

LGBT 20:20 Project



**An evaluation by Catherine Rose
for sexYOUality Cambridge**

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Photos taken for the project by Hanna Baumann



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1. Dashboard (a summary of findings)

For the young people, the project has:

- Introduced them to new experiences
- Increased their skills
- Broadened their knowledge
- Given them new ideas about future paths they might take
- Increased their confidence
- Motivated them to seek new opportunities.

The majority of young people felt well supported and well informed during the project.

In addition, the young people expressed positive feelings including interest, gratitude, excitement and luck.

For the older people, the project has:

- Offered an opportunity to 'give something back' to the LGBT community in a very positive way
- Given them the chance to tell their own stories, in some cases for the first time
- Given the chance to reflect on their own past history
- Provided them with a beautiful photograph of themselves, in some cases also with their partner.

The majority of the older people felt extremely positive about the support and information they receive during the project.

In addition, they expressed a great deal of enjoyment in taking part in the project, and in the interaction with young people which it provided.

For sexYOUality, the project has:

- Introduced the organisation to a new type of project and practice
- Improved its confidence in itself as an organisation to run major projects
- Improved and increased contact with many LGBT organisations in Cambridgeshire
- Provided useful learning points for the setup and administration of future projects
- Created new relationships with a wide range of LGBT people, and particularly with more older people
- Built up a great deal of goodwill for the future.

Artistically, the project has:

- Created a body of oral history material which is unique to Cambridgeshire, and which provides a moving and detailed insight into the lives of LGBT individuals.
- Commissioned a film which can be widely disseminated, based on the interviews.
- Commissioned a series of illustrations based on stories from the lives of interviewees.
- Made its artistic/historical results available to all via a new website.

2. Project Outline

SexYOUality turned 20 years old in 2013. Young people, volunteers, staff and the Board of Trustees decided to celebrate this achievement by running a new heritage programme which will enable young LGBT people to engage with their cultural histories and traditions over the past 100 years.

The project supported young people in learning how to access archived materials tracing LGBT people's histories over the past 100 years. They also learnt how to interview older LGBT people in order to gain their oral histories. These oral histories and learning from researching archived material formed the basis of material which was turned into an interactive creative tool which will then be used to disseminate to 20 youth venues and schools across Cambridgeshire as a means of illustrating the value of LGBT heritage and how this has shaped young LGBT people's experiences today. It is hoped that the interactive material will act as an educational tool to help combat homophobia and prejudice against LGBT people that still exists today.

The project recruited 20 young LGBT people, three older volunteers and 20 interviewees. In addition, 11 volunteers were involved in transcribing the interviews. The young people underwent varying degrees of training (depending on individual availability), and were supported in meeting one or two interviewees. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, but were not filmed.

A celebration event bringing together the interviewers and interviewees, and everyone else involved in the project, took place on Friday, 11th July at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.

The main activities of the project were as follows:

Activity	Date	Status
Advertise and recruit young people and project volunteers	April 2013	Achieved
Steering Group set up and running	April 2013 - ongoing	Achieved
Run workshops with our heritage partners and education partner to develop the heritage research skills of young LGBT people, allowing young people to learn how to find archived material which illustrates LGBT history.	August – October 2013	Achieved
Deliver oral history training	August 2013	Achieved
Record oral history	December – Feb 2014	Achieved
Transcribe oral histories	January – March 2014	Achieved
Produce an appropriate creative end product	March – June 2014	Achieved
Research and produce an educational tool kit including the interactive creative end product	Ongoing beginning June 2013	Ongoing

3. Outline of evaluation process (methodology)

The evaluation process was largely retrospective, starting after the training and the interviews had taken place. It consisted of the following activities:

- Telephone interviews with Miriam Lynn (Project Manager) and Rosie Squires (volunteer).
- Two surveys:
 - A survey of the older people who had taken part as interviewees, comprising seven questions.
 - A survey of or the younger people who took part as interviewers, comprising 11 questions.

In each of these surveys, the respondents were not asked to identify themselves, but their identities on known to the evaluator. In both surveys, the final question asked respondents whether they were happy to be quoted anonymously in reports such as this.

- Interviews, as follows:
 - Semi-structured telephone interviews with three of the older participants (Sam Feeney, Owen Jones and Jess Monck).
 - Semi-structured telephone interviews with three of the younger participants (Molly Moore, George Fletcher and Jacob Nightingale).

Each interviewee received a transcript of this conversation, and was given the opportunity to correct or add to it.

Please note that material from the surveys and interviews has been lightly edited for spelling and punctuation before inclusion in this report.

In addition, the evaluator attended the final celebration event on 11 July 2014 at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. She was able to view the photographs and illustrations, see the film, read some of the interviews between the younger and older people, and engage in informal conversation with participants from the project. Material and observations from this event are included in this report.

4. The young people's experience

10 out of 14 participants responded to the survey – a response rate of 71%. The survey was opened on 6th June 2014 and closed on 16 July, 2014.

What drew young people to the project?

Many of the young people who took part in the project were already known to sexYOUality, and were members of their group activities. It is clear that, without the project, the young people would never have had this opportunity.

