

Feeling Safe 'Out' in Dorset

Using lived experience to drive LGBT+ community safety across Dorset



Feeling Safe 'Out' in Dorset	0
Who we are	2
About us	2
Our members	2
Definitions	3
LGBT+	3
Identifying	3
Allies	3
Coproduction	4
Background - Being LGBT+ in the UK today	4
Barriers and risks to LGBT+ people	9
National statistics	10
Dorset's population	11
The UK's ranking on LGBT+ rights	11
Perceptions of LGBT+ in 2022	11
LGBT+ hate crime and hate incidents	12
Coproduction event	13
Findings	14
What do you love about the area you go out in?	14
What does it feel like being out in Dorset's major towns when you're LGBT+?	14
Are there places that feel particularly safe or unsafe? - If so, what makes them feel like that?	14
What would make places (inside and outside) feel more safe and inclusive?	15
Survey results	15
Recommendations	16
- LGBT+ Safe Pledge	16
Creation of LGBT+ Safe Beach Points	17
LGBT+ representation and allyship in local democracy	17
Thank you	18

Who we are

About us

The LGBT+ Voices Dorset Forum (hereafter 'the Forum') started in August 2020, as an independent, lay-led organisation to promote LGBT+ equality across Dorset, including Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. The Forum began in response to local feedback from LGBT+ people on the lack of opportunities for them to act to improve their equality and expressions of frustration at the slowness or ineffectual nature of progress in those opportunities led by professionals and their being for professionals. Our uniqueness is therefore, reflected in the genuine partnership approach we adopted, where identifying and non-identifying, professional and lay members work together through a flat structure to express, explore, understand and work on issues affecting the LGBT+ community locally. Starting during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the Forum undoubtedly benefited from the new opportunities of remote working, in access to and ability to bring together people from disparate geographies, diverse lived experiences, experienced organisations, renowned advocacy positions, community voices and influential strategic and system roles. Whilst we recognise the barriers that working entirely remotely can have, including digital and socioeconomic inequity, accessibility and diverse representation, we believe that the overall balance has been positive, in creating opportunities and utilising trusted community partners to reach and represent voices which may otherwise go unheard. Since our inception, we have grown to a fifty-strong organisation of LGBT+ people, statutory, community and voluntary sector organisations. By ensuring lived experience is at the heart of local policy, planning and service design, we are raising awareness, generating confidence and sharing best practice to create LGBT+ inclusive services. The Forum is increasingly recognised as a single-point of reference for LGBT+ equality across geographical Dorset and is valued as a shared space, where no-one is expected to know everything, where people can come together to listen and learn and act collectively to positively transform LGBT+ experiences. Our membership continues to grow and we are working increasingly strategically to make tangible improvements to our community locally and with regional and national coalitions to both amplify and generate local system change around shared experiences.

Our members

The LGBT+ Voices Dorset Forum are:

- all of our LGBT+ members
- Space Youth Project
- Weymouth Gay Group
- Dorset Council
- NHS Dorset
- Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust
- GMB
- Dorset Mind

August 2022

- Office of the Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner
- Dorset Police
- Public Health Dorset
- Locus Counselling
- Intercom Trust
- We are with You
- Beyond Reflections (formerly Chrysalis)
- PramaCare
- Bournemouth University
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Dorset Parent Carer Council
- Community Action Network
- Help and Kindness
- Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospitals Dorset LGBT+ Staff Network Lead
- Citizens Advice in Dorset
- Dorset Youth and Community Centre
- Dorset Police LGBT+ Staff Network Lead
- Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Pride Network
- NHS Dorset LGBT+ Staff Network Lead
- Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust LGBT+ Champion

Definitions

Some of the key terms used in this document are explained below. For a full list of terms in relation to LGBT+ identities, we recommend you [look at Stonewall's List of LGBTQ+ terms](#).

LGBT+

The acronym for lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace. This is an umbrella term and the '+' denotes all gender, sexual and relationship identities that are not explicitly referenced in the acronym. The Forum is explicitly and unequivocally inclusive and welcoming of and allied to trans and all gender diverse identities.

Identifying

Someone who identifies as being LGBT+.

