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Care home challenge

Care home community advisors professional development

Ideas for promoting your LGBT-inclusiveness

1. Imagery

Use images of same-sex couples or the rainbow symbol, for example, in your publicity and promotional materials and reception area.

2. Language

Use the words lesbian, gay, bi or bisexual and trans or transgender wherever and whenever appropriate in your literature. The acronym LGBT is sometimes appropriate, but try not to use it by itself as some people don't understand it. Also ensure you use neutral terms such as 'partner', 'friend' or even 'the person most important to you' as well as husband and wife.

3. Media

Use the LGBT media, such as Pink News (www.pinknews.co.uk) for features about your organisation, human interest stories and maybe to promote volunteering opportunities. Include LGBT reading matter in your reception area. Older people, including older lesbian, gay, bi and trans people, are often also avid readers and listeners of local press and radio, so these can be useful vehicles for communicating your LGBT-inclusiveness.

4. Have a named contact

There are times, such as following a media feature, when having a named contact for LGBT callers can make a world of difference. Knowing they are going to speak to an LGBT-friendly person can help LGBT enquirers feel much more comfortable and confident about contacting you – especially knowing they won't have to explain why they're calling.

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5. Events

Events like LGBT History Month each February provide ideal opportunities to celebrate and educate. There are dozens of ways to mark a month like this, such as showing a film, a sing-along with your local Gay Men's Chorus or the Pink Singers, inviting a speaker or creating a display. These are the kinds of things you can do throughout the year, but LGBT History Month provides a great focus www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk

6. Partnerships

Make friends with a local lesbian, gay, bi and/or trans group – this might be a social group, telephone helpline, support group or anti-homophobic crime forum. The relationship can be mutually beneficial – as well as their being a source of expertise on your local LGBT community, they can help promote your service to the LGBT community.

7. Boards and advisory or user groups

Appoint an LGBT champion – it doesn't have to be a lesbian, gay, bi or trans person, just someone prepared to speak up about the issues.

Quiz

1. What percentage of the population is estimated to be lesbian, gay or bi? Both the UK Government and Stonewall use figures of 5-7%, while the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reckons it's 1.5% (actually even less for older people, down to 0.5%).

Discussion: Which figure do you think is more likely to be accurate? Why do you think the percentages differ by age? Do you think the numbers vary by location?

2. 956 arrests were made for homosexual 'offences' in 1938 – a typical year for the era. Can you guess what the figure was in 1952? 3,757 – an increase of 400%. Many more endured blackmail or agreed to undergo the supposed 'cures' (eg chemical castration, electro-aversion therapy) in order to avoid arrest or imprisonment

3. When was male homosexuality decriminalised in a) England and Wales 1967; b) Scotland 1980; c) Northern Ireland 1982?

4. In 1921 an unsuccessful attempt was made to criminalise lesbianism. Can you imagine why it failed? Ironically to protect impressionable women – politicians feared mere mention that it existed was likely to corrupt more women than it protected

5. When was being lesbian or gay de-classified as a mental disorder by the World Health Organisation? 1992

Discussion: Homosexuality as a criminal offence or mental disorder is very recent history and today's older LGB people have lived through enormous prejudice and social censure. 'Hostile until proven otherwise' can therefore be an understandable sentiment with regard to services and institutions – in other words we have to earn their trust.

7. A MORI poll on prejudice against minority groups was undertaken in 2001. In which age group do you think most individuals expressed a personal prejudice against LGBT people: 15+ 25+ 35+ 45+ 45+ 55+ or 65+? 65+ at 31%. Lowest was 25+ at 7%

Appendix 4: Selected training activities

Discussion: In the MORI poll familiarity, knowledge and especially personal contact with a lesbian, gay, bi or trans person, went significantly hand in hand with a reduction in prejudice, and the same applied to all groups about which people tended to feel negatively. In other words, attitudes can be changed.

Taking Affirmative Action

Individual action

- Learn about and understand the issues that matter to today's older lesbian, gay, bi and trans people, for example: housing and care; physical, mental and sexual health; being a carer; personal safety; couple and partnership rights; benefits, pensions and survivor rights; next of kin and medical decisions; wills and estate planning; spiritual needs.
- Read LGBT fiction, press, histories, biographies, research and web resources.
- Be aware of assumptions and generalisations you may make.
- Assume there are lesbian, gay, bi and trans people all around you, in your family and among your friends and work colleagues.
- Do not assume the person you are talking to is heterosexual.
- Use inclusive or neutral language when asking about relationships.
- Recognise that LGBT people are a diverse group – they are black and white, disabled and able-bodied, of organised faiths and of no faith, richer and poorer, older and younger and so on.
- Use the words lesbian, gay, bi and trans in positive ways, to normalise them and get people used to hearing them. Try not to use acronyms such as LGBT too much as some people do not understand what they mean.
- Challenge homophobic jokes and stories.
- Don't collude with gossip about other people's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Wear an AIDS awareness ribbon or LGBT-supportive badges at times such as World AIDS Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance and LGBT History Month.

Strategies for intervention: short exercises

How would you respond to these situations? Based on the six categories, what would be the most appropriate kinds of interventions?

1. A Sikh man who wears a turban joined your team while you were on leave. When you meet him he introduces himself as Raggy and, when you ask if that is short for anything, he tells you it is because one of the team called him 'Raghead'. As he didn't like that, in the spirit of compromise he agreed to being called Raggy
2. A local drop-in centre has refused to display one of your leaflets featuring two black people on the front and has returned the whole batch. They wearily state that as there are no black people in their area it does not apply to them and that being expected to display such leaflets is a prime example of 'political correctness gone mad'
3. You attend a public meeting at which a local councillor refers to 'the tranny group' on several occasions. You know there are Equality and Human Rights Commission staff present but so far no-one has said anything about this
4. At a multi-agency meeting in your area there is a man in a wheelchair. During the meeting the chair refers to him as the 'crip with a chip', at which all the participants laugh, including the man in the wheelchair
5. A colleague who has just joined your organisation says to you: 'Did you see that poster on the notice board about the gay group? I don't mind what people do in private but I really object to having that sort of thing thrust down my throat at work'
6. At a meeting someone asks: 'Why should I fill in the monitoring bit of our six-monthly report? All 60 places are filled in our centre and, as long as we don't discriminate, which we don't, what does it matter who comes?'

Assertiveness techniques

Three key techniques that can help when tackling difficult situations:

1. Be specific

Decide what it is you want or feel and say so specifically and directly. Avoid unnecessary padding and keep statements simple and brief

2. Repetition

This skill helps you stay with your statement or request by using calm repetition, over and over, without falling prey to the irrelevant comment or argumentative bait

3. Dealing with manipulation

To enhance communication, indicate you have heard what was said but don't allow yourself to be hooked in to the content. Continue confidently with what you were saying without feeling defensive or aggressive