

# Understanding Equality and Diversity Sexual Orientation Digest

Produced by the Corporate Research Team, Borough of Poole.



## Purpose of this Paper

This paper has been designed to help inform and service and policy planning, and aid focus and prioritisation of services. A series of 7 guides provide available research and statistical evidence relating to the varying needs, experiences and outcomes of different equalities strands in Poole. It provides a top-level view of this specific subject area and identifies contacts and resources for people who would like more detailed information. National information is highlighted in grey throughout.

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## The Population of Interest

The government uses the figure of 5-7% of the national population, which is considered a reasonable estimate (*Stonewall.org.uk*).

Nationally, since the Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into force in 2005, there have been 26,787 civil partnerships formed. 8,728 of these were formed in 2007 (4,770 male and 3,958 female partnerships) (*Neighbourhood Statistics – Civil Partnerships*).

Recent research for the Equality and Human rights commission revealed that over half of gay male respondents (51%), 61% of lesbians and 25% of bisexual people felt that they had experienced disadvantage as a result of their sexual orientation. Examples given varied widely, but included issues relating to neighbourhoods, experiences at school and universities, problems with family, living in secret and openly homophobic verbal and physical abuse (*Beyond Tolerance, 2009, Equality and Human Rights Commission*).

There is a broad estimate that between 5% and 10% of the local population in the South West define themselves as lesbian or gay, with a further cohort of unknown size defining themselves as bisexual to an extent that affects their self-awareness or day-to-day life (*A Firmer Foundation*). In the 2001 census, 214 people in Poole aged 16 and over identified themselves as part of a same-sex couple, 0.2% of all 16+ people living in households. This is the same proportion as in the South West and England (*Neighbourhood Statistics*).

## **Key Issues for this Strand**

The following reports highlight issues nationally and from the South West and Dorset, but the information is often limited, and from a narrow range of sources, and there are no reports with data specific to Poole.

### **Health and Longevity e.g. mortality, access to healthcare**

Generally anxiety, depression, self-harm, suicidal feelings and drug/alcohol abuse are more common in the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) community than among heterosexual people. Gay and bisexual men remain the group at highest risk of infection with HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. (*Prescription for Change, 2008; NHS – Reducing Health Inequalities for LGBT, 2007*).

Issues may arise in regards to access to health services. Stonewalls' Serve You Right survey reported that 1 in 14 gay men and lesbians expect to be treated worse than heterosexuals when accessing healthcare for a routine procedure or an emergency procedure, while 8% have the same expectations about GP's (*Beyond Tolerance, EHRC, 2009*). Half of lesbian and bisexual women surveyed reported having a negative experience of healthcare within the year 2006-2007 (*Prescription for Change, 2008*). Mainstream mental health services are not always found to be LGB 'friendly', and people may find ill-informed staff or experience judgemental attitudes (*Stonewall.org.uk*).

In the South West, 78% of respondents in the 'A Firmer Foundation' report disagreed or strongly disagreed that mental health services were free from prejudice and that staff were well trained in Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual issues.

### **Physical and Legal Security e.g. freedom from violence and discrimination**

Homophobic hate crimes are common but continue to be under-reported (*Beyond Tolerance, EHRC, 2009*). Surveys have found quite high levels of homophobic incidents among the LGB community. 66% of 2,500 respondents reported being a victim of at least one homophobic incident (*Breaking the Chain of Hate, 1999, Stonewall.org.uk*). Recent research for the Equality and Human Rights commission found that a fifth of gay men and 6% of lesbians had been physically assaulted as a result of their sexual orientation. 66% of lesbians and 63% of gay men reported experiencing name calling, and nearly 4 in 10 lesbians and gay men reported that they had been bullied, felt frightened and had suffered from low self esteem (*Beyond Tolerance, EHRC, 2009*).

In the South West area, 36% of survey respondents (130 total respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that they do avoid areas that they perceive to be unsafe (*A Firmer Foundation, 2006*).