Comments on individual motivation, drawn from interviews,¹ included:

- *For me personally I don't necessarily know that much about LGBT history and our past and I think for me as someone who is LGBT it's important to have that information and knowledge and able sharing that with others as well.*
- *The interviews seemed like a great social opportunity as well as emotional, in order to meet people of other generations who I would never have met without the project.*

I asked the young people what they were expecting from their interview(s), adding the examples "new information, new insight, new ideas, a friendly chat". Perhaps predictably with this kind of question, some of the respondents simply picked up the suggestions included in the question. However, there were many more detailed comments, falling into the following categories:

New experiences and insight

- I think I was expecting to be able to relate to the interviewees on a personal level, and get insight about my own future from them.
- Learning experience, new insights and understandings, getting to connect to other people's lives and compare experiences
- I didn't have any particularly strong expectations, but I was interested to hear about different experiences.
- New information and views

LGBT history

- I was looking to find out more about the LGBT community and its past.
- How the LGBT community has changed over the years

An explicit interest in the older participants

- I was expecting all those things. And I was expecting to be moved by some of the older participants' stories.
- I don't know what I expected. I was hoping that it wouldn't be uncomfortable and that the people I interviewed would be comfortable and willing to give lots of interesting stories and anecdotes. I hadn't spoken to any "older" gay/trans people before, and I'd heard about how they were treated but had never heard it from a specific person, so I was curious about what they'd say.

I asked the telephone interviewees whether they had any interest in or relationships with older LGBT people. The answers were revealing, again showing that the project has opened up new experiences and new ways of thinking for the young participants, as well as possibly a glimpse into their own futures.

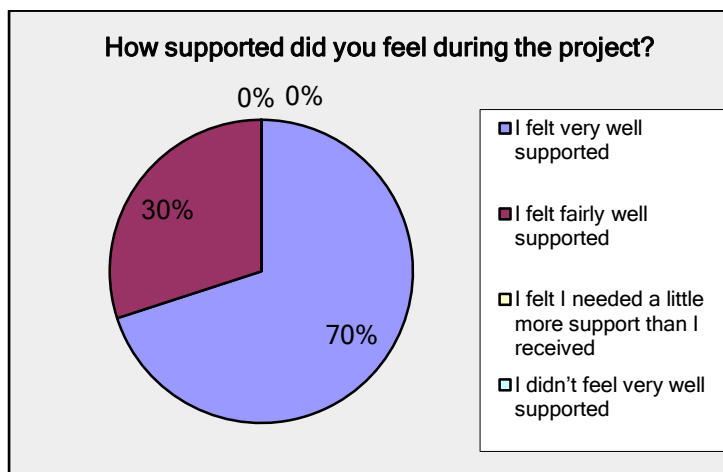
¹ Text in Italics is drawn from the telephone interviews. Attributions are only given for interviews with staff members. All other material is drawn from the online surveys.

- *I didn't know anybody. I think the oldest person I knew was actually Miriam. Round here people the older generation are actually really anti, especially where I live. So I didn't know what their attitudes would actually be, and I thought that because I'm of a completely different generation to them I thought they some views I didn't necessarily agree with, but actually, although some of their language was different, they had some similar, obviously worse, experiences but very similar, and I didn't expect that, because I don't know anyone round here that's even remotely open about things like that, that's that age.*
- *I've done my college LGBT society so from that perspective I've met a few people of an older generation who were part of this but never had a chance to learn about their lives in such a way to compare – it was definitely a new experience in that way.*
- *That's something that I found really interesting because I don't think you do necessarily think about older LGBT people. That's partly to do with the media and the representation of the LGBT people – it's not often you do see older – most people will be in their 20s and 30s... I never thought about what my later future would be like.*

Training and support

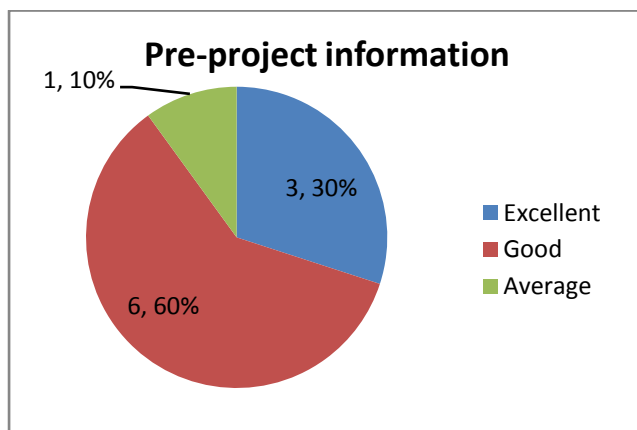
We asked young people four questions about their experience of the training and support provided by sexYOUality.

1. How supported did you feel during the project?



Overall, the young people felt well supported within the project.

2. Was the information you received BEFORE the project adequate and supportive?



Generally speaking, the young participants found the information provided in advance of the project to be of good quality. However, only three of them said that it was excellent – there is clearly room for some improvement here.

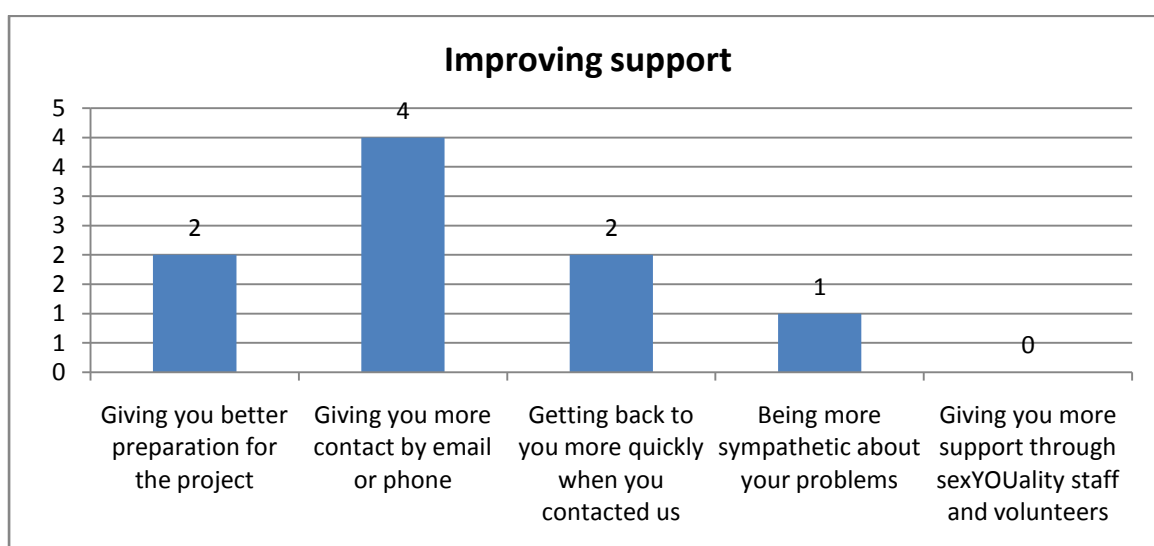
Their comments are very varied, covering the amount, type and quality of information, and consequently I have not generalised from them, but reproduce them in full.

