

Report on the Housing and Support Needs of Older Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) People in Sheffield

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To highlight the consultation undertaken by the Housing Independence Service (HIS) to look at the housing and support needs of older Lesbians, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) people in Sheffield.
- 1.2 To report on the findings of this work and the associated research.
- 1.3 To make recommendations about meeting the housing and support needs of older LGB people in Sheffield.

2. Background

- 2.1 Between 5 – 7%¹ of the older people population in the United Kingdom are LGB (based on retirement ages for men & women)
- 2.2 In 2009, HIS conducted an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) which identified a gap in the understanding of the needs and requirements of older people in the LGB community. Unlike some of the other minority groups within our community, where there is a wide range of research and legislation covering the sector, there is relatively low awareness of the issues facing people in the LGB group. This position reflected that seen in other parts of the country.
- 2.3 Along with other Local Authorities, Sheffield City Council has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010², to outlaw unlawful discrimination against a person or group of people because of their Protected characteristics which include amongst others “gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation” The Act defines unlawful discrimination in three main ways:
 - Direct discrimination.
 - Indirect discrimination
 - Harassment
- 2.4 With regards to the LGB group, the EIA gives the chance to highlight their needs, what impact the project or policy will have on them and what actions are to be taken to address them.
- 2.5 It is anticipated that the information that is provided in this report will give a clearer understanding of the needs that

¹ ILC Housing Issues Affecting Older Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual People in the UK: A Policy Brief, November 2008

² HQN equality and diversity briefings The implications of the Equality Act, May 2010, Jeffery and Seager

older people in the group have with regards to their housing and support.

The Study:

2.6 The study involved:

- A desktop review of research relevant to the LGB community
- Discussions with individuals of all ages from covering the Gay Men and Lesbian groups in one to one interviews
- Meetings with professionals from Sheffield City Council, NHS Sheffield and the Voluntary Sector who are working in the equalities framework
- On line and paper questionnaire – see Appendix 1
- Holding a Focus Group attended by 10 gay men.

3. Research Evidence

- 3.1 There is relatively little research available in Britain that focuses specifically on the housing and support needs of the LGB older people. What has been produced tends to either be in areas where there are large LGB communities i.e. Brighton, or carried out by specialist organisations i.e. Stonewall - the Lesbian, gay and bisexual charity.
- 3.2 Brighton & Hove City Council produced their “LGB Peoples Housing Strategy”³ which addresses a variety of citywide issues. The research they used to inform the strategy found that in comparison to straight people, those in the LGB community had particular housing issues such as the risk of homelessness, difficulties finding homes where support could be given from the LGB community and the risk of harassment and hate crime. Brighton found that amongst the group, there was a higher than usual level of mental health problems along with domestic violence and abuse. They have therefore worked in partnership with community groups and individuals to get a better understanding of their needs and enable them to better plan services to meet the requirements of the LGB people in the city.
- 3.3 Stonewall⁴ carried out a specific piece of research in partnership with Communities Scotland in 2004 that concentrated on the housing & support needs of older LGB people. They also found that a majority of people felt that they could experience barriers to accessing quality

³ LGB (Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans) People’s Housing Strategy executive summary, 2009

⁴ Précis A summary series of recent research from Communities Scotland No 67

services i.e. Residential Care. It was also felt that the service they received depended on the staff and individuals who were delivering the service. There was also a clear preference for services to deliver in the person's own home, rather than specialist units.

- 3.4 Other pieces of research have confirmed that LGB elders generally wanted to remain in their own homes, with care being provided there as long as possible. There seems to be a general fear of the possible "homophobia of staff" in care & sheltered homes which can result in them "going back into the closet"⁵. This type of situation can obviously have a negative effect on their quality of life. (ILC November 2008)

