

You are invited to

# OLDER

## SO Out Final Report

Do you identify as lesbian,  
gay, bisexual, transgender,  
queer, undecided, intersex?

Are you 50+?

Come along and enjoy fabulous  
food, creative informal discussion  
and meet like minded people.

Let us know what you think.

**Saturday 21st September**

**12 to 2pm**

Somerset Day Centre,  
62 St James's Street,  
Kemptown, Brighton.

(car parking off Lavender Street)

Call Lifelines on **01273 688117** for more information  
or email **hbashford@csv.org.uk** or just come along.



# Older & Out Event September 2013

The event took place on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September between 12 and 2pm at Somerset Day Centre (an existing day centre for older people in Kempdown). The main aim was to bring together members of the older LGBT community, primarily but not exclusively in Brighton and Hove, for an informal consultation and a fabulous lunch.

The purpose of the consultation was to explore, have a say in and shape opportunities and services both now and in the future for the older LGBT community in Brighton and Hove. The format of the day included talks from the main partners about current services and hopes for the future; an open space consultation where small groups were asked a series of 4 questions and invited to give feedback in this and other forms (such as writing on tablecloths); and a buffet lunch provided by Lunch Positive.

# 1. Summary

The event was a collaboration between MindOut, The Carer's Centre, Somerset Day Centre and Lifelines and assisted by volunteers Susan Goodwin and Felice Rhiannon.

It was well attended with a lively and informal atmosphere. Feedback from the day was that the event was very positive and a welcome idea. People stated that they were really pleased to have the opportunity to input and that they were excited by the potential of what might be achieved as a community. They felt that this was the start of something very exciting and vital about important issues which would ultimately affect everybody.

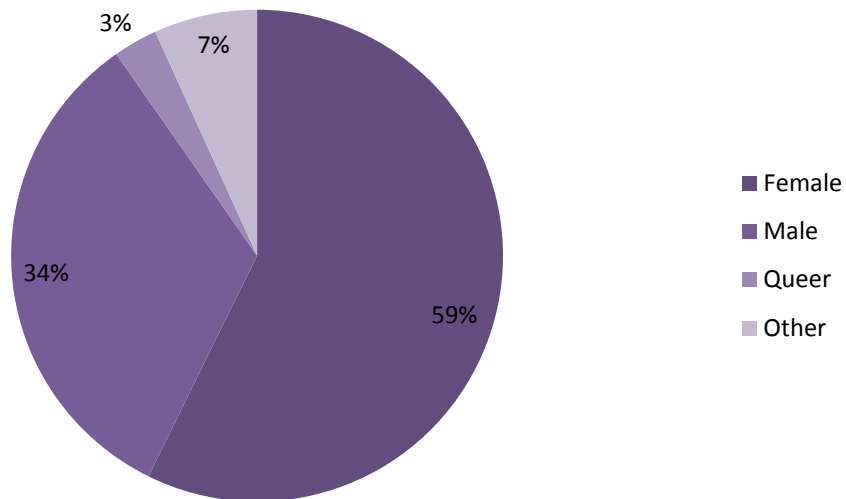
The main issues raised on the day were around building community and how to ensure that LGBT people are treated with understanding and dignity in old age. There was also a wealth of ideas put forward about the types of services that people would like to see for the older LGBT community, depending on funding and resources available.

Most people who attended the event saw it as the first step in what they hoped would be a series of consultation / planning events which would involve and engage the community at large.