Comments

- More information on the actual participants would have helped me prepare for the interview better.
- At the beginning it was very disorganised, but this improved greatly throughout the project.
- Maybe make the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee more open before the interview as it was often difficult to arrange dates.
- Better internal communication would have perhaps improved communications to the participants.
- I knew everything I had to do, but I didn't really understand what was going to happen with the interviews.
- You can't improve, I have autism so it is hard for me to follow. [Please see Section 7, p23 below for a discussion on support for young people within the organisation.]

3. How could we have improved our support to you during the project?

We offered respondents a number of ways in which support for them during the project could have been improved. Seven respondents answered this question, with a number of them ticking more than one option.



Comments

It is worth noting that nobody felt that any improvement was needed in the support given by staff and volunteers. In addition to three generally positive comments, the following suggestions were made:

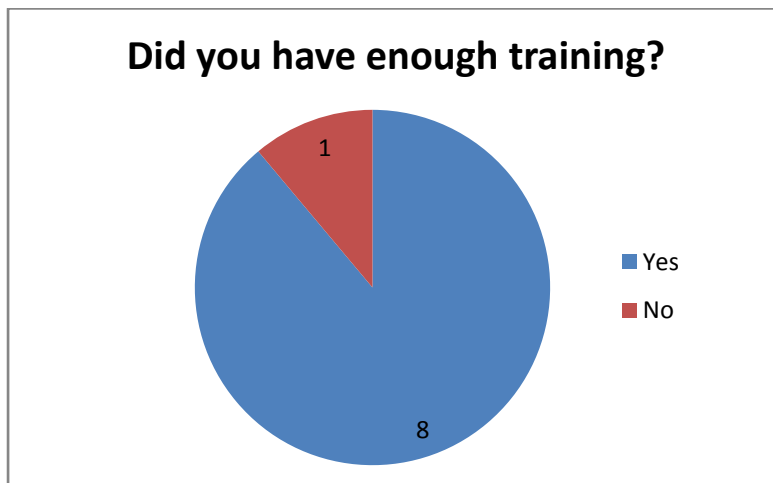
- To have more meetings which were after 4pm, to suit those who have work or school all day.
- Although the oral history classes and preparation exercised were useful, it would have been good to have a chance for a final run-through of everything, just before the interview.

Another participant referred to his own anxiety issues, and commended sexYouality for the quality of their support:

- Overall I think the support was pretty good. I suffer from an anxiety disorder and was made to feel well informed, trained and comfortable with all aspects of the project.

4. Please tell us about your experience of the training given before your interview(s). In your own words, how did you find the training?

Most of the respondents felt that they had enough training, but a number confessed that they had not attended all the training sessions, or had been late to some sessions. My own view from talking to project participants is that the younger participants, one of whom was only 14 years old, would probably have benefitted from more training, whereas those who were at undergraduate level in particular, would already have some of these skills.



Comments

In addition to four generally positive comments, the following points were made.

Positive comment:

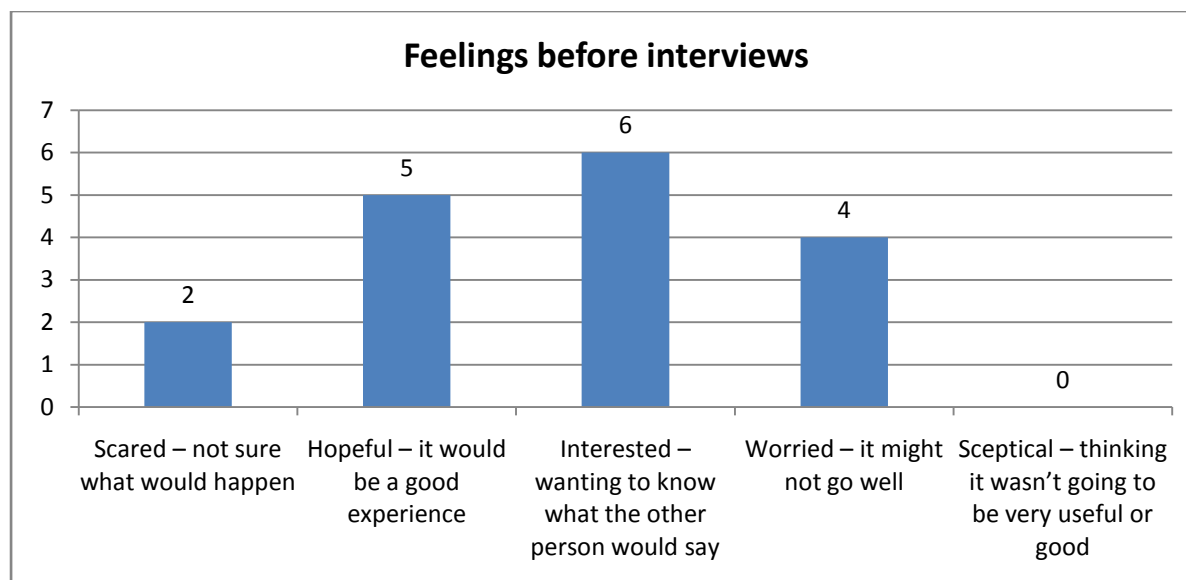
- Very interesting, culturally speaking, as well as broad enough to consider all types of situations/reactions during an interview
- I was late to the 20:20 vision project and as such missed the main interview training. However the staff were brilliant and gave me one-to-one training before my interviews.