Allies

A (typically) straight and/or cis person who supports members of the LGBT community. Allies are also people who identify with an LGBT+ identity who supports other, different LGBT+ identities. Allies can be for any identity or experience, not just LGBT+. An ally helps promote a common interest from outside of the particular community, by amplifying community voices and taking an active stand against oppression and

August 2022

unacceptable behaviour. They help wider society to better understand the experiences of particular groups.

Coproduction

A way of working, whereby the people using a service, the people designing and delivering that service, work together on an equal basis to create a service or come to a decision which works for them all.

Background - Being LGBT+ in the UK today

LGBT+ people have always existed. For centuries, same-gender attraction was not “othered” and in some cultures, LGBT+ identities, including gender diversity, have been accepted for centuries as part of traditional culture. In the UK, anti-LGBT+ sentiment took a strong hold in the 19th century and whilst the UK still strongly feels the impact of laws that were brought in subsequently to criminalise and other LGBT+ people, these impacts are also visible due to the export of anti-LGBT+ policies and laws during colonialism.

In 2022, in every area where the question is asked, LGBT+ people have poorer outcomes than non-LGBT+ people. LGBT+ people are not biologically different from their LGBT+ peers but face significant barriers from a society that is not built for them and as such, have become marginalised.

Sharing your LGBT+ identity isn't a singular instance and therefore, the notion of “coming out” is an iterative process across the lifespan which LGBT+ people must evaluate on the risks inherent with different people and in different places.

Despite the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 to not disadvantage someone who identifies with a protected characteristic (of which LGBT+ is one) and services assurances that they will treat everyone the same regardless of protected characteristics, we know that inequalities exist. LGBT+ people with multiple marginalised identities face starker barriers and disadvantages.

Some of the inequalities experienced by LGBT+ people include¹:

- 45% of young trans people and 22% cisgender LGB people have tried to take their own life compared to 5-13% general population
- 24% young homeless people are LGBT+, 69% cite parental rejection as the main factor
- 1 in 6 report drinking every day compared to 1 in 10 adults in the general population
- 25-30% smoke, compared to 18% of the general population

¹ LGBT Foundation Training Academy, 2021

- waiting times for gender dysphoria services can be as long as 5 years with 17% of the trans population self-medicating during this time
- less than half of lesbian and bisexual women have ever had sexual health screening, with half of those testing positive for sexually transmitted infections
- 1 in 10 (11%) experience domestic abuse compared to 6% women and 3% men in general population
- lesbian, bisexual women and non-binary people are twice as likely to experience sexual violence
- around 40% lesbian and bisexual women told they don't need cervical screening and 1 in 50 have been refused a test
- trans men and non-binary people with cervixes are often not called for cervical screening because health systems only call women
- 53% of new HIV diagnoses are in men who sleep with men
- 51% LGBT+ from ethnic minorities face discrimination based on ethnicity from within LGBT+ communities. This figure rises to 61% in Black communities. LGBT+ people of faith and LGBT+ disabled people are also discriminated against from within the LGBT+ community
- older LGBT+ people significantly more likely to live alone (41% compared to 28% wider over 50s population)
- 83% of young LGBT+ adult carers experienced bullying in school, 3x more likely than young carers overall and than young LGBT+ people in general
- 59% disabled LGBT+ people have felt life is not worth living compared to 31% non-disabled LGBT+ people
- 1 in 8 LGBT+ people have experienced unequal treatment from healthcare staff, while one in four have witnessed discriminatory or negative remarks against LGBT+ people by healthcare staff and one in 7 have avoided treatment for fear of discrimination because they're LGBT+
- one in twenty have been pressured when accessing healthcare services to access conversion "treatments", this figure is higher for LGBT+ people from ethnic minorities
- one in five aren't out to any healthcare professional for general medical care, this increases to 40% for bi men and 29% for bi women
- the Covid-19 pandemic created specific barriers for LGBT+ people around binding, social isolation, suspension of medication,

appointments and surgeries, social isolation, disrupted support networks and isolation in networks and families where it was unsafe to be themselves

To take forward the understanding that LGBT+ identities and the sharing of those to others and in other settings is an iterative process, there are certain touchpoints or experiences we can identify as significant in LGBT+ lives.

