Bi Scotland's development through funding and capacity building advice.