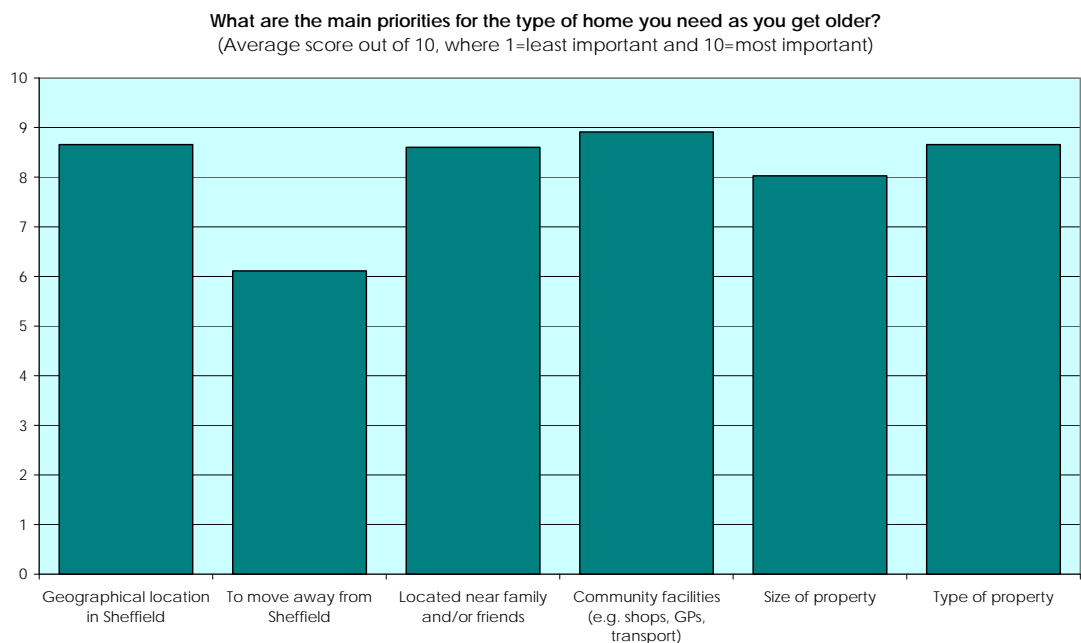
4. Questionnaire Results

- 4.1 In order to get as wide a view point as possible, a questionnaire was produced for completion by people from the LGB group. The format of the questionnaire was arrived at through contributions from staff in the Equalities Sections on the Council, along with input from representative groups and LGB individuals. The questionnaire could be accessed by people in two ways:
- Paper versions sent to LGB members within both the Local Authority and NHS Sheffield.
 - Electronic version placed on the Council's Intranet Home Page.
- 4.2 Both formats were used, with the electronic method proving to be the most popular.
- 4.3 People were given options and asked to either rank them in line with their preferences or presented with a yes or no choice.
- 4.4 A total of 35 responses were received with 13 being women and 6 of the total respondents, declaring themselves as having a disability. The table below gives a breakdown of the age profile of the people who completed the questionnaires:

⁵ Chapter 6: The housing needs of older people from the LGB community

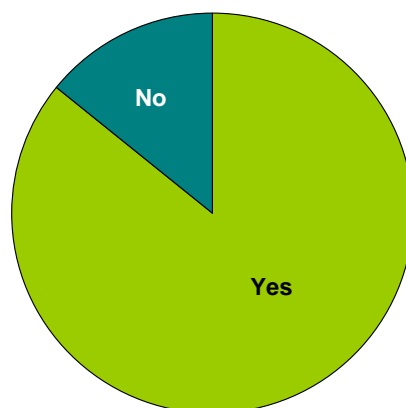
Age	No.
20-30	3
31-40	7
41-50	13
51-60	3
61-70	2

4.5 The replies show that as people get older, the ability to remain in Sheffield, where their friends, peers and contacts are, is one of the key factors in making decisions about their home. The size, type and location of the property all have relatively equal importance.

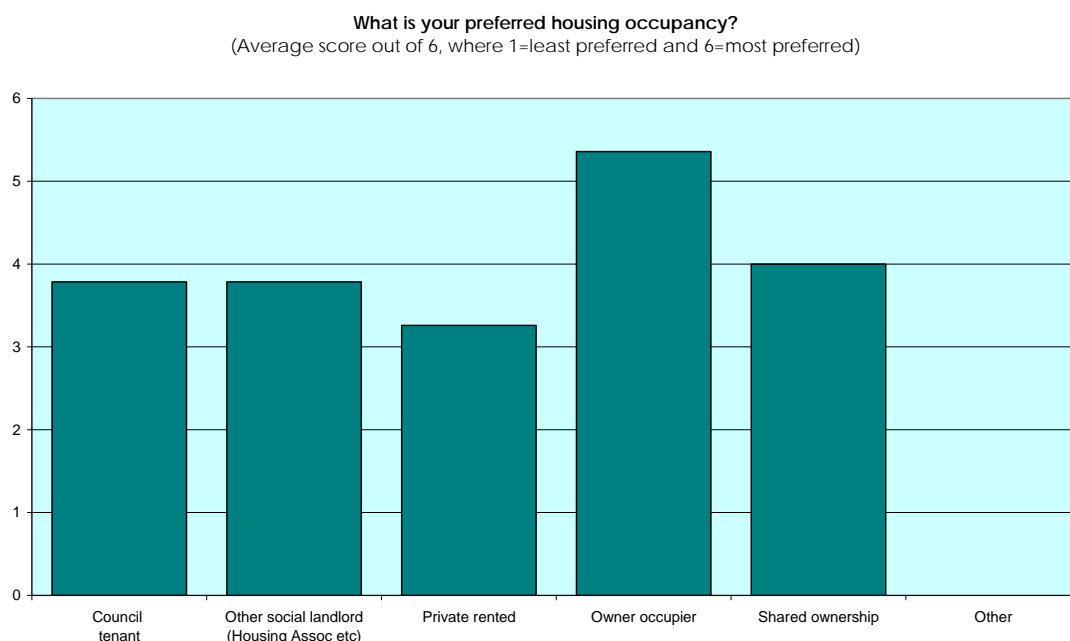


4.6 It was also interesting to note that 86% people felt that as they got older, their views with regards to the type of housing they choose would change.

Do you think your housing preference will change depending on what age you are?

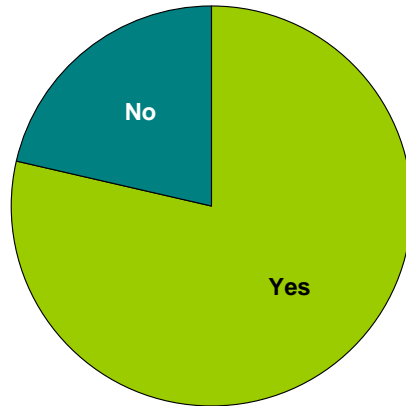


4.7 When they were asked what their preferred tenure would be, owner occupation was the most popular choice, as it was seen as providing greater security as they grew older.



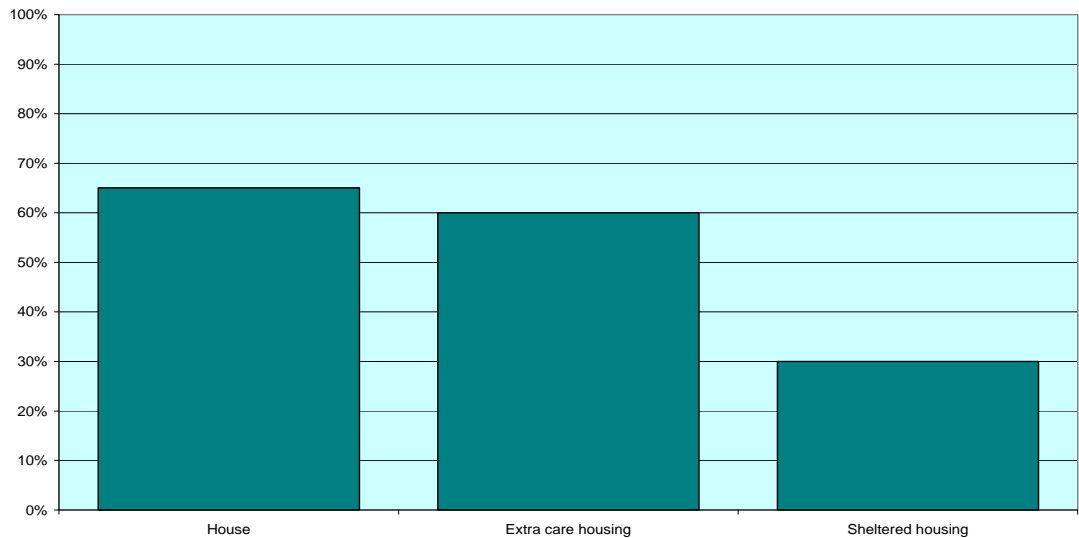
4.8 In relation to the question of whether people would like to live with other members of the LGB community, the responses to the Questionnaire, which were from a mixed gender profile, provided a different perspective from that given by the members of the all male Focus Group. Whereas the outlook from Group discussions was that it would be beneficial to live in a specialised gay housing, where support could be given by peers, the questionnaire showed a large majority – 79% - against this choice, with only 1 in 5 being in favour (see below). There was a general feeling that people would benefit from living in a “mixed community”, both in terms of age and lifestyle.

Would you like to live in accommodation with other members of the LGBT community?