Feeling there were some inadequacies:

- I found the training good but I felt there weren't enough training sessions.
- I found the background information on oral history very interesting, and the interviewing advice was helpful and clear.
- I liked the content, but it was a bit awkward. I know we had to practise but I didn't know anybody and at times I found interviewing people I knew nothing about a bit uncomfortable. Also there was no introduction to each other aside from names, so people kept getting pronouns/etc wrong.

Carrying out the interviews

I asked the young people about how they felt about the interviews before they carried them out. I offered them a range of feelings to choose from, and as before, several respondents ticked more than one. None felt sceptical about the project, which is perhaps not surprising, since by this stage they were all committed to taking part.

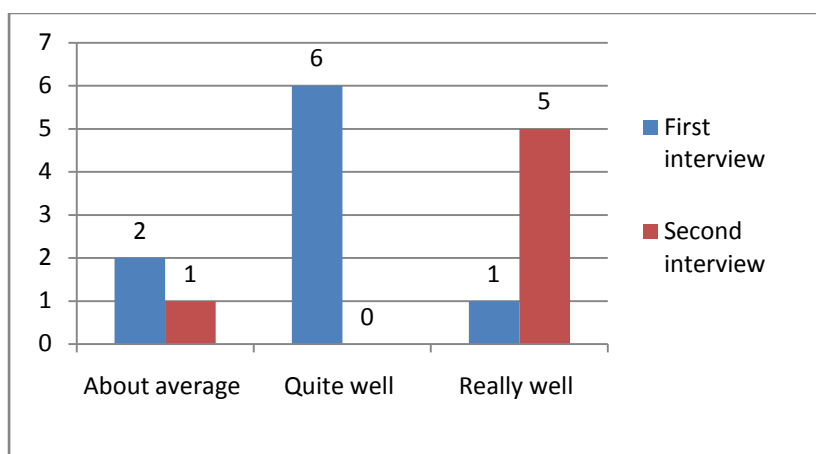


Comments from the telephone interviews included:

- I'm quite an anxious person so naturally I was nervous and apprehensive about meeting people and delving deeply into their stories. But I think especially because I know the people who work there quite well... one thing they are really good at, they are aware of my issues and they were really good at making sure I was all right and comfortable and ready. It helped that they were checking up on me as we went along.*
- I was slightly nervous to begin with but mainly on a practical level – whether my questions would be effective and whether the interviewee would respond well to them – that was my initial concern.*

In addition, I discussed the interview process with two of the youngest participants, both of whom said they had been extremely nervous. One of them told me that on the way to his first interview, he pulled out due to nerves. He later did the interview at a re-organised time. Another did not want to undertake an interview by herself, but sat in on one led by another young person of whom she is a close friend. She then took part by asking some questions at the end of the interview. This flexibility, which the project offered throughout, is commendable, as it offered young people at different ages and stages the opportunity to take part at different levels.

I asked the young people how they felt their interview(s) went.



How did your interview(s) go? 1

Most of the participants were reasonably satisfied with their first interview, but it is clear that most felt that their second interview went better. A number of the young participants felt that the success of the interview was at least in part down to the interviewee, and there is a sense of their gratitude towards the older participants in this respect.

- My interview went well because the person I interviewed was really nice and I was well prepared and supported.
- The interview took a little time to get into flow, but once it did the interviewee offered lots of great stories from throughout their life.
- I think it depends on both the interviewer and the interviewee on how well the interview went. I personally feel the second interviewee was better than the first and thus made for a better interview.
- Both people I had interviewed said that they weren't uncomfortable and that's possibly why they were so open and easy to talk to. They gave me lots of really interesting stories, and I really enjoyed listening to them. Even if the subject matter wasn't easy to listen to, it was in a positive light as opposed to a theme of "dread" and "regret".

What the young people learned

I asked the young people whether they agreed with certain statements about the project. Overall the response was extremely positive, with all 10 of them agreeing with the following statements:

- It was a good experience
- I learned something interesting
- I would recommend this type of project to other people like me

Nine participants agreed with the statement 'I enjoyed meeting the other person'.

Comments included the following suggestion:

- It would be nice at some point to open more of a dialogue with the interviewee and be able to have more of a conversation about the issues we covered

Other comments were extremely positive:

- I think it is a great and very healthy experience for young LGBT people to be able to meet with senior participants.

- It's been a brilliant experience so far and I look forward to continuing on with the project during the youth venue workshops and exhibition.
- I nearly didn't do this, but I am mega glad that I volunteered. It will definitely give me confidence to do more things like this, which is great as before I never would have considered it. There isn't a negative thing I can say about it.

It also asked the young people whether anything happened that they didn't expect, for example, feelings, ideas, things they might have decided to do. This was an open question, which only six participants answered, yielding the following comments:

- Probably feelings, and also an interest in subjects that may not really have been part of the main projects' [suspected word missing]
- I suppose I didn't expect to see evidence of internalised homophobia or transphobia in our senior interviewees.
- Opened my eyes to how lucky I am.
- I preferred to stick to an interview plan so when the interviews became engaging enough, it was a relief to come up with more spontaneous questions.