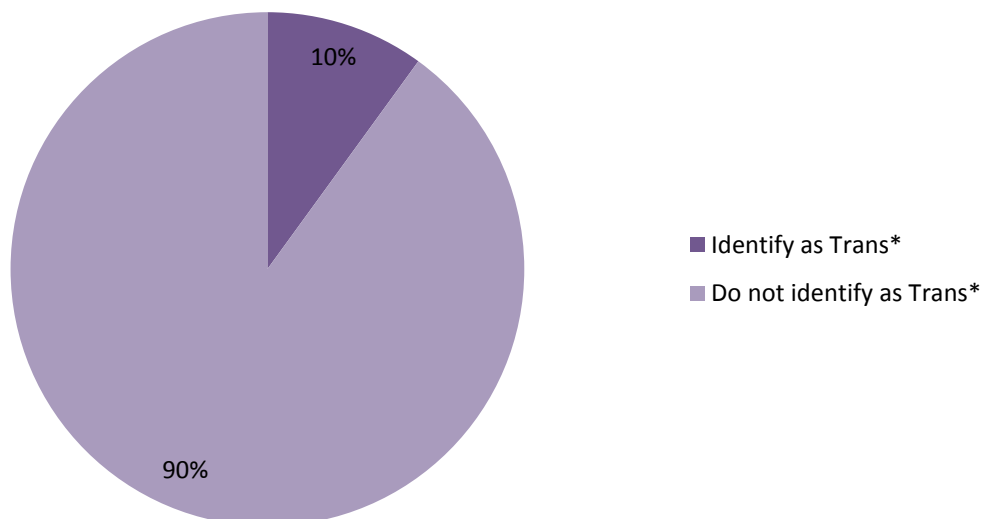
## 2. Demographics

The event was attended by 33 people with a mixture of ages, genders and sexuality. The demographic of those attending was as follows:

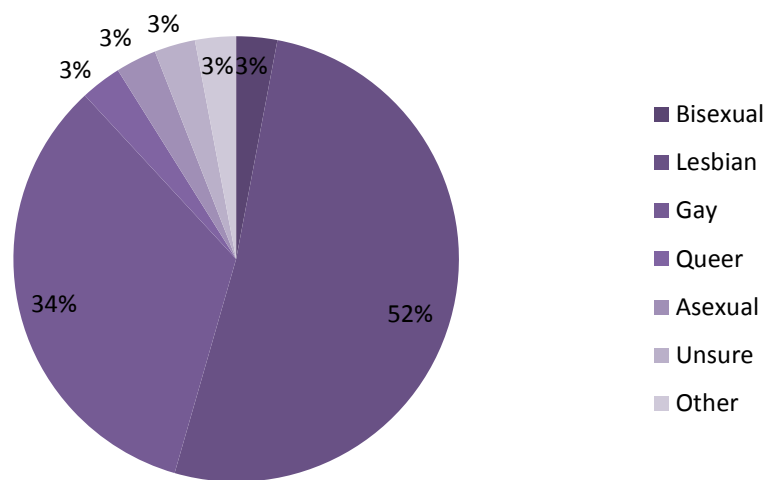
### Gender Identity



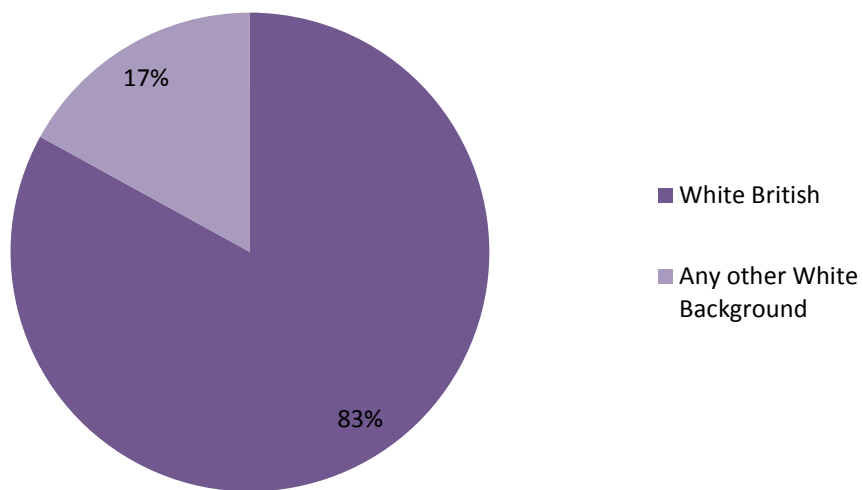
### Trans\* Identity



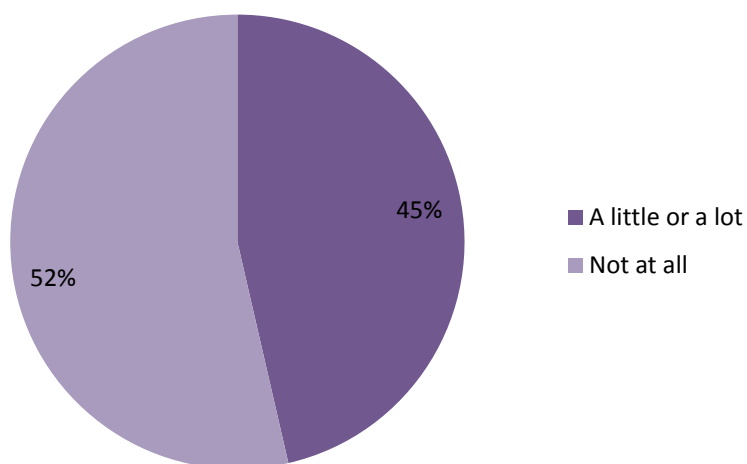
## Sexual Orientation



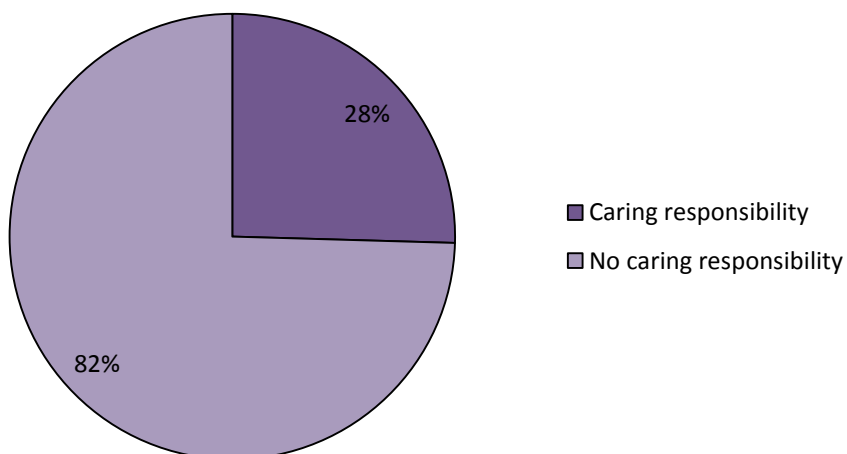
## Ethnicity



**Are your day-to-day activities limited by a health problem or disability?**



**Are you a Carer?**



The majority of attendees were from BN1, BN2 and BN3 postcodes but 2 people were from outside Brighton (Lewes and Worthing).

The average age of attendees was 62.

## 3. Responses

In the Open Space exercise, attendees were asked for their opinions on the following questions:

- Why do you live in Brighton? Why do you stay?
- What's your support network here? Do you support others?
- What do we want if we get some money?
- What can we do for ourselves and each other? What would you like?

### Why do you live in Brighton? Why do you stay?

By far the 2 dominant reasons that people gave for living and staying in Brighton were the feeling of acceptance, lack of prejudice and discrimination in Brighton and the quality of life. People felt that there was more support here, people were more accepting of LGBT identities which were not an issue here as in other places.

*'Cosmopolitan atmosphere – more accepting than most other cities'*

Quality of life, especially the sea and the LGBT scene were also important factors.

*'By the sea, easy going, accepting for friends, smallish size, walkable'*

*'Seaside, liberal, open good friends, feeling of it being a spiritual home'*

*'Healthier than London, less mad and busy and exhausting, near the countryside'*

Other reasons that brought people to Brighton and kept people here were family and other connections and the sense of having a support network of friends.

*Stay to keep the connections I've got – social, work, family  
Wonderful support network (friends)*

A couple of people had moved here from more rural areas needing to be somewhere less isolated as they grew older and a couple mentioned that the proximity to London was a positive factor about Brighton.

### What's your support network here? Do you support others?

Overwhelmingly, the main support networks for people were to be found in groups and from friends, rather than from families. People cited such groups as GEMS, Rainbow Chorus, MindOut, Lifelines, Clare Project and interest groups such as walking, reading, singing, climbing.

*'Network of friends not family'*

28% of people at the event reported that they had caring responsibilities (for foster children, grandchildren or older parents etc) and several people also reported that they supported others through various voluntary activities such as Lifelines or the Clare project.

Concerns were expressed about the lack of support networks in older age, especially since few people had children.

*'As you get older the worry is that the support networks aren't there – and not everyone has children'*

### **What do we want if we get some money?**

The majority view was the need for some kind of physical community space – either an LGBT centre, social centre, day centre or café. People wanted it to be mixed age, multi-purpose, friendly, safe, colourful and somewhere with atmosphere and character and close to transport links. Suggestions included a café or non-commercial daytime venue, a space offering support and information as well as a social centre and 'something other than a bar or club'.

The other main wish was for some kind of LGBT specific / friendly accommodation. Whilst the specifics varied, the main demands were for somewhere where people could have a level of support but still be independent. More importantly was the desire for it to be with 'like-minded people' or 'LGBT specific' so that people didn't feel the need 'to go back in the closet'

In terms of services, people wanted more interest and social groups such as film clubs, book groups, discussion groups, cookery, old age wellbeing etc. People also wanted money to be spent on LGBT carers or to already existing services such as GEMS, MindOut, Lesbian Link so that they could develop their support and services to the older LGBT community.

Some felt that money could be used for publicity and promotional materials, awareness raising and campaigning, and training for services or professionals around LGBT issues with the aim of changing attitudes towards older LGBT people especially amongst Sussex Partnership Trust staff / professional carers.

### **What can we do for ourselves and each other? What would you like?**

Building community, having a voice, sharing experiences and being accepted were all things that were raised as being important. People felt that they were currently being represented by mainstream organisations which may not necessarily know what they want. Input into the shape of LGBT services needs to come from the community itself.

Some people felt that the ageing process robbed them of a voice and welcomed the opportunity to reclaim that voice – advocating 'older and proud' campaigns for example.

People expressed the need for an older LGBT group that could act as a pressure group and consult with others but recognised that this would need amenities and a committee to support it.

In terms of building community people wanted both a physical space and groups that would encourage community. Suggestions included book clubs, theatre groups, oral history groups. Some wanted things in the evenings for people who work, some



preferred daytime activities, but mainly 'non-scene', with mixed age groups, and to include intellectually stimulating events.

There was some discussion, and some division around acceptance / segregation. Whilst people definitely wanted somewhere safe, non-discriminatory and somewhat separate, with like-minded people so that they didn't feel that they had to go back into the closet, people were also aware that they did not want to be in a ghetto or to feel segregated from society as a whole. They felt that the emphasis needed to be on breaking down barriers and narrowing the gap between LGBT and straight people rather than putting up a wall between the two communities.

Other ideas put forward under this heading were: a bus to take 'us' on days out or shopping, sex workshops for older people, a fund to make bequests to, a web based central information bank and crowd-sourcing from the LGBT community as a means of raising funds.

### **Other issues not specifically covered in the open space questions:**

The issue of care in older age was raised. Feedback was that people wished to be supported / cared for by like-minded people.

Hopes and expectations for care services in the short term were for day centres for LGBT people, places where people could have 'the freedom to be' which might necessarily have to be segregated for now. Home carers should be educated about the importance of recognising and valuing difference in personal care for LGBT people. There was a wish for carers to be valued to a greater degree (with better pay and conditions). Sheltered housing with individual and group space was also important.

In the longer term there were hopes for LGBT (even gender specific) care homes, carers who identified as LGBTQ, an NHS LGBT nursing home and, above all, choices, respect and safety. Care facilities should focus not just on physical care but on mental care and spiritual needs. The 'fantasy care setting' was described as 'homes with small gardens in an LGBTQ community with shared nurses, carers, cleaners etc'. (However it should also be noted that others expressed a preference not to be given an LGBT label and to be treated as a person first).

As far as carers were concerned, people would prefer to be handled by same sex carers and by people who understand 'our individual needs as queers'.

### **Other miscellaneous comments:**

- include a laughter session at the next meeting of this sort
- Apply to the Rainbow fund now for a community bus
- Option to choose LGBT carers if support needed at home
- Lesbian speed dating for over 50s
- Online or telephone community so older LGBT people can contact someone anytime day or night
- Training for all carers now in 'LGBT awareness'
- Rest places in town

- Old dykes home – not just an old folks home but independent living within a co-operative outer form
- To found a co-operative infrastructure with a plan and an agreement to provide a co-operative structure for LGBT people which allows independent living and protects us for the lifetime of all those who live within it
- Publicity – advertise LGBT friendly services in bus shelters, shops, post offices
- Services – especially Health and Social Care and Housing to have different choices – some LGBT, some mixed, some inter-age but all fully accepting, trained and open to all LGBT people
- Not enough advertising for this meeting – in future could try putting it in the Friday Argus 'What's happening in Brighton' plus at other LGBT meetings

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Feedback from participants pointed to the following key areas for action or consideration:

### 1. Continued consultation amongst the community

The event seemed to be very well received and overall there was a resounding wish for people to be included in an on-going consultation process and to have a say in their own futures.

### 2. Education and awareness raising amongst the caring professions

There was a level of fear expressed by people around how they are cared for and who by, and a need identified for carers to be educated on LGBT using people's own experiences.

### 3. A space to meet and build community

There were various suggestions as to how to do this and what it might look like but there was unanimous agreement that a physical space in which to build community was necessary.