



**ENGAGING
LGBT PEOPLE IN
YOUR WORK**



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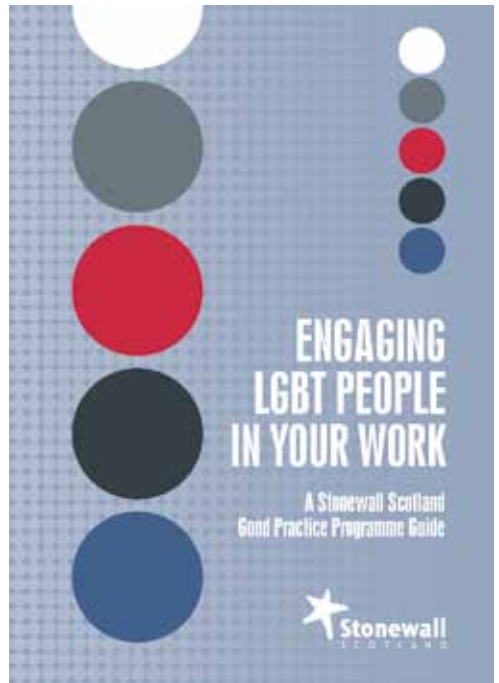
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Introduction

Efficient public services are those which understand the requirements of their service users. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have specific needs from the public services they use, but all too often fail to get the level of service they need.

Many organisations have yet to effectively engage their LGBT service users or address their requirements in the services they deliver, but the Equality Act 2010 places a responsibility on public bodies to demonstrate how they have enabled LGBT people to engage with the development and delivery of services.

LGBT people will be encouraged to have a greater role in holding public bodies to account on how they are reducing inequalities in public services.



This booklet is an abridged version of Stonewall Scotland's Good Practice Guide, Engaging LGBT People in Your Work, available to download from

www.stonewallscotland.org.uk

What is engagement?

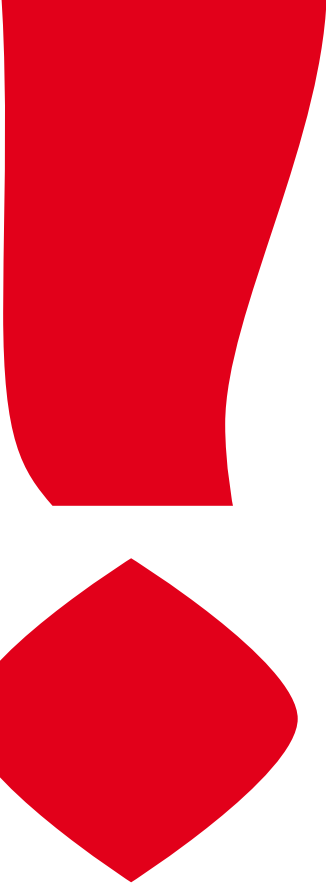
Engagement is the means by which public bodies capture and understand the interests and requirements of their service users, and the practical ideas they have about how to deliver more efficient and innovative services.

For councils, this is the population of the area they cover. For other public bodies, this is their particular set of service users, which in many cases will be a very diverse group of people. Engagement is known in some organisations as public consultation, involvement or participation.

Why is it important?

Giving people an active role in determining the shape, structure and priorities of the services they use makes them more:

- ◆ Accountable.
- ◆ Transparent.
- ◆ Democratic.
- ◆ Relevant.
- ◆ Cost-effective.
- ◆ Trustworthy.



By holding services to account and ensuring their requirements are addressed, people will receive better, more relevant services.

Public bodies that involve service users in making decisions about services will improve their understanding of the local population's requirements and will be able to identify which existing services are not meeting the needs of users, and develop services that address the cause of problems rather than simply the consequences. This makes them more cost-effective and improves outcomes for service users.

Why engage with LGBT people?

LGBT people have a diverse range of interests and requirements. Engaging directly with LGBT service users is the most effective way for public services to understand what those interests and requirements are. There are two main opportunities for public bodies to engage with LGBT service users:

- 1** Through **general** engagement exercises with the whole local population or different groups within the local community. Organisations that monitor the sexual orientation and gender identity of respondents to these exercises are able to examine how a particular initiative or service impacts on LGBT people. This is a cost-effective way of exploring how different services impact on different groups.
- 2** Through **specific** engagement exercises with LGBT service users. Direct engagement helps organisations identify any different requirements LGBT people may have and think about how they engage the wider LGBT population through other services.



How do LGBT people's requirements differ?