In 1998, the Human Rights Act was passed as law. In this, protocol 1, article 2 protects our right to an effective education, in application to primary, secondary and higher education². However, the government can make laws that decide and regulate how that education is delivered. Stonewall, the LGBT+ rights charity was formed in response to the introduction of Section 28 in 1988 as part of the Local Government Act that banned local authorities and schools from “promoting” LGBT+ experiences. For many educated and trained in the shadows of Section 28, the impact of it still hangs heavy despite its repeal in 2003 and LGBT+ children and young people today feel its effects in the normalisation of experiencing anti-LGBT+ bullying in education settings. 42% of students have hidden or disguised their LGBT+ identity at university out of fear of discrimination, while 16-25 of trans and non-binary students respectively do not feel able to wear clothes representing their gender expression at university³. Section 28 deprived LGBT+ children and young people from seeing themselves represented in media and prevented them from accessing inclusive sex and relationships education. Despite the repeal of Section 28, generations since have not had access to inclusive sex and relationships education, with it focusing mainly on heteronormative and cisnormative experiences and within these, safe penetrative sex, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. In 2017, Stonewall’s School Report⁴ found that 40 per cent of LGBT pupils are never taught anything about LGBT issues at school, only one in five have learnt about consent in same-gender relationships and only 17 per cent have learnt about violence or abuse in same-gender relationships. The introduction of inclusive sex and relationships education in 2020 updated guidance that had not been reviewed since prior to the repeal of Section 28 in order to begin to eliminate anti-LGBT+ bullying in schools and ensure LGBT+ children and young people saw themselves represented and respected and that all children understand safe and healthy relationships and diversity in individuals and families⁵. A growing number of children and young people are identifying as LGBT+ and exploring and using increasingly fluid terms to describe their experiences; the provision of effective inclusive sex and relationships education and the ability to access LGBT+ organisations run by LGBT+ people for LGBT+ people is essential to supporting and validating children and young people’s experiences. This is never more the case than now, at a time when increasingly extreme views are being expressed by politicians and other figures influential in setting policy direction which are

² <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights-act/article-2-first-protocol-right-education>

³ Stonewall LGBT in Britain report - 2018

⁴ <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/school-report-2017>

⁵ <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/lgbtq-inclusive-education-everything-you-need-know>

reminiscent of Section 28 and could lead to untold harms to our children and young people's mental health. For instance, the Trevor Project's annual National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health found an increase in rates of attempted suicide for children and young people without access to affirming and supportive education⁶.

Becoming aware of your sexual orientation or gender identity, usually during childhood or adolescence, can be a very different experience depending on many factors, such as role-models, where you live, friends, family, schooling and if your identity intersects. Whilst not for all, we tend to think of our families as safe havens, providing security, love, warmth, affirmation and safety. Whether because of generational differences or intolerance though, LGBT+ children and young people can find themselves ostracized, invalidated, verbally or physically harmed by the people that are supposed to protect them over their LGBT+ identity. For some, home and family are not safe and they are not able to live authentic lives, having to conceal their identity. As indicated in the statistics above, many LGBT+ homeless people cite lack of safety at home to be a contributory factor in their homelessness. For those who are able to access, either while still at home or following dislocation from their family through choice or force, an LGBT+ community, LGBT+ people can place greater importance on and derive greater benefit from found or chosen families. These are people who validate and support their identities, often through shared experience of being or allied to LGBT+, with no biological connection to the person. Deconstructing the adage of "you can choose your friends but not your family", chosen families provide this affirmation without any obligation to do so, whilst for some LGBT+ people their biological families renege on this perceived obligation inherent in biology and reject their relations because of how or who they love or do not love or how they identify their gender.

Following education and a childhood that often involves experimentation with many different aspects of identity, for many people work is an opportunity to further develop this and experiment and evolve different identities based on the people you surround yourself with and the line of work or progression through it you do. For LGBT+ people the barriers to equity in work compared to non-LGBT+ peers are stark. Nearly 1 in 5 people have been targeted at work because they're LGBT+ and 1 in 8 trans people have been physically attacked by customers or colleagues⁷. LGBT+ people are less likely to be in employment, while one-third of trans women specifically lose their salary after transitioning. In the last four years, a third of people accessing LGBT+ employment support services were over the age of 45, compounding the issue that it is harder for people to find work as they get older. 20% experience discrimination in recruitment, with almost half of trans people being denied a job. If in work, LGBT+ people are twice as likely to face bullying and discrimination, with trans people most affected, with 18% of LGBT+ employees reporting having been the target of negative comments and conduct from their colleagues and driving up levels of concealment around LGBT+ identities in