In particular there was a feeling that the project was more enjoyable than expected:

- I didn't expect to enjoy taking part in the project as much as I have done.
- I didn't expect to have enjoyed it as much as I did. I didn't expect two fairly average looking people to have such amazing stories and I was really glad to meet them, it's made me think more about what other peoples' lives were like, allowed me to empathise with people I would never normally talk to.

Other unexpected outcomes are likely to emerge over a period of time. In conversation with the youngest participant, I asked whether he was enjoying the celebration event at which we were both present. He replied that he had never been in such a large social gathering before, or attended so large an event. He was deeply exhilarated by the experience.

I explored this question of unexpected outcomes in a little more depth with the telephone interviewees. They made the following comments:

- *[My home] is a city, but it's doesn't feel like it because it's so pathetically small and everybody knows everybody. When I met the people to begin with – I'd already met one of them so I wasn't as surprised, but with the first one I'd seen people who looked similar round here and I was thinking maybe they have similar stories as well – they might not be gay but they might, like... I don't know what lives they've actually had. You can't tell at all. When I saw Toni, I didn't expect her to say anything like that. I thought she was going to say "oh, I ran a pub and then it shut down", and it wasn't that at all. It's making me think "hmm, I wonder what other stories out there?" Because you see, I see people and think "I wonder what's happened to you?"*
- *I think one of the big things which struck me was when I was thinking about it more deeply the issue of kind of coming out and how I realised that although the circumstances have changed and people's reasons for struggling with coming out have changed, it's probably equally as difficult now for people to come out as previously.*
- *From the perspective that change has gone about quite quickly, because age-wise my interviewees had lots of experience of cross-generational work and particularly working with charities that I was familiar with and it was interesting learning their perspective of the events that they lived through, and including religious groups as well – because of the change that they'd witnessed and their own personal experiences and how they fit together with the political events that were happening.*

Acquiring skills

Although a question about skills acquisition was not included in the survey, the telephone interviewees did indicate that they felt that their skills level had been raised. This was reinforced by comments made during informal conversations at the celebration event.

- *[It] was a new experience for me being able to guide and lead conversations in that way and get a very wide perspective on someone's life in such a short amount of time. There was also a lot of group work, planning and organisation. A very helpful experience I would say, particularly the research aspect of it.*
- *When I finished the second [interview], everyone was like saying, "oh you did such a good job", and I didn't think I would. I thought I'd make them nervous and they wouldn't want to say anything. It's made me think that if I wanted to do something to do with journalism or something like that then I could go into that area. I didn't think I'd be very good at it, so it's told me a little bit more about what I can do.*
- *It definitely did introduce me to possibilities of places that you could go particularly with activism – and political activism which I'd probably not before been aware of how to get into.*

Conclusion

Despite initial doubts, and some nervousness on the part of some of the participants, it is clear that this has been an overwhelmingly positive experience for the majority of the young participants.

- I enjoyed the experience so much that I'd love to do more in the future whenever possible!

This enjoyment and positivity is further reflected in the messages offered by the young people through the online survey (below).

5. Young people's messages

What message would you like to share with other young LGBT people across Cambridgeshire about your experience?

A once in a lifetime experience that teaches and reminds us about a past that wasn't that far away from our time.

Life is beautiful in its entirety, and it most definitely does not end at 30. I think the mainstream gay media fails to teach us to live responsibly for our old age, so don't fall into that trap.

You're not alone and other people have felt the exact same things as you.

The experience provided invaluable insight into the lives of other generations and the significance of their involvement within the LGBT community. I would recommend something similar to everyone as it is such a wonderful learning experience and hopefully just as enjoyable for the older participants.

I'm very pleased to have been able to participate in this project and make a small contribution to LGBT social history.

I'd like people to be able to see how far society has come into accepting LGBT people in recent history, and from this we can only expect things to continue into our futures. Perhaps even in our lifetimes we will see complete acceptance and tolerance.

If you get the opportunity to talk to older people about their experiences, even if you don't think you could relate at all, or even if you think they look like boring people; reconsider. You'd be amazed what people have lived through, and you can see how they've become the people that they are.

I had a good time doing this and [it was] a good experience to do.

6. The older people's experience

17 out of 18 participants responded to the survey – a response rate of 94%. Three respondents asked for the survey to be delivered on paper, and it was one of these who did not respond. The others responded online. The survey was opened on 6th June 2014 closed on 16 July 2014.

What drew the older people to this project?

Please note that there are some interesting remarks on this issue in Section 7, p21 (below).

Although this question was not asked in the survey, it was clear from interviews and informal conversations that the main motivations for the older people were to give something back to the LGBT community, and to tell their own story. There is also a clear wish on the part of those who are already involved with sexYOUality to support the organisation's work.

The older people had varying levels of engagement with current LGBT culture. A number mentioned the freedom that the internet had given them to experience gay culture and have access to information and reading materials that they would not have been able to find in their youth.

The following comments come from the telephone interviews, but there are also some interesting insights in the section below on 'Older People's Messages'.

- I just thought it sounded like a valuable thing to be part of really, and I do like to support sexyYOUality and the wider community. I'm limited to some extent but where I can help I do like to be involved. I think her groups great and I've done a bit of work with her group – so valuable – supporting that in some way. My work is around skills development and I really see value in young people learning some of the skills. All in all it ticks a lot of boxes.*
- I'm a volunteer with sexyYOUality, I'm known by volunteers and staff there and it was something for me I think, because through my transition I've had to reflect a lot on my own experiences as a young person, and I think that being able to have those conversation across all generations is really helpful for both sides.*
- I feel that I'm very lucky because I have a partner. We've been together for 30 years and I felt that I wanted to give something back to the [LGBT] community.*

1. How supported did you feel during the project?

Overall, the vast majority of the older people said they felt very well supported, with one saying they felt fairly well supported. There was no negative feedback on this.