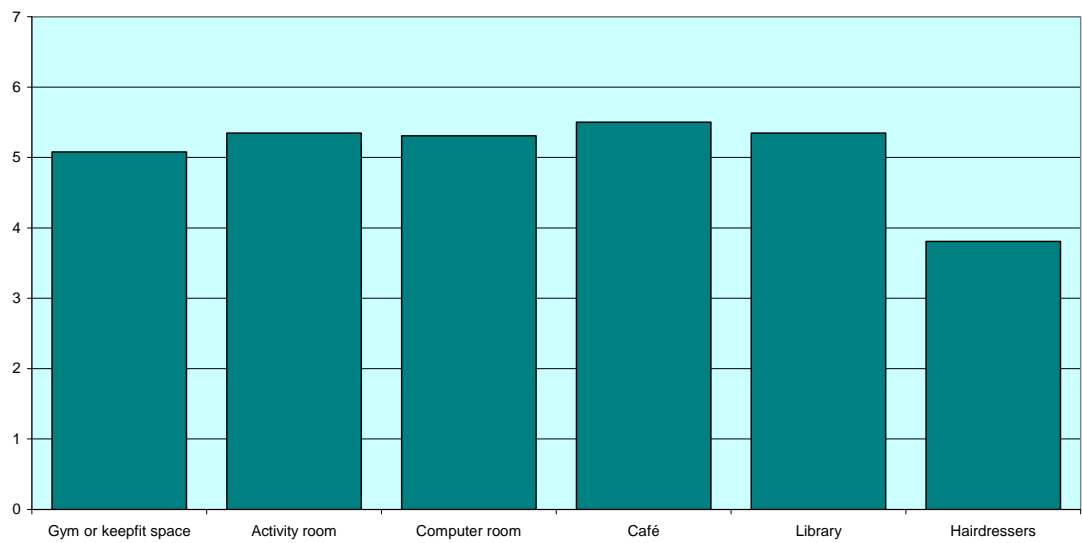
4.9 When asked about the type of accommodation and facilities provided, there was general agreement from both groups, that a traditional house was the preferred choice. The strong support expressed in the discussions in the Focus Group were mirrored in the Questionnaire, where 65% of those who returned the questionnaire choose a house as their preferred option.

What type of accommodation would you like to live in?



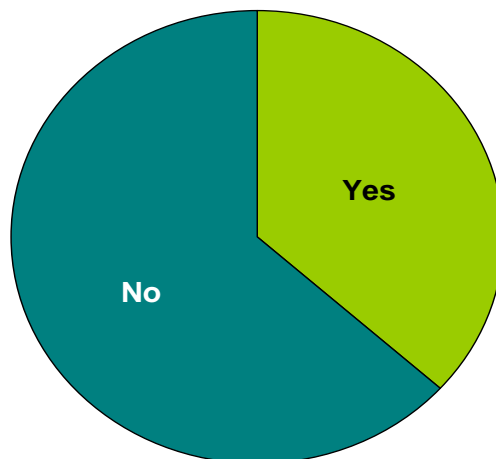
Furthermore, the questionnaire showed that if available, 60% would also like to live in an Extra Care Housing scheme. The Focus Group members would also like the chance to live in a LGB themed ECH Scheme, but added that the provision of café was important for whatever type of development was produced. This would provide a focus point for members of the group, where they could meet and share information.

What are the key leisure features that you feel are important in any housing development for older people?
(Average score out of 7, where 1=least important and 7=most important)



4.10 One area where there was agreement with the Focus Group was in relation to the importance of security, with 1 in 4 respondents to the questionnaire having suffered from difficulties in their neighbourhood.

Have you experienced any difficulties in your current living environment or its surrounding neighbourhood?



5. Focus Group

5.1 The Focus Group was held at “The Circle” with a group of 10 White British gay men aged between 31 - 47. The aim was to have a discussion around a number of key points that would assist in the examination of how best to deliver the housing and services the LGB Group need. The questions put to the Group were:

- a) When you reach “older age” what type of accommodation would you prefer to live in? I.e. House,

flat, bungalow, communal building. Would you have a preference as to the tenure that you live in as an older person? I.e. Owner Occupation, Private Rented, Social Rented, Shared Ownership.

- b) What do you see as your key housing requirements as you grow older? i.e. Security, gardens, facilitates, community,
- c) What other services do you see as a priority in older age? i.e. Public transport, refuse/rubbish collection, access to retail outlets, housing support.
- d) Is the provision of care and support in your home a key requirement as you get older? I.e. on site care team to meet your needs, provision of care when required from off site team, housing support provided at home.
- e) What features would you like to see in your home? I.e. alarm service, internet access as an option, adjustable units.
- f) Are there any other concerns/fears/barriers that you have as a LGB person in choosing/finding/moving into housing i.e. harassment, discrimination or lack of social networking?

5.2 Whilst the majority of those present were under the age of 55, they all had views as to how they would want to live when they reached that age. There was a general concern across the group about the fear of being left alone and the isolation that could lead to. The feeling was that their situation would mean that they would have to rely on peer support and that this would be best delivered in a specialised housing unit for gay men. This would allow care and support to be provided in one place, with the possibility of fellow residents providing informal support. There was a view that this was similar to that in certain BME groups who would require their own space as they get older.

5.3 These points led the group to look in more detail at the different choices they had in older age with regards to supported housing. There was a general concern that a move into housing schemes such as sheltered housing, could result in them living in fear of victimisation – both from residents and staff - if their sexuality was known. This would then lead to them having to hide their feeling which would have a detrimental effect on their lifestyle. It was therefore felt that people needed to be challenged more as

to their homophobia and there needed to be more publicity to promote the LGB community.

- 5.4 When the discussion moved onto what were the key requirements in older age, being part of a community was seen as pivotal to them been secure. This would also facilitate social networking and give the opportunity to mix with other groups. It was seen as important that we did not create an “older persons ghetto” but had somewhere where people of all ages could mix. The access to the internet from their home would also assist with all these issues, enabling people who may not be mobile to be part of the network.
- 5.5 Some points were made as to the importance of the location of housing. People felt that due to the specialist needs that exist within the group, they need to be housed either in or near to the city centre. This would give them easier access to the services that members of then group require on a regular basis.
- 5.6 Once people are housed in appropriate accommodation, it was felt that provision of the right level of service to allow them to remain there was a key requirement. This would involve the correct adaptations been provided along with care and support as and when required.

6. Individual Views

- 6.1 In an attempt to supplement the information that was to be derived from the Questionnaires & Focus Group, a number of discussions were held with individuals from the LGB Group. This gave a personal view on the issues that they saw as important to them within a particular section of the LGB community.
- 6.2 One point that ran through discussions in different sections of the community was that the issues they faced varied depending on which group they were in.
- 6.3 From a Lesbian perspective, there was a feeling that unlike Gay men who have a focal point such as Shout, where they can meet and socialise, there were no such facility for them. It was felt that as things such as luncheon clubs do not have an environment in which LGB people would feel comfortable to be honest about their sexuality, there was a need to provide designated housing with areas where meetings could take place with like minded people. This

would also provide the chance to hold leisure activities and entertainment in a safe environment.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 Although the sample consulted was relatively small, the results of the questionnaire were consistent in showing that the vast majority of people want to live in a bungalow or house when they are older.
- 7.2 Whilst the actual size of the property does not seem important – unlike in the heterosexual community where older people ask for more space - factors such as been located near to friends and communal facilities does seem important.
- 7.3 This supports the findings of other research referred to in this report which highlights the importance of been close to peers, especially when the family network may have broken down.
- 7.4 One area where there is an overwhelming support for one choice is in the kind of housing tenure people want. As in the heterosexual community, the vast majority of people state that when they get older, they want to own their own home.

8. Recommendations

The recommendations from this report are that:

- 8.1 The views highlighted in this report are taken on board when looking at the actions that are needed in the provision of a service to older people from the LGB group. This may include raising awareness around Self Directed Support in the LGB community and the opportunities personal choice provides to access services to meet the needs of individual needs.
- 8.2 The choices and preferences with regards to types of housing that are discussed here, are taken on board when looking at the provision of housing.
- 8.3 The issues raised with regards to the harassment that LGB elders can face in supported older people's housing, are looked at with a view to ensuring that managers, staff and fellow residents are educated as to the needs of the group. This may include raising awareness in the LGB community about how Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) policies tackle harassment and how care providers are strictly monitored

through contract management to safeguard residents from anti - LGB related behaviour.

8.4 in order to share the information contained in the report as widely as possible, is taken to:

- Housing Independence Service Programme Board
- Sheffield City Councils LGB Multi Agency Group
- Sheffield's LGB Staff Network
- Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board

Resources

- ILC Housing Issues Affecting Older Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual People in the UK – A Policy Brief
- LGB (Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans) Peoples Housing Strategy 2009 - 2014 – Executive Summary
- HQN equality and diversity briefing the implications of the Equality Act May 2010-08-31
- PRECIS A summary series of recent research from Communities Scotland No. 67 Housing and Support needs of Older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB) people and to develop a good practise guidance for the providers and users of housing and support services.
- Sheffield City Council Draft Single Equality Scheme 2009 - 2012
- Out and Healthy – an introduction to older lesbians, gay men and bisexuals on healthy ageing – Age Concern