LGBT people might have the same views and experiences on their local public services as anyone else, but LGBT people can often have different experiences or be affected disproportionately by the way public services are delivered.

Engaging with LGBT people can help identify any distinct experiences and requirements, will enable service providers to better understand the reason for any differences, and help develop innovative and cost-effective solutions to respond to them.

Benefits for organisations

Public bodies that effectively listen to members of the public should be able to:

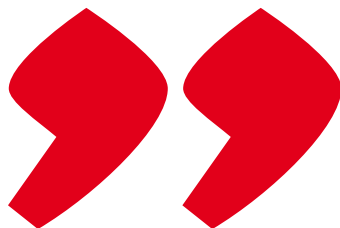
- ◆ Identify the barriers that prevent people from using their services and learn how to design inclusive and accessible services.
- ◆ Demonstrate improved quality of service delivered to individuals, measured through a better uptake of services.
- ◆ Identify common requirements of different groups, encouraging economies of scale through joined-up delivery and only delivering services that local people need and will use.
- ◆ Develop a clear evidence base to ensure the delivery of relevant outputs, better planning and delivery of services.
- ◆ Improve reputation and establish trust, satisfaction and confidence among local people in the services that they pay for.
- ◆ Avoid the risk of potentially expensive legal action by identifying potentially discriminatory policies or practices.

Benefits for individuals



When public bodies
carry out effective engagement:

- ◆ Service users feel they have a greater stake in their local area.
- ◆ They feel more confident and satisfied with their local services.
- ◆ They feel that the services are delivering value for money.
- ◆ They feel that their taxes are better spent.
- ◆ They receive better, more relevant services.
- ◆ They have more trust in public service providers.



Engaging the wider LGBT community

There will be occasions when wider engagement exercises may need to be conducted with LGBT people. Wider consultation should not be undertaken without reviewing whether the topics for consultation are appropriate or the methods of engagement are accessible and cost-effective.

Engagement with the wider LGBT community is when organisations run an open public exercise specifically for the LGBT community to capture their views on topics relating to public services. This engagement can be conducted in a number of ways.

LGBT community groups and LGBT organisations should play a key role in deciding when and where it is feasible and important to consult the wider LGBT population. In many instances these groups may feel that it is not cost-effective, practical or relevant enough to engage the wider community, and issues and solutions can be explored by these groups on behalf of the wider LGBT population without need for wider input.

However, there will be occasions when it is appropriate and important to consult the wider community. For example, when:

- ◆ There is a need to capture reliable quantifiable evidence of the views of LGBT people on a topic, such as determining the numbers of LGBT people who use or would use a local service.
- ◆ An issue is deemed of significant importance or has such disproportionate impact on local LGBT people to merit wider consultation.
- ◆ Organisations feel that there are perspectives currently not being captured via advisory or community groups, or they wish to demonstrate that the groups and organisations reflect a breadth of views within the community.
- ◆ There are changes planned to specific services for LGBT people, or services disproportionately used by LGBT people.

When is it right to engage with the wider LGBT community?

Not all policies will have a disproportionate impact or relevance for LGBT people. For example, LGBT people may not have specific concerns about which day the bins should be collected or the opening hours of the payment office. Their views on these matters can be collected via generic engagement exercises and feedback (and as it is good practice to collect equal opportunities monitoring data on generic engagement exercises, the views of different groups can be collected)

However, a policy like a new equality action plan clearly has relevance for the LGBT community who use the organisation's services. If an organisation is developing a new equality plan it needs to identify the key policy areas that will have the greatest effect on LGBT people. This can be in conjunction with local community groups, national LGBT organisations or advisory groups. Community groups and other LGBT organisations would be able to advise how to ensure a diverse range of LGBT people are aware of and are encouraged to respond.

The different methods of engagement

Citizens' panels consist of a large, representative group of people who participate in regular surveys. These surveys can be online, by telephone or paper versions that are mailed out. They can be used to identify local issues, assess service needs and determine the effectiveness of new services. Asking participants questions about their gender and gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion and disability status can enable further detailed breakdown of data.

Focus groups are in-depth small group conversations where participants talk to each other as well as to the facilitator. They can capture detailed data on people's attitudes, perceptions and opinions, particularly from less confident people who otherwise might not make their voice heard at larger consultation events.