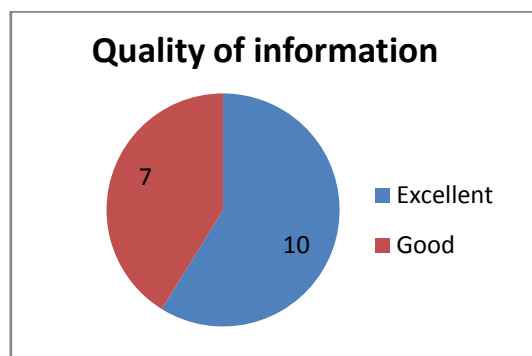
2. Was the information you received BEFORE the project started adequate? How could we have improved on this?

There was a high level of satisfaction with the information provided in advance of the project. 10 respondents (59%) said that the information was excellent, with the remaining seven (41%) saying it was good.

Drawing from the accompanying comments, respondents clearly felt well-involved and well looked-after, although one asked for "More time please".

Other comments:

- I think it's always difficult to describe a new project such as this to prospective participants but I feel I got a pretty clear idea of what was going to happen.
- Personally, I thought that it was excellent, and executed very sympathetically, and careful not to embarrass me, with no pressure to say, or not to say, what I honestly felt. I was only too pleased to answer their questions, and thought it a very good idea to bring this subject of being a gay woman or gay man. ... I cannot think of anything that you have not already done.
- I can't think of any way you could have improved on it since it was fine.



The interviews

The survey asked a series of questions about the experience of the interview.

3. What were you expecting from your interview? For example, new information, new insight, new ideas, a friendly chat?

Six of the respondents said they were expecting a friendly chat, though some added expectations to this. One said that they hoped for new insight, while another said they agreed with all the examples given in question.

Eight respondents mentioned the idea of reflecting back on their past and on the past of LGBT people, reminiscing and sharing stories. One said they expected "a reflection on my life; the journey I have taken and the things that have made me the person I am today." Interestingly, they added "...although this process started once I had agreed to be interviewed." This comment sheds some light on the way that the 20:20 project has encouraged older people to reflect individually on their own experiences.

One respondent mentioned being "isolated in our gayness" and therefore welcoming interaction.

Other comments:

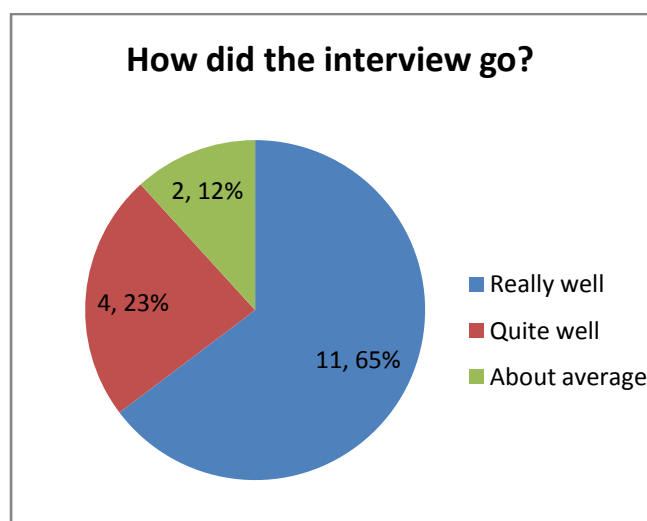
- I am not quite sure exactly what I was expecting. I had given some thought to my past and in some ways I gained new insight in to some events and why I did what I did.
- Record the attitudes and problems faced by gay people in years gone by, thereby helping gays in our present society.

There were a few comments on the process that interviewees expected during the interview:

- I was expecting video as well as audio.
- Some kind of guided questioning. Wasn't sure how formal or informal that was going to be.
- I had been well briefed so understood it would be informal, some questions to answer about me and my experiences so far!

4. How did you think you interview went? Quickly grade it 1-5 and then please add some comments in your own words. What was the process like for you?

Note: the options given in the 1 to 5 rating were: really badly – just about OK – about average – quite well – really well.



The majority (65%) of the respondents felt that the interview went really well (five on a scale of 1 to 5), but a significant minority felt the experience was only average or quite good. It is possible to trace back which of the interviews these statistics refer to, if required. Reading comments below, it seems clear that the main problem may have been a lack of time, or, in some cases, a lack of confidence on the part of the interviewee.

General comments:

- I enjoyed it.
It went fine. The interviewer was excellent and I had plenty to talk about.
- Made me reflect on how far I've come - and how far society has come since I first came out as a teenager.
- The experience was quite elating, remembering and reflecting on past attitudes and responses to my sexuality. Funny and distressing encounters and experiences of life as a young and out Lesbian.
- Well I enjoyed talking about myself for nearly an hour - but how much of that was of value to the project is quite another thing!

Comments about the interviewers:

- It was good to talk to a young person who asked good questions.
- I loved the way the interviewer had thought out the questions prior to the chat.
- The interview went extremely well. It was very relaxed and interesting and a pleasure to do.
- I was bowled over by how sensitive, thoughtful and mature my interviewer, George, asked their questions and listened actively and genuinely empathically to my responses.
- I really enjoyed the time with both Rosie and Jacob - they made it a very pleasant experience.

