



University of Brighton

**Community
University
Partnership
Programme**

**On our
doorsteps**

Seed Funded Projects Self-evaluation Report

1. Brief Description of Project

LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex builds on a successful Equalities Forum held in February 2010, organized by the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance (HRRA) and supported by the University of Brighton, and on previous research on LGBT lives in the area, the 'Go Hastings!' report (Fairley & Noudjem 2004). In the past, interaction between LGBT communities and local services and providers has not necessarily resulted in positive action for change or response to identified needs. In response, this project offers a timely intervention into the local context.

The project aims to improve the lives of LGBT people in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex by:

- creating strategic networks between academic institutions, local communities and services;
- impacting on the awareness and decision-making of local elected representatives, suppliers of services and employers;
- extending community partners' engagement with services, public bodies etc;
- augmenting academic work in the area of LGBT lives beyond the metropolis.

2. Project Progress

The original proposal planned an initial activity phase (Phase One) comprising of 4 activities. Phase One is supported by On Our Doorsteps and takes place within its lifetime. However, the project also supported the potential development of another series of activities (Phase 2) – larger projects which could draw on the key partnerships and trust developed through Phase One.

Phase One

1. Organising a series of meetings/action learning sets with specific aims and tangible outcomes, with an initial meeting on the 19th May 2010.
2. Developing and enacting a mapping exercise to identify pockets of excellence (as well as gaps) in local LGBT-related policies and practices.
3. Setting up a website forum where LGBT equality-related questions could be posed and answered in ways that address local contexts but also draw on national and international data.

4. Further academic insights into service provision and policy/practice excellence beyond specific metropolises, thus questioning the assumption that only metropolitan areas are engaging with their LGBT populations.

Phase Two

1. Using action learning sets to pursue further potential partnership work, identified in Phase One, in targeted ways.
2. Reviewing current literature, available toolkits and good practice elsewhere to recommend mechanisms to ensure local public organizations can be held accountable by (and learn from) LGBT people.
3. Assessing potential and desire for future community/university partnership projects examining gender and sexual differences in East Sussex.
4. Exploring funding options for a PhD project focusing on the priorities of the partner group (HARRA).

Regarding **Phase One**, actions 1, 2 and 4 are continuing successfully, while action 3 has not been undertaken.

The series of meetings in Action 1 has been running on a roughly monthly basis since the initial meeting – there have been 11 meetings so far and are continuing. The list of forum members includes academics, students, community group representatives, activists, interested individuals, representatives of public services and representatives from the voluntary sector. Attendees vary from meeting to meeting, though all are kept up to date via the extensive and growing mailing list. The most frequent elements of meetings include: sharing information about equalities work and best practice; sharing information about local LGBT-related issues; and developing and implementing the mapping exercise (Action 2). These meetings have been very well-received, with numerous attendees commenting on their usefulness and the feeling of common purpose they create. The discussions at the meetings are always detailed and cast a light on the complexity of LGBT equalities in the county – because of this, ethical approval was sought and won to audio record the meetings, so that this important qualitative data might not be lost. This data will be used to inform future LGBT-related research in the local area.

The mapping exercise comprising Action 2 is nearing completion. A questionnaire suite (including general and organisation-bespoke questions) was developed through the forum meetings and via email and face-to-face meetings between these. Community groups and public service representatives advised on policy areas to be covered, services to send the questionnaire to and potential contacts at these services. Once the data was compiled by the academic researchers, the forum attendees worked in partnership to analyse the data and to make recommendations stemming from the report. It is expected that the report will be launched officially in early November, at an event organised by the LGBT Equalities Forum.

As an initial engagement with Action 4, a book chapter outlining the project and issues arising through it has been submitted for inclusion in the forthcoming 'Sexuality, Rurality and Geography' edited by Andrew Gorman-Murray. This will be written by the two academic researchers, Dr Kath Browne and Nick McGlynn. Further academic work resulting from the project is expected in the future.

The creation of the website as detailed in Action 3 was the subject of discussion at a number of forum meetings throughout 2010. It was agreed that using volunteers

from the University of Brighton, via the Active Student programme, would be a good way to encourage the university to connect with local LGBT communities. However, the general consensus of the forum attendees was that such a resource would not be used. Other types of resource, such as mailing lists and social networking sites, were discussed, but enthusiasm and desire for this kind of resource was simply not evident. At the moment it is planned that discussions about a web resource will be had again once the mapping exercise is complete.

Regarding **Phase Two**, Action 4, the potential PhD project focused on the same area and issues is now underway, with funding secured for one of the academic researchers, Nick McGlynn. This PhD began in January 2011 under the working title 'Life in the Shadow of the Gay Capital: lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) lives, communities and service provision in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex'. This will help sustain and grow university connections and investment in the area.

3. Partnership working

As previously stated the LGBT Equalities Forum attracts a very wide spectrum of attendees. The main partners for the project are the University of Brighton and the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance (HRRRA), but other key stakeholders include:

- Sussex Police
- Hastings Borough Council
- Wealden District Council
- East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care
- East Sussex County Council Children's Services
- East Sussex County Council Library and Information Services
- Rother District Council
- NHS Hastings & Rother
- Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust
- CRI Young People's Service
- Care for the Carers
- Hastings Voluntary Action
- East Sussex Fire & Rescue

Partnership work took place via the two main actions of the project – the LGBT Equality Forum meetings and the mapping exercise. Regarding the former, while the academic partners organised and chaired the meetings, other partners contributed items for the agenda, raised important local LGBT issues for discussion, and shared their specialist knowledge regarding these issues with the other forum attendees. Regarding the latter, forum attendees worked alongside the academic partners to develop the mapping exercise questionnaire, to identify organisational contacts, to analyse the data and to formulate recommendations based on the findings. Once more, the forum attendees brought to bear their own specialist knowledge regarding LGBT issues and equality policies in the local public sector.

Additional partnership work took place through the academic partners' consulting with the HRRRA committee regarding the February 2011 HRRRA community event, 'Out and Proud', which celebrated LGBT people as active citizens.

Future partnership work will take place through the planning and implementation of an LGBT community event in November 2011, at which the mapping exercise will also be launched. Together with the academic partners, forum attendees have

developed a questionnaire to highlight local LGBT equality issues, suggested a model of round-table discussions for the event, and those from local public services will offer information regarding their LGBT equality policies at the event. This event may be held in the future, potentially on a bi-annual basis, to follow up on issues raised by local LGBT communities.

Aside from the vital funding, CUPP contributed volunteers to take minutes at meetings of the LGBT Equality Forum, which was vital before the audio recording of these meetings and allowed the academic partners to engage with the discussions.

4. Neighbourliness

The partnerships developed through this project worked to improve networks between the university, local communities in the Hastings and Rother areas, and local public services. They also encouraged a shift in focus for academic studies of sexualities, moving away from urban metropolises and recognising the important and distinctive LGBT equality work going on in non-urban areas of deprivation, such as the Hastings area.

5. Outputs

Thus far the project has produced or will shortly produce 4 distinct outputs:

- Mapping exercise initial findings report;
- LGBT community event (early November) + community questionnaire;
- Conference paper (RGS/IBG Annual Conference 2011) by Nick McGlynn based on the PhD research stemming from this project;
- Book chapter outlining the project and issues arising through it, to be included in the forthcoming 'Sexuality, Rurality and Geography' edited by Andrew Gorman-Murray.

6. Outcomes

- Increased partnership work, knowledge exchange and improved networking amongst partners from academic, public, voluntary and community sectors via the LGBT Equalities Forum meetings;
- Furthering LGBT community's knowledge of local public services' LGBT policy 'promises'.
- Providing assistance for local LGBT communities wishing to hold their public services to account regarding LGBT equality.
- Improving local public services' knowledge and awareness of LGBT community.
- Furthering academic awareness of LGBT equalities and issues beyond 'the metropolis'.
- Further research on LGBT lives and needs in the local area through PhD project.

7. Longer term knowledge exchange work

The connections and relationships developed as part of this project should be sustained and developed through the PhD project which has stemmed from it, also producing new opportunities for knowledge exchange between partners.

It is hoped that the LGBT Equalities Forum meeting will be able to be continued in some form once the seed funding has expired, thus sustaining the important networking and knowledge sharing opportunities these meetings create.

As discussed in section 3, the forthcoming LGBT community event may be repeated on an annual or biannual basis, allowing local LGBT communities to hold public services to account for policies and promises detailed in previous meetings, and improving services' awareness of local LGBT needs and issues.

8. Statement of Income and Expenditure

There were no discrepancies. The monies were spent on:

- Research assistance for Nick McGlynn
- Support for Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance
- Refreshments for meetings

9. Quantitative evaluation

- Number of people involved in the partnership – see Section 3, above, for the institutions involved
- Number of people involved in events/workshops you have run - including the conference which we co-hosted, c.200.
- Numbers of people who have benefitted from the activities you have undertaken - this is impossible to quantify.
- Numbers of hours the partners have worked on the project:
 - This varied by month, but approximately 5-7 hours per month over the course of the project for project partners (this time is always voluntary);
 - Nick McGlynn worked one day a week from July-December 2010 and since January 2011 has worked full time on this research;
 - Kath Browne works 5-10 hours a month on this research.