Open public meetings are often used for engaging with a broad range of people on a specific issue. These can provide a big picture, but organisations should be aware that LGBT people may not feel prepared to out themselves in a public forum by raising issues relevant to LGBT people. »

» **Monitoring sexual orientation and gender identity**

on existing anonymous questionnaires that people are invited to complete at the point where they receive a service. Many services wish to evaluate the service user experience, providing comment and complaint forms, and equal opportunities monitoring on these evaluations can provide a 'snapshot' of how LGBT people feel about the service.

Organisations should take steps to ensure LGBT people feel comfortable to provide this data in surveys by ensuring that the collected data remains confidential and that staff involved in data collection are appropriately trained.

Online surveys provide a cheap and simple method of quickly capturing people's views and opinions online. They are distributed as a link that can be emailed or posted on a website or social media. Including monitoring questions on these surveys can provide additional insights as described above.

Online forums can allow people who are concerned about outing themselves or are too busy to attend meetings to contribute. People engage in dialogue online, through posting comments on a particular topic.

Effective engagement

There are a number of practical steps organisations can take to effectively engage with their LGBT service users. Many are also relevant for effectively engaging with a whole range of local communities.

Organisations should:

- ◆ Initiate trust building exercises with the local community first, to quell assumptions that engagement is just a 'box-ticking' exercise.
- ◆ Work in partnership with other local public bodies, to ensure wide participation.
- ◆ Manage the expectations of participants.
- ◆ Ensure a diversity of views is captured.
- ◆ Enable participants to challenge and criticise.
- ◆ Offer feedback to participants.

Building trust first

For engagement with local LGBT people to be effective, it needs to be part of a broader strategy for equality.

LGBT people may feel there is limited value in engaging with an organisation which has not demonstrated their commitment to LGBT equality before. Engagement with the LGBT population must run in parallel with other work to demonstrate an organisation's commitment to equality.

Setting timescales

Many organisations engage with service users far too late in the process and use it simply to 'rubber-stamp' a policy that's already been developed and approved. People will be sensitive about being used to 'tick a box' in this way and will feel that this does not help public bodies to improve services. As LGBT service user groups and populations are often relatively small, there is a real risk of developing 'consultation fatigue' unless engagement processes are thoughtful, well-planned and managed, and deliver results.

Plan engagement activities in advance and schedule enough time to involve LGBT people in developing the engagement exercise, promote the exercise, seek responses and provide feedback to participants and the wider community on any action to be taken.

Organisations in similar sectors, such as emergency services, the NHS, and culture and sport organisations can also benefit from partnership working in engagement.

Organisations who collaborate will be better able to identify how they can work together on specific pieces of work and learn from each other, and can share the minimal costs associated with setting up, hosting maintaining and supporting an advisory group.

Acknowledging barriers to engagement

LGBT people, especially those who have been excluded from services in the past, may have concerns about talking to a public body. Organisations should be aware of the barriers that prevented people engaging in the past and make it clear that they are now welcome.

A commitment to inclusiveness over and above legislative responsibility to do so will go a long way to welcoming »

Acknowledging barriers to engagement

- » previously marginalised groups – do it primarily because it's the right thing to do, not because you have to.

The most effective engagement allows individuals to offer their views in different ways. It is important to remember that different methods of engagement will encourage, or discourage, different groups from taking part. Organisations should consider that some people may prefer engagement that avoids face-to-face contact such as an anonymous paper questionnaire, or that some people may not use social media or are not able to participate in online surveys.

Getting a good mix around the table

Engagement is most effective and most trusted when a wide range of people, with new insights and ideas, are able to feed in. Without a diversity of experiences the information coming from engagement exercises risks being of poor quality and limited use.

Organisations need to find and reach out to LGBT people who are women, from ethnic minority backgrounds, religious, older and younger people, parents and carers, and those who have a disability.

To do this, organisations will need to promote engagement opportunities, in places where a diverse range of people will hear about it.

For example:

- ◆ Community groups or forums for LGBT parents, older people, people with a disability, black and minority ethnic people.
- ◆ Newspapers or radio stations aimed at black and minority ethnic people, younger or older people.
- ◆ Youth groups, places of worship or community centres.
- ◆ Community health initiatives or drop in centres for specific groups.
- ◆ Citizen's Advice Bureaux, JobCentres, town halls, hospitals, GP surgeries, schools, colleges and leisure centres.

Organisations need a simple yet inspiring message that will convince LGBT service users to engage with them. Organisations should avoid jargon and should not assume that LGBT people automatically understand whether a topic is relevant to them. »

- » Market and promote the engagement exercises and the advisory group as widely as possible. Use local media and the internet and promote it in venues where LGBT people are likely to see it.