Comments concerning time and other restrictions:

- Went pretty well. Might have been nice if it had been a bit more freeform, but that could well be down to what the interviewer felt comfortable with.
- Was a pity it had to be cut at one hour, we only got to late-1980s. So no mention of current partner, or previous two come to that. [There] was talk of a 2nd interview, but that part of project was finishing.
- Too little time to talk about a lifetime! It was most unfortunate that your interviewer had to leave early.

Some of the informal conversations I had with older participants at the celebration event indicated that issues of timing were still a cause for concern. Some felt that they did not have enough time to say everything they wanted to say.

Comments about personal responses to the interview:

- I wasn't sure what they wanted so I just blabbed on. Without really knowing if I was talking about relevant stuff.
- Any interviews of this type are bound to be difficult, since they revisit problems and events long buried in the past and often not spoken about in the present.

5. Did anything happen that you didn't expect? For example, ideas, feelings, things you've decided to do? If so, please describe it here.

15 respondents answered this question, with six of them simply answering that nothing unexpected had happened. However, others made some very powerful statements about their past, and how their attitudes towards speaking about that past had changed because of the interview.

This is a key achievement of this project, in that it has enabled a number of older LGBT people to open up about the past, with both a personal impact and wider implications for society. In particular, speaking about former distressing experiences seems to have been particularly important for a number of interviewees. In some cases, this has induced very positive feelings through recognising personal triumph in the face of adversity.

A significant number of interviewees mentioned that they wish they had been able to be more open in the past.

Other comments:

Openness about past experience:

- I was quite surprised by the amount of time I spent talking about my childhood and one particular aspect of that in particular.
- I will be more open in the future regarding my mysterious hidden past.
- I did spend time reviewing my past and wish that I could have been more open about my sexuality.
- I didn't expect that I would feel so comfortable in talking about my youth and some harmful experiences I had back then. It was good to be reminded of how much music and creativity means to me. It was also good to feel how far I have come in my life with all its challenges and have that valued personally.
- Was a good chance to reflect on some key experiences.
- Yes, because of this interview, I would not have bothered to express my views and feelings about Gay people.

Reminders of difficult times:

- At some points the interview became much more emotional than I would have anticipated.
- Yes it reminded me of how difficult it had been to come out to my parents.

Being at ease:

- No, I have for many years now been comfortable and confident in being in my own skin. I guess I'm just a wise old Dyke, which pleases me.

Other emerging issues

The importance of intergenerational work

- *I think it IS important to bring older and younger people together. I don't think I would react differently at all because I've always been happy to talk to young gay people if they've happened to be in my vicinity.*
- *This sort of intergenerational work has a lot of potential for just connecting people and people's stories matter, they – people seeing themselves reflected in the stories that are told. Actually fairly ordinary but extraordinary lives. It really can build bridges I think.*
- *Yeah undoubtedly it's a great thing to do to bring older and younger LGBT people together. So much has changed. I'm maybe not the eldest but phenomenal amounts of things have changed in my experience of being a Lesbian... I got value out of it myself. It's enlightening and cheering in many ways. But also of course life it not always easy for young people whatever their sexuality so it's nice to be around young people generally.*

The impact of reflecting on your own story

- *I think having the opportunity to just tell a bit of my experience just joined up a few more connections for me. And made me think perhaps actually – yeah, there's something about the learning that I've done from my own experience, and being able to share that with a younger person who may or may not be experiencing some similar issues.*
- *It was a nice opportunity – made me a bit reflective afterwards the themes that had come through but it was a very positive thing.*

Conclusion

The older participants perhaps understandably approached the project with a great deal less nervousness than the young people. For them too, it is clear that this has been an overwhelmingly positive experience.

- *I was so impressed with the skills and the sensitivity and the emotional maturity of the young person who interviewed me – talking about some potentially quite sensitive issues. I've always had a lot of respect for young people, but they really inspired me. There's a lot of hope for shifting changing attitudes in the future.*

The desire to communicate with an offer support to future generations of LGBT people come through loud and clear in the messages offered by the older participants through the online survey, which appear below.

Older People's Messages

What message would you like to share with other LGBT people across Cambridgeshire about your experience?

Get involved in projects like this. You'll learn something about yourself and get a whole new insight on your life and your history. Your story is unique – if you don't tell it, who will? And people will be interested to hear it!
Enjoy your life, and live with it
Each and every experience will help you on your journey, no matter how hard, distressing and scary it is. Just always be true to yourself, and your confidence and self actualization will develop and grow.
Be out, find support and be who you are
That it is important to record what it was like to live in different decades and if you have a chance to help, do so.
Now that you can be open without criminal prosecution be brave and come out to your friends and family.
Be yourself, do not hide, it is your life to make and enjoy, but be aware of others and try to accommodate some of the things they may wish for you.
I am proud to be Gay, it has given me my rights, my happiness, to get on with my way of life without feeling guilty about myself. I have been very fortunate, my Mother, who told when I came out, that she knew I was Gay, and was proud of me standing up for myself. I was able to meet my first Gay Partner back in 1966, I was 26 years old, Oh those were the days? we were together for 28 years until he died of Terminal Lung Cancer in 1994, they were very happy years, although my Father would not accept this, I just told him that it was his problem, not mine. I thought I would never find another partner. but on 13th. December 1995. I met my present partner, and became very much in love with him, we had our Civil Partnership on the Thursday. 22nd. December. 2005. We have had a very good life in the time together, and it is a wonderful feeling having someone close to love you, be there for you, but we are still the very best of friends, share everything together, go on holidays together, we enjoy Theatre, dining out, being with our friends, and entertaining at home, respect each other's differences, hobbies, music, collections of things you may not like. Choose your partner well that you wish to share your life with. Good Health, Happiness and Luck for the Future. Frank x
It was a wonderful opportunity to have a genuine and open conversation about LGBTQ life across a generation. Positively affirming!
How very lucky they are that being gay is now acceptable by the majority of the society in which we live, partly due to those who fought and suffered under the repression. May it soon become universally regarded as a completely normal condition.
If you can get involved with an initiative like this, do. Much of our LGBT history is only preserved in our memories, or orally. Lots of it is lost as it doesn't get written down.
That it is ok to love and be loved. People who are filled with hate will be consumed by it... whilst you will be loved.
Our individual stories are as valid as anyone else's - even if we feel our lives are 'nothing special', personal stories are such a good way of challenging the assumptions we all make when we meet someone new. So speak up!