⁶ <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/08/11/suella-braverman-attorney-general-lgbtq-schools-trans-section-29/>

⁷ Stonewall LGBT in Britain report - 2018

workplaces. This is further negatively impacted by disparity between LGBT+ and other protected characteristics which workplaces are more vociferously and proactively exploring the impacts of, such as race and gender. LGBT+ people face specific barriers in the workplace, such as discussion of non-heterosexual and non-cisnormative identities being deemed sexualised and inappropriate and barriers to promotion due to impacts on performance of concealment and seniority often necessitating travel to countries where being LGBT+ is a crime, sometimes punished by the death penalty. Two-thirds of LGT+ people will not report discrimination and bullying at work, believing that their complaints will go unpunished or fearing further negative impacts around relationships or disclosure. Limited discourse due to sexualisation of LGBT+ identities, disparity with action on other protected characteristics and concealment all lead to missed opportunities to understand the needs of LGBT+ people in work and as such, these are not reflected to those influencing policy or in policy development. Therefore, there is a perpetual cycle of silence, inaction, non-disclosure, feelings of lack of safety from LGBT+ and non-LGBT+ people discussing LGBT+ experiences and a lack of change⁸.

Ageism is not often talked about in the context of protected characteristics and in the context of LGBT+ experiences may combine with mythology around sex and ageing to desexualise older people. When considering that older people are significantly more likely to live alone (41% compared to 28% in the wider population), risks of isolation experienced in the LGBT+ community more generally are heightened. Having grown up in a world pre-decriminalisation, older people may continue to fear discovery, conceal their sexual orientation or trans identity. For older people dependent on others for providing care, including personal care around dressing and washing or toileting, there are significant issues of personalisation of care sensitive to validating that person's identity, such as how they want to dress, makeup and care of their physical bodies. The lack of this sensitive and appropriate care forces many older people back into the closet when accessing social care services and depersonalisation of care controlled by invalidating family or others involved in caregiving and decision-making. Outside of residential and domiciliary settings, LGBT+ older people report feeling excluded from their own community by younger LGBT+ people and LGBT+ spaces. Spaces are seen as catering to younger LGBT+ people and 21% over 55-64 and 28% over the age of 65 have experienced discrimination or poor treatment because of their age in their local LGBT+ community, such as not feeling welcome in gay bars and clubs, primitive sheltered accommodation not affording access to other gay contacts and financial worries limiting travel to accessible LGBT+ spaces.

Whilst huge progress has been made, from the decriminalisation in 1967, to the start of the Pride movement to protest and progress LGBT+ rights, the repeal of Section 28 and inclusive marriage and civil partnership, inclusive sex and relationships education and the removal of barriers for lesbian and bi women and trans people accessing fertility treatment, things can go backwards as well as forwards. We are seeing this now, with hostility and scaremongering towards our trans siblings,

⁸ LGT Foundation Training Academy, 2021

extreme views and bodies that are meant to protect us threatening our rights. It is vital that we keep hold of what we have gained and continue to fight for more, so that everyone has the same rights and those rights grow.

Barriers and risks to LGBT+ people

The experiences and barriers across the lifespan affecting the LGBT+ community create and sustain inequalities, in accessing health and social care, impact on health and wellbeing and as victims of hate crime. In 2020-2021 for example:

- 40% of LGBT+ people had experienced hate crime
- over 80% of LGBT+ people had self-harmed
- 48% of LGBT+ people under 26 have attempted suicide
- 59% of LGBT+ people had considered suicide
- trans people were three-times more likely to attempt suicide than LGB peers
- there were strong links between experience of hate crime and discrimination and incidence of self harm and suicidal thoughts, anxiety, depression, drink and drug use
- trans people were seven-times more likely to use drugs and twice as likely to binge drink at least once a week, with a higher likelihood of substance dependency and instances of seeking support for substance dependency
- 30.8% of LGBT+ people delayed seeking healthcare due to previous discrimination
- respondents who felt they had to educate healthcare providers were four-times more likely to delay seeking healthcare
- trans people were reluctant to come out in mainstream services for fear of discrimination and prejudice. 80% trans people experience anxiety before accessing hospital treatment due to fears of insensitivity, misgendering, discrimination and concerns around intimate care. As well as experiencing disproportionate levels of mental health concerns, services were least well equipped to meet the needs of trans people
- trans people were 9x more likely to contract HIV
- waiting times for gender dysphoria services were as long as 5 years, with 17% of trans population self-medicating during this time
- less than half of lesbian and bisexual women have ever had sexual health screening and half of those have tested positive for sexually transmitted infections
- around 40% of lesbian and bisexual women have been told they don't need cervical screening and 1 in 50 refused a test