Managing expectations

Service users will quickly disengage from engagement efforts that are not seen to get results and effect real change. Many are suspicious of anything seen as simply a ‘talking shop’ rather than a genuine opportunity to improve local services. Organisations should be clear from the outset about what participants can expect, and what the organisation expects from the engagement.

- ◆ Ask participants what they want to get from their involvement and what barriers might stop them from contributing fully.
- ◆ Acknowledge where services might not have been inclusive in the past and demonstrate how the organisation has changed its approach as a result.
- ◆ Explain what you intend to do – there will be a degree of cynicism that this is just a ‘box-ticking exercise’ rather than a genuine attempt to improve services – and it is important to dissipate this concern.

- ◆ Be realistic about timescales. You will need to explain that change won't happen overnight and may be subject to a range of processes such as board approval.

Organisations should be prepared for criticism from the LGBT community, particularly in the early stages of engagement. People who've been excluded and feel their voices have not previously been listened to may initially respond to engagement opportunities with frustration.

It's important to recognise that although challenging, this behaviour represents progress because this group is communicating with the organisation for the first time. If participants are critical:

- ◆ Acknowledge people's criticisms and listen to their concerns.
- ◆ Demonstrate how the organisation is changing for the better.
- ◆ Explain how being involved in the process can solve the problem.
- ◆ Try to manage expectations about what can and can't be achieved by consultation and how long this may take.

Managing resistance

Organisations may sometimes need to justify work to engage directly with LGBT service users. The broader local population may not always understand the value and importance of engaging with and responding to the requirements of specific groups of people, and in some cases people may misread it as 'special treatment' for LGBT people. It's important for organisations to respond robustly and confidently to this type of resistance. When responding to these concerns organisations should be clear that:

- ◆ All service users are encouraged to engage with services and contribute views about how they can improve.
- ◆ Engagement is about developing more efficient services that give value for money for all taxpayers, which includes many different groups.
- ◆ LGBT people can genuinely face discrimination and barriers to accessing public services. If organisations do not address this they will be failing in their responsibilities to their service users and may be acting unlawfully.
- ◆ Engaging with LGBT people and responding to their requirements is not about special treatment. This is a way of acknowledging a gap and proactively ensuring that groups who may have faced barriers in the past can feed in too.

Sustaining engagement

Organisations must manage their own expectations about the levels of response they will get when initially engaging with the wider local LGBT population. To maintain momentum and continue engagement it's important that once key requirements are identified, either by the advisory group or through wider engagement, steps are quickly taken to address the issues. These follow-up initiatives might include:

- ◆ Updating policies to remove any discriminatory or exclusive procedures that were identified through engagement.
- ◆ Developing targeted marketing and advertising or outreach activities to promote services to local LGBT people.
- ◆ Developing specific services that respond to the requirements of LGBT people.
- ◆ Improving training for frontline staff.
- ◆ Developing key public commitments to address specific issues raised in engagement.
- ◆ Seeking specific tailored advice from local and national LGBT organisation on how to address issues raised in engagement.

Evaluating

In order to learn from and improve future engagement it is important to evaluate, monitor and review your engagement activities.

Alongside more formal mechanisms this can also be achieved through ongoing dialogue with the advisory group and other service users.

An important role of an LGBT advisory group is to act as a 'critical friend' offering ongoing evaluation of an organisation's work.

Reporting back

It is vital to provide feedback to people involved in any engagement exercise about what action was taken as a result. People need to feel their contribution was valued, and keeping them abreast of subsequent developments is a vital part of making them feel they have an important role in the engagement.

Maintaining a steady flow of publicity about the good work that has resulted from the consultation is a good way to manage the relationship and keep the community onside.

Organisations should continue regular communication with participants and other service users to maintain momentum, keep them involved and attract new participants, and publicise any actions that result from the organisation engaging with LGBT service users, making use of every opportunity to communicate this via local media and the internet.

If the organisation was unable to resolve an issue raised through engagement, it is important to acknowledge this and to explain why the situation hasn't been resolved or addressed.

EQUALITYNETWORK

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights in Scotland



Stonewall
S C O T L A N D

Community Connections

has been developed in partnership by Equality Network, LGBT Youth Scotland and Stonewall Scotland in order to achieve meaningful engagement with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.

- 1 Engaging LGBT People**
- 2 Engaging Public Bodies**
- 3 Engaging Young People**
- 4 Engaging Transgender People**
- 5 Best Practice**
- 6 Publicity**