In Poole 2007/08, the police recorded 136 prejudice incidents, 10% of which were homophobic incidents. In the period between April and December 2008 there were 118 prejudice incidents, 12% of which were homophobic incidents. Borough of Poole recorded 38 incidents of which 11% were homophobic. There were also 38 reported incidents in the period April to December 2008 (*Strategic Assessment 2009*).

### **Education e.g. attainment, access to life-long learning and training**

Homophobic bullying in school is an issue for young LGB pupils, with 2 thirds experiencing homophobic bullying, and 97% of gay pupils reporting hearing derogatory phrases. This can have a direct impact, with over half of lesbian and gay pupils reporting that they don't feel able

to be themselves at school and 35% not feeling safe or accepted in school. 7 out of 10 LGB pupils report that bullying impacts on their school work (*The School Report, Stonewall.org.uk*).

Only half of lesbians, gay men, 44% of bisexual women and 30% of bisexual men felt that they could be open about their sexual orientation without fear of prejudice or discrimination in schools, colleges and universities (Beyond Tolerance, EHRC, 2009).

The Lesbian and Gay Foundation's 2007 research 'Exceeding Expectations' found that two in three young people thought that training for teachers around sexual orientation issues and homophobia would be a good idea.

No local information available.

## **Standard of Living** e.g. housing, transport, independence

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people can experience a range of housing issues. Young people can find themselves thrown out of the family home, or may choose to leave to escape homophobia. Older people in care accommodation can feel isolated and fail to receive the services they need. All LGB individuals can experience harassment and violence in their neighbourhood. Another issue is the lack of emergency accommodation for LGB people, especially gay and bisexual men, when escaping domestic abuse (*Stonewall.org.uk*).

In Dorset, nearly all respondents to the Gay and Grey survey (2006) expressed wanting a gay friendly society with dedicated gay/lesbian support services, however they also felt that they would prefer not to be 'ghettoised' and that services should be integrated into mainstream services (*Gay and Grey survey, 2006*).

## **Productive and Valued Activities** e.g. employment, workplace experience

Recent research by the Equality and Human Rights commission revealed that 7 in 10 lesbians and gay men felt that they could be open about their sexual orientation in the workplace without fear of discrimination. However, only around 2 in 10 of bisexual men and 3 in 10 of bisexual women felt the same (Beyond Tolerance, EHRC, 2009). In a survey with lesbians in the workplace, some felt that keeping their orientation secret at work was exhausting, stressful and damaging to the morale of the individual and of the team (*The Double-glazed Glass Ceiling – Lesbians in the Workplace, Stonewall.org.uk*).

One in five lesbian and gay people have experienced bullying from a colleague because of their sexual orientation (*Stonewall, 'Serves You Right', 2007*).

No local information available.

## **Individual, Family and Social Life** e.g. independence, equality in relationships

Nationally, since the Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into force in 2005, there have been 26,787 partnerships formed. 8,728 of these were formed in 2007 (4,770 male and 3,958 female partnerships) (*Neighbourhood Statistics – Civil Partnerships*).

Department for Children, Schools and Families statistics show that 80 lesbian and gay couples adopted children in England in 2007-8 - down from 90 in 2006-7. The figures for heterosexual couples were 2,840 and 2,940 respectively. Single people can also adopt regardless of sexuality: the figures sit at about 300 for each of the two years. It is recognised that, historically, lesbian and gay adopters have been given harder-to-place and older children rather than babies.

Recent research carried out with the children of gay parents found that many children feel that differences in their families is something to be celebrated and most find that their friends are fine about them having gay parents. However, some do report having experienced bullying and that schools aren't always very good at doing something about it. (Different Families: The experiences of children with lesbian and gay parents 2010)

In the Gay and Grey survey (2006), 60% of respondents in Dorset reported experiencing some degree of isolation, with almost 10% reporting that they have no social life and 25% felt that they did not have adequate support networks. Respondents expressed a need to develop other ways of making social networks.

## **Participation, Influence and Voice** e.g. participation in decision making

3 in 5 LGB people think that they would face barriers if they wanted to be a parliamentary candidate for the Labour party, this rose to 90% for the Conservative party (*Stonewall.org.uk*).

A large majority of respondents in the South West "A Firmer Foundation" study disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "I think local government services are free from prejudice". Urban residents were more critical than rural residents. It is important to keep in mind that these are indicators of people's perceptions and not a measure of performance (*A Firmer Foundation, 2006*).

## **Identity, Expression and Self-Respect** e.g. Religion, Belief

Homophobia can be defined as 'the irrational hatred, intolerance and fear of LGB people'. Heterosexism is 'bias shown by a society or community where cultural institutions and individuals are conditioned to expect everyone to live and behave as heterosexuals'. While homophobia can cause the most obvious harm to LGB people, such as bullying and violent attacks, heterosexism can cause more subtle damage to self-image and self-esteem. (*Mind Factsheet 2009*)

In Dorset, almost half of those questioned in the 2006 Gay and Grey report (2006) felt really positive about being gay, but others had experienced devastating discrimination.

Homophobia can be a 'hidden agenda' as not everyone is happy to be 'out' in the community and many don't use the law to address their issues or to report crimes. Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people can experience a dual struggle due to fear of harassment/crime but also of declaring openly who they are in the community (*Bournemouth and Poole Equality and Diversity Forum, February 2009*).

## **Sources of Information Regarding Sexual Orientation:**

The following section provides links to local reports and datasets that offer further insight into the diverse nature of the varying age groups in Poole. However, it should be noted that due to population sizes and inconsistent data monitoring, the information available at local level is often limited. For more robust, national sources of equalities information, please refer to the Improvement and Development Agency '**Equality Evidence Base**', and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission '**Review of Equality Statistics**'.

## **Reports Providing Specific Information on Sexual Orientation**

**Lifting the Lid - Gay and Grey Report, 2006** explored the needs, experiences and aspirations of older lesbians and gay men in Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset between June 2003 and September 2006. Available [here](#).

**Pride, Progress and Transformation in the South West – Equality South West** – A survey conducted in 2010 to identify the real issues for LGB and Trans people living, working and visiting the South West Region. The results of this survey will be available [here](#).

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## [Reports Which Contain Analysis of Information By Sexual Orientation](#)

Not currently available for the local area

## [Reports on Sexual Orientation Relevant Services](#)

Not currently available for the local area.

## [Sexual Orientation Information Sources](#)

**Equalities South West** – Regional equality and diversity body and registered charity dedicated to promoting equality and diversity throughout the South West region.

<http://www.equalitysouthwest.org.uk>

**How Fair is Britain? Equalities and Human Rights commission** – The first review that examines how far what happens in people’s real lives matches up to the ideals of equality in Britain. The report brings together a range of sources including Census data, surveys and research. Report and supporting evidence available [here](#).

**Joseph Rowntree Foundation** - Independent development and social research charity, supporting a wide programme of research and development projects in housing, social care and social issues. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/>

**Knowledge Base, Equality South West Data Tool** - collates and disaggregates (where possible), by local area and by equality strand and socio-economic status, existing data from a wide range of reliable and widely used national data sets, and is capable of detailed interrogation and analysis for a range of local equality purposes. Available [here](#).

**Lesbian, Bisexual and Trans Women’s Services in the UK** – A report highlighting the key issues affecting different groups of lesbian, bisexual and trans women as well as providing a picture of the sector that supports these women. Available [here](#).

**Neighbourhood Statistics** – Allows you to find detailed statistics within specific geographic areas e.g. Local Authority, Ward, Super Output Area.

<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>

**Nomisweb** – service provided by the Office for National Statistics providing detailed and up-to-date UK labour market statistics. <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

**Office for National Statistics** - The Office for National Statistics produces independent information to improve our understanding of the UK's economy and society.

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/default.asp>

**Stonewall** – provides information and research to focusing on equality and justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people. <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

This paper is one in a series of seven profiling the Equalities Strands produced by the Corporate Research Team, Strategy Team, in line with I&Dea guidance on measuring equality at a local level. You can view the papers on disability, age, gender, ethnicity, faith and social inequalities [here](#).

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