7. What the project has meant for sexYOUality

Project planning and administration

This project was a completely new departure for sexYOUality. Creating and maintaining clarity between the normal activities of the organisation and LGBT 20:20 as a separate project was not always easy.

Other issues included:

- The organisation itself was on a steep learning curve, carrying out an oral history project for the first time.
- Although a project support worker was employed on a one-day a week basis, Miriam realised that this was not enough. Other people became involved in running the project, which caused some inconsistencies.
- The time needed for the transcription of recorded interviews was heavily underestimated. The expectation that young people might transcribe their own interviews proved unrealistic. Fortunately, voluntary support was freely offered following an appeal for help.
- Communicating with young people in particular is always a challenge. The organisation of interviews involving between three and five people was often difficult.
- The workshops offered to the schools and youth venues were in a different format from normal, which caused some issues initially. However, feedback from the schools has been, according to Miriam, very good.

Recruitment

Recruiting participants to the project provided sexYOUality with both benefits and some negative experiences, which provided a steep learning curve.

Recruiting young people

Miriam Lynn explained the recruitment process for young people. This included renewed and/or extended contact with LGBT societies in the university, colleges and 6th forms, including visits by the project worker to generate discussions with students. Miriam feels that this has been good for the organisation in developing relationships with other LGBT organisations.

- *Personally I found the recruitment stage really interesting. We already have a pool of young LGBT people but we increased our marketing for this project and happily recruited young people who weren't already involved in our work... Personally I felt it was much easier to recruit the younger participants. [Miriam Lynn]*

Having recruited the young people, the main difficulty for the company was to keep in contact with them, and to make arrangements with them despite their busy schedules and the perhaps slightly chaotic attitude towards organisation and timekeeping.

Recruiting older people

SexYOUality was looking for a range of LGBT people, preferably over the age of 50 (though at least one of the older participants was still in her 40s). Although they were successful in the end in recruiting the group of interviewees, they came across a number of barriers, both attitudinal and institutional.

Methods of recruitment included:

- Putting up fliers and posters
- Contacting social care older peoples' teams
- Local media including newspaper articles and interviews on local radio
- Contacting local LGBT groups for adults

Miriam reported that although older men were telephoning them to sign up, it was more difficult to recruit women, who seemed very reticent, and uncertain as to whether they had a useful story to tell.

- *I found it difficult to persuade [the women] – people saying 'I don't feel I've got a story to tell' or 'I'm not interested'... we felt we needed to encourage their involvement much more than the gay men... We weren't looking for major achievement or [anything] ground-breaking – just day-to-day experiences of being LGBT years ago. [Miriam Lynn]*

In addition, the company came across outright hostility from the University of the Third Age (U3A), which refused to put up their posters. It transpired that the reasoning behind this was that U3A does not support any political or religious organisation.

- *We wrote a very positive letter which basically encouraged them to look to get some training which we would very happily offer their staff. I think they said they didn't want to cause offence, but they were denying the involvement of their students in this project. [Miriam Lynn]*

Miriam cites the involvement of volunteer Rosie Squires as crucial to the process of recruitment. She also took advice from a local oral historian on using newspaper articles to reach people particularly in isolated rural areas.

Training

Staff and volunteers at the company undertook training alongside the young interviewers, in order to be able to run the project. This was a valuable exercise in itself for those who took part, but also gave them an understanding of the process that the young people were going through.

The training process was perhaps a little diffuse, not least because it was very difficult to organise the young people in advance. As Rosie said, "if we try and arrange training two or three weeks away, that's a like a year away for [the young people], and they don't think about it until the day before". Not all the young people attended all the training, and yet the process seems to have been largely successful.

I think they responded really well... I think it's not just given them skills for the 20:20 project but also for job interviews, and... it has given them life skills as well... It teaches you to hold back, be patient, listen to the person and wait until they've finished speaking." [Rosie Squires]

Rosie also commented that there were some beneficial changes that could be made to the training. Although notepads and pens were provided, she feels that more handouts, and possibly minutes or bullet points of each session, could have been useful to help the young people to think about their task in between sessions.

She also felt that the process of organising the training and the interviews could have been 'less disorganised', but at the same time felt that a degree of disorganisation is inherent in the project of this kind, and that allowance simply must be made for it.

Safeguarding, supporting and etiquette

A range of smaller issues came up throughout the project.

SexYOUality had to consider **safeguarding** issues, particularly in terms of safeguarding the young people. The company followed good practice in having the young people accompanied at all times by an adult volunteer. There was also an emphasis on ensuring professional conduct and attitudes. An emergency phone was created, and volunteers telephoned the organisation to confirm the end of every interview. However, no individual risk assessments were undertaken, which may be something that the company wishes to consider in the future.

Some of the young people required a great deal more **support** than others. As Miriam said, *"if you share things about yourself, you're making yourself vulnerable"*. In particular, some of the young interