

LGB&T Training

LGB&T Terminology

The first exercise of the day focussed on the correct use of LGB&T terms in a professional environment. Studying a list of terms we categorized these into 'acceptable', 'sometimes acceptable' or 'unacceptable'. Whilst some terms were easily identified as acceptable such as 'lesbian' and 'gay' and some as unacceptable such as 'fag', others caused more discussion. For example the term 'queer', whilst derogatory for many people, is used by some to define themselves and is therefore acceptable in these circumstances. Terms beginning with 'trans' also necessitated explanation; the trainers highlighted that the various terms shouldn't be used interchangeably and also to be aware that these terms do not tell us anything about a person's sexual orientation.

What skills do CVS' need to support LGB&T group?

We discussed the role that CVS' should play in relation to supporting LGB&T groups. It was felt that whilst CVS' ought to have a degree of knowledge about LGB&T issues, they don't need to have in-depth specialised services for LGB&T groups but rather the broad support that they offer must be accessible to them. The potential for the LGB&T Consortium and CVS' to work together was discussed. The Consortium hopes to introduce people to CVS' so as to access their skills, whilst CVS' could access the consortium for specialist information such as up-to-date statistics.

Barriers and challenges for LGB&T access to CVS services

The main barriers identified were inaccurate perceptions of LGB&T issues and lack of knowledge. Misunderstandings such as a lack of awareness of the appropriate terminology to use can result in a lack of confidence in service delivery as well as an unaccommodating service if terminology is used incorrectly. Another barrier identified, derived again from lack of knowledge, is the pattern of referral loops whereby it is common for CVS' to refer LGB&T groups to specialised LGB&T services when in fact it is broad support on issues such as governance or funding that the group is seeking. As a result the LGB&T services often refer them back to the CVS, resulting in a situation where the group's needs are not met. In addition to a lack of awareness, it was also noted that discriminatory attitudes can undermine professionalism and ostracise LGB&T groups from services. Another important issue raised was the challenge of reaching people from BAME backgrounds, where in some cases difficulties accessing services may be compounded by cultural norms that define being gay as socially unacceptable.

Making services inclusive

We discussed ways of overcoming the barriers above and other ways to make CVS' as inclusive as possible for LGB&T groups. These included ensuring that CVS' are visible to LGB&T groups via out-reach initiatives such as advertising services in LGB&T press and websites, using case studies to demonstrate that the organisation helps LGB&T groups, using LGB&T symbols in promotional materials and assessing recruitment processes for LGB&T reach. The correct and confident uses of language as a tool for inclusivity was emphasized by the trainer, as well as the avoidance of making assumptions about people's lifestyles or sexuality simply because they are involved with an LGB&T group. Other ways of ensuring inclusivity suggested by the trainer were offering a confidential service if this is deemed

appropriate for their needs and providing gender neutral facilities where possible so as to accommodate people who identify as trans or gender queer.

Discussion

There was discussion about the acronym LGB&T and whether or not it accommodates all identities (such as gender queer). The trainer explained that the consortium aims to meet the needs of all under this term and making the term more complex may be detrimental to government engagement. The introduction of ‘&’ into the acronym has been added to ensure that ‘trans’ is differentiated from LGB.

The issue of conflicting equalities was raised, such as a conflict between LGB&T and faith whereby a faith based organisation may not accommodate LGB&T issues. When working with these groups it was thought that the best strategy is to emphasize the legal compliance to accommodate LGB&T. Whilst it is not the role of the CVS to change people’s beliefs, placing impetus on equalities requirements can help to mediate this conflict.

Resources

- The LGB&T Consortium has recently launched a new website www.LGBTlondon.com. This useful resource provides borough profiles which include local equalities schemes, political make-up and useful contacts; as well as news & events pages, blogs & resources and a directory of all the LGB&T groups across London.
- Kairos in Soho have recently published an almanac based on a sample of 89 organisations in London which focussed on equalities and LGB&T community of identity organisations (LGB&T organisations working on specific equality issues such as disability and race). A key finding was the resource disparity between LGB&T groups and LGB&T community of identity organisations. To view the report or to order a hard copy click [here](#).