- trans men and non-binary people with cervixes have not been called for cervical screening
- 100% of non-binary people reporting feeling uncomfortable and 94% reported feeling unsafe being non-binary in the UK
- trans people were more likely to experience youth homelessness⁹

National statistics

Currently, there are no robust figures about LGBT+ people and identities in England and Wales and the figures that do exist tell very different stories depending on the extent to which they recognise LGBT+ people and experiences. This leads to our LGBT+ community, our experiences and our needs not being recognised in policy, services and funding by government and public bodies and therefore, to further poor experiences and lack of support for LGBT+ people. This marginalisation increases in intersectional communities, such as LGBT+ People of Colour and LGBT+ disabled people.

The Census 2011 is a primary tool for understanding the makeup of our population and for use as an evidence base for grants, funding and service and policy development. Yet, the Census 2011 did not include any questions on sexual orientation or gender identity. The only question asked in relation to LGBT+ identities was whether the person was in a same-sex civil partnership. This has, subsequently, made it easy for funding bodies and local and national public sector organisations to downplay the needs of our community and led to significant challenges for community and voluntary sector LGBT+ organisations to attract necessary funding, particularly in the light of growing need set against increasingly draconian potential and actual policy change.

In 2021, following a large consultation and significant lobbying from LGBT+ organisations, Census 2021 included two new questions on sexual orientation and gender identity. This data is due for release by the end of 2022.

Currently, statistics suggest that around 10% of Brits identify with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual and that when seeing sexual orientation as a spectrum, the number identifying as 'completely heterosexual' falls to 72%, demonstrating greater fluidity in how we experience and describe our sexual orientation¹⁰.

Data on trans (including non-binary) people has not been statistically significant to draw conclusion from, however, Stonewall estimates that there are approximately 600,000 trans and non-binary people in the UK today¹¹.

⁹ LGBT Foundation Training Academy, 2021

¹⁰ <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/lifestyle/articles-reports/2019/07/03/one-five-young-people-identify-gay-lesbian-or-bise>

¹¹ <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/information-and-resources/truth-about-trans#trans-people-britain>

Dorset's population

The population of the county of Dorset (comprising Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council local authority areas) is 777,000, with the population being larger in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area. Most of the population is concentrated in the 40-74 year old age bracket and there are slightly more females in the population than males¹².

Statistics on sexual orientation is not available at local authority level but at a regional level, the Sexual Orientation experimental statistics for 2020 suggested 167,000 identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other, compared to 4,301,000 who identified as heterosexual or straight. This suggests 4% of the population¹³.

The UK's ranking on LGBT+ rights

From occupying top position in the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) ranking of countries' position on LGBT+ rights in 2014 and 2015, the UK decreased its position to 14th in 2022¹⁴.

The decrease is blamed on the anti-trans rhetoric, delays, inconsistency and failures over the ban on so-called conversion therapy and lack of meaningful reform of the Gender Recognition Act. The impacts on the LGBT+ community reflecting ILGA's findings is seen in a significant rise in the number of anti-LGBT+ attacks (see below) and the LGBT+ community feel neither safe nor protected by current legislation and practice. Hostility towards LGBT+ people is normalised and role-modelled as acceptable in the rhetoric of our politicians. As a result, 80-90% of LGBT+ hate crimes are not being reported, as the community believes that no action will be taken. Returning to LGBT+ experiences across the lifespan, it is essential, says Stonewall, that acceptance begins with inclusive education¹⁵.

