

## **Executive Summary: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGB&T) Health Needs Assessment**

### **Introduction**

This health needs assessment was undertaken as part of Northern, Eastern and Western Devon Clinical Commissioning Group's (NEW Devon CCG) participation in the Stonewall Health Champions programme 2013-14. The scope was widened to take a Devon-wide approach (the area covered by Devon, Torbay and Plymouth local authorities), taking into account differences between the areas where the data was available. The scope covers lesbian, gay, bisexual *and* transgender people, while recognising that sexual orientation and gender identity are distinct protected characteristics.

### **Aim**

The health needs assessment seeks to increase the healthy life expectancy of the LGB&T population in Devon and reduce the health inequalities that exist between these groups and the wider population. It should be the first step in a process of ongoing work and development.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this Health Needs Assessment were:

- To describe the current health needs of LGB&T people in Devon;
- To assess the provision of, access to and utilisation of healthcare by these groups, identifying barriers and opportunities for improvement;
- To put forward considerations for further work to improve the health, and access to healthcare of LGB&T people in Devon;
- Identify opportunities to improve what is / is not known about the health needs of LGB&T people.

### **Methods**

The health needs assessment incorporated the following methods:

- Table-top literature search reviewing secondary research;
- Analysis of local data where available;
- Qualitative input from local stakeholders;
- Survey for local LGB&T people (The Big Community Survey 2014).

## Summary of Findings

- LGB&T people should not be considered as a homogenous group with regards to health needs; sexual orientation and gender identity are just two aspects of identity, and LGB&T people are found across society, just as heterosexual people are. A number of different LGB&T 'communities' exist in the form of social groups and online networking, but the individuals within this community are diverse and not solely defined by their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and many other LGB&T individuals are not linked to these 'communities'.
- The lack of routinely recorded data presents challenges for assessing the health needs of LGB&T people in the local population, in particular for the transgender population. Developing sensitive and appropriate monitoring of sexual monitoring and gender identity will improve the picture, but it is also necessary to use other methods to ensure that LGB&T needs are being met, including ongoing engagement and input from LGB&T individuals and groups.
- LGB&T people have significantly higher levels of depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicidal ideation. LGB&T people who also have other minority/protected characteristics are at even greater risk.
- Men who have sex with men remain a priority group for HIV prevention and early diagnosis. Devon is an area of low prevalence but this presents its own challenges. Sexual health for lesbian women and trans people is often an invisible and poorly addressed area of need.
- Rates of smoking in LGB people in Devon are significantly higher than in the general population.
- Levels of drug and alcohol abuse are significantly higher in LGB&T people.
- Lesbian and bisexual women are as likely to, and gay and bisexual men are more likely to, experience domestic abuse as their heterosexual counterparts. LGB&T youth may face rejection and abuse from their families.
- Young LGB&T people are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicidal ideation and have higher levels of smoking, alcohol and substance abuse. This is likely to be linked to stress from isolation, bullying and harassment. Homophobic and transphobic bullying is common in schools and can be aimed at anyone who does not conform to a gender or sexual identity norm (whether they are 'out' or not).
- Older LGB&T people are not confident that health and care services are able to provide for their needs in a culturally sensitive way. Older LGB&T people are less likely to have children and more likely to live alone.

## Recommendations for next steps<sup>1</sup>

	Recommendation	Responsibility
1.	Joint Strategic Needs Assessments to include the needs of LGB&T people.	Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Health and Wellbeing Boards and Directors of Public Health
2.	Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy implementation plans to consider actions to reduce health inequalities affecting LGB&T people.	Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Health and Wellbeing Boards
3.	Seek agreement for a Devon-wide LGB&T Best Practice Charter to improve LGB&T access to and experience of services.	Seek agreement from leaders within: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEW Devon CCG</li> <li>• South Devon and Torbay CCG</li> <li>• Devon County Council</li> <li>• Plymouth City Council</li> <li>• Torbay Council</li> <li>• Devon, Cornwall and Somerset Public Health England Centre</li> <li>• NHS England Local Area Team - Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly</li> </ul>
3.	Devon, Plymouth and Torbay to take forward other areas of work as appropriate locally.  In Devon, this should consist of a three-year LGB&T Health Improvement strategy, implementation plan and steering group to address the themes from this health needs assessment. The strategy should be developed in collaboration with the HNA stakeholder reference group and should address: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Programme Leadership, Strategy Implementation and Governance;</li> <li>2. Monitoring and Surveillance (see Appendix 1 for sample guidance)</li> <li>3. LGB&amp;T Mental Health and Wellbeing (including social isolation)</li> <li>4. Lifestyle/Risk-taking health behaviours in the LGB&amp;T community</li> <li>5. LGB&amp;T Children and Young people</li> <li>6. LGB&amp;T Access to, and Experience of, Health and Social Care Services</li> </ol>	Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Health and Wellbeing Boards and Directors of Public Health
4.	If commissioning needs are identified, identify opportunities for pooled budget and joint commissioning	Local authorities, Joint Commissioning Coordinating Group
5.	Explore the possibility of developing a Peninsula-wide LGB&T Health Network	Authors of this report, Public Health England

<sup>1</sup> Further overarching recommendations can be found in *The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Public Health Outcomes Framework Companion Document* (Williams 2013).