Perceptions of LGBT+ in 2022

Contradictory to rhetoric pedalled as justification for delays in major reform to harmful and obstructive LGBT+ policies, public attitudes to LGBT+ identities is not only positive but has improved over the last few years. Stonewall's Take Pride (2022) report found a picture of growing acceptance in over 2,000 adults surveyed, with less than one in 10 people reporting negative feelings. Positive feelings were more apparent in women and girls than men and boys, comparable with other societal attitudes. Whilst positive sentiment was similar across responses to trans people as to LGB people, there was also a visible pity response towards trans

¹² Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age, ONS, 2020

¹³

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2020>

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/12/uk-falls-down-europes-lgbtq-rights-ranking-for-third-year-running>

¹⁵ <https://www.dazeddigital.com/politics/article/54524/1/young-gay-men-share-horrifying-stories-amid-rising-uk-anti-lgbtq-hate-crimes>

people, however, the reasons for this were not explored. Equality in perceptions and feelings towards trans people as compared to LGB people is particularly important to note, given the negative bias of media coverage and playing on the supposed threat posed by trans people. As such, the impact of media coverage and a small minority of vocal and influential anti-trans groups and individuals does not seem to be influencing public perception, which is largely supportive, respectful, welcoming and admiring of trans and LGB people alike. Importantly, given the focus on the threat of trans women to cis women promoted by the media, women respondents in the survey were less likely to feel negatively towards trans people than men. There was no finding that transphobia was more prominent, nor that it was distinct from other forms of phobia based on sexual orientation. The report highlights that particular work needs to be done in men and older people's feelings about LGBT+ people, where generally speaking responses were more negative¹⁶.

LGBT+ hate crime and hate incidents

We have heard about the impacts of intolerance from different corners of our society on our ILGA ranking and how those manifest in explicitly anti-LGBT+ sentiment and action. In August 2022, while the government have suggested a rise in confidence in reporting hate crimes, Galop's Hate Crime report found that only one in eight report. In the last five years, LGB hate crimes have doubled and there was a 32% single-year increase in 2021-2022. Transphobic hate crimes meanwhile increased by 240% over 5 years. The beginning of the Monkeypox epidemic has seen a rise in anti-LGBT sentiment similar to the demonisation and fearmongering towards the community in the 1980s during the HIV/Aids epidemic, whilst continuing and growing hostility towards trans people is also contributing to community visibility and an ensuing rise in attacks. Combining barriers to reporting - discussed in earlier sections around sharing your LGBT+ identity and implications of this - with the fact that only 14% of anti-LGBT+ hate crimes are resolved by police makes clear not only reasons for significant underreporting and therefore, underrepresentation of the true nature of anti-LGBT+ hate crime in Britain today but the significant work needed at all levels of society to create safe, welcoming, inclusive and accepting communities for LGBT+ people¹⁷.

In Dorset, recorded hate crimes on sexual orientation and transgender identity almost doubled in 2017/18 on the previous year and again in 2018/19. This number has continued to rise year on year and means that since 2016/17, there has been 163% increase in hate crimes perpetrated because of sexual orientation and transgender identity¹⁸. Such hate crimes accounted for between 15 and 23% of all recorded hate crimes within Dorset Police between 2016/17 and 2021/22.

As a Forum and member of Prejudice Free Dorset, we encourage our members and the people they support to use the Report It Online site to report hate crimes and incidents, either as individuals or third-parties and contact through 101 and 999 for

¹⁶ <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/take-pride-report-2022>

¹⁷ <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/08/15/anti-lgbtq-hate-crime-police-uk/>

¹⁸ Hate crime, England and Wales, 2020/21, Home Office, 2021

crime prevention and reporting. Through Dorset Police's membership of the Forum, we have an understanding of quarterly LGBT+ hate crime and incident reporting and direct links with neighbourhood policing leads and hate crime leads for combining community intelligence and action with strategic influence.

Coproduction event

Taking this look back on where the UK is currently on LGBT+ experiences, the next section of this report looks specifically at how structural inequality, policy, the design and delivery of services and attitudes towards LGBT+ people is manifesting in perceptions of and experiences of safety for LGBT+ people in their local community of Dorset.

In April 2022, the Forum held its first open workshop to understand if Dorset felt like a safe place to be for people identifying as LGBT+, from the perspective of both LGBT+ and non-LGBT+ people.

We held a 90 minute online workshop via Microsoft Teams which was widely advertised through social media, websites, local community mapping groups, statutory, community and voluntary sector organisations and local radio and invited anyone living, working in, or with a connection to Dorset to join a safe space to discuss this question.

Utilising our membership and their onward networks and connections as trusted community partners to encourage uptake, we were vocal about the commitment we had from local statutory organisations to learn from and work with the Forum to take forward outputs and recommendations, to remove as far as possible barriers to attendance which may have been present from previously feeling unheard or invalidated.

Alongside the online workshop, we also ran a public survey, asking similar questions to those that would be explored in the workshop, for people who were unable to attend or those who were attending but wanted to contribute written feedback too.

Those interested in attending the event signed up via a Microsoft Form, which asked demographic information and postcode to ensure only those with a connection to Dorset attended and to facilitate assignation to peer-led breakout rooms for LGBT+ identifying attendees. The invite and introduction to the workshop was explicit in creating a safe, welcoming and inclusive space and all facilitators were able to remove anyone not upholding the inclusive values of the session immediately.

Twenty people signed up for the event, of whom fifteen identified as LGBT+. A further nine individuals completed our survey. All participants were over 18 years old. The event was scheduled as follows:

- welcome and icebreakers - 15 minutes
- first breakout room - 25 minutes
- whole group discussions - 10 minutes
- comfort break - 5 minutes

August 2022

- second breakout room - 25 minutes
- whole group discussion and close - 10 minutes

The event was facilitated by four Forum members, one to manage the main room and running of the event, two LGBT+ members to run two rooms for all LGBT+ people attending and one member who ran a non-identifying room. We were also grateful for the support of one of our member organisations, Dorset Mind, for providing a breathing space breakout room with a qualified counsellor for anyone who needed support or time out during the session, recognising the sometimes difficult content being discussed. All facilitators captured feedback during breakout sessions on private online post-it walls which were only visible to their group and these were kindly analysed by our member organisation, NHS Dorset, after the event. No identifiable information was captured on these walls.

The four questions around which discussion was facilitated during the session were:

1. what do you love about the area you go out in?
2. what does it feel like being out in Dorset's major towns when you're LGBT+?
3. are there places that feel particularly safe or unsafe? - If so, what makes them feel like that?
4. what would make places (inside and outside) feel more safe and inclusive?

Findings

What do you love about the area you go out in?

- nature, particularly beaches and countryside and their proximity
- mindfulness and quiet of disconnecting in nature
- accessibility of places and services from centralised locations balanced with rurality
- friendly people
- art, culture and nightlife

What does it feel like being out in Dorset's major towns when you're LGBT+?

- improving but not there yet, particularly in knowledge, older generations, rurality and lots of discrimination compared to inclusive cities
- gendered toilets cause issues
- it's about the people you're with, not the places
- no consistency - good experiences then assaulted
- safe, queer spaces are being eroded

Are there places that feel particularly safe or unsafe? - If so, what makes them feel like that?

- ✓ home
- ✓ LGBT+ organisations
- with others when out and about but still avoid certain routes

August 2022

- × Poole, Bournemouth and beaches, gangs and after dark feel unsafe
- × more CCTV, awareness needed, Ask for Clive and Hollieguard app
- × spiked drinks are an issue

What would make places (inside and outside) feel more safe and inclusive?

- visibly demonstrating places are safe spaces
 - progressive pride flag
 - all are welcome
 - tolerance posters
 - wearing visibility e.g. badges, lanyards, shoelaces
 - Ask for Clive
 - Ask for Angela
 - Hollieguard App
 - ‘You’re Safe Here’ scheme
- staff training
 - venues that are already there coaching others
 - allyship
 - peer representation when designing services
 - general inequalities training
- LGBT+ awareness and representation in planning communities, events and services
- all-gender, not restricting to accessible toilets
- CCTV

Survey results

Four respondents lived in the DT postcode area and six in the BH postcode area, with one person living outside of both postcode areas.

Most respondents were aged between 30-64 years old. Participants were invited to write-in their gender; most used binary sex-based descriptors of male/female, with double the number of females attending as males and opting for more fluid responses.

Characteristic	Attendees
LGBT+	7
Living in an urban location	3
Trans, non-binary and gender diverse identities	2
Living in a rural location	2

Disabled	1
On a low income or in poverty	1
In an Armed Forces/Veteran family	1
A single parent	1
A carer	1

Like workshop attendees, survey respondents reflected on nightlife and cultural benefits of living in Dorset, as well as natural spaces, similarly reflecting on the lack of diversity perceived in Dorset.

The majority of survey respondents felt safe in their local area, however, there was reflection that visible policing had reduced contributing to feeling of lack of safety combined with a lack of CCTV and a noticeable reduction in dedicated LGBT+ spaces, with a desire for those remaining safe spaces to be collated into a map. Not all experiences of night-time economy were positive.

Respondents like workshop attendees wanted LGBT+ experiences represented in local planning and expressed a desire for positive engagement with our members of parliament and council and youth democracy.

Safe points staffed by police and council staff along beaches were discussed, as well as segregation between younger and older LGBT+ people with the gap needing to be bridged.

The recommendations and steps needed to create safety for our community broadly aligned with those coming out of the workshop.

Recommendations

From the online workshop and responses to our survey, the Forum is pleased to share the following set of agreed recommendations. We will be working with all our members and, particularly, building strong relationships between our LGBT+ member organisations and statutory partners to implement these:

- **LGBT+ Safe Pledge**

The Forum will work with the Police and Crime Commissioner for Dorset, Dorset Police, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and Dorset Council to create a pledge for venues, particularly within the night-time economy, to sign up to and demonstrate they are LGBT+ safe spaces.

Based on a set of criteria created by the Forum and informed by existing national schemes of best practice, venues will be encouraged to raise awareness, train staff and implement safe and inclusive practices.

Engaging our LGBT+ community in an ongoing dialogue about community safety, the pledge will generate community intelligence and a spirit of friendly competition between venues through visitors' reviews on a dedicated website, accessed via QR codes displayed in venues.

This community intelligence will be utilised on an ongoing basis and used to inform spot-checks carried out on an annual basis between the Forum, local councils and police against the pledge criteria.

Awareness of the pledge will be raised through a social media campaign, endorsed by local councils and the police and participants in the pledge added to a map of LGBT+ safe spaces to raise community awareness and trust and inspire other venues to participate.

In addition, aspects of the pledge will be communicated to and monitored through licensing procedures by the authorising local authority for taxi operators, to raise standards, provide inclusive services and ensure taxis are a point of refuge for any LGBT+ person requiring help in the future.

Creation of LGBT+ Safe Beach Points

Building on the provision of staff training on LGBT+ inclusion through the LGBT+ Safe Pledge, the Forum will work with Dorset Police and Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Councils to create LGBT+ Safe Beach Points.

Run by these statutory organisations and expanding the knowledge and support offered by Beach Safety Wardens, the Safe Beach Points will provide designated, identifiable and accessible spaces along Dorset's beaches to provide support and refuge to LGBT+ people using Dorset's beaches.

Creating a single-point of information for LGBT+ safety in Dorset, these Points will be displayed on our map of LGBT+ safe spaces and utilise visible signs of inclusion, including the progress pride flag and apparel.

LGBT+ representation and allyship in local democracy

The Forum will work with all our statutory partners across health, local government and policing to understand and map opportunities within local democracy, to facilitate accessibility of these and encourage representation from our LGBT+ community.

Through the provision of LGBT+ inclusion training as part of our LGBT+ Safe Pledge, we will engage with local councillors and encourage dialogue between them and Members of Parliament to raise awareness and allyship for our community.

Thank you

First, thank you to all those who attended our workshop and completed our survey. The faith you have shown in the Forum, your openness and willingness to share your experiences to benefit our community was courageous and enables us, together, to make a difference. We hope this report demonstrates the impact you have made and will continue to make going forward, through your feedback and participation, for LGBT+ people now and in the future.

The Forum is a collective of LGBT+ people, statutory, community and voluntary sector members. Thank you to all our members, without whom and the unique knowledge and experience they bring, we would not be what we are.

Thank you too to our LGBT+ members who facilitated breakout rooms, sharing aspects of their experiences to create safe, welcoming spaces that enabled LGBT+ people to talk and share so freely.

Finally, thank you to our statutory organisational members for your passion and commitment and for your openness to listening and learning to LGBT+ voices in Dorset. Our ability to work in partnership, across LGBT+ and non-LGBT, professional and lay membership, is a defining feature of our Forum and critical to not only our success but to re-evaluating perceptions and removing barriers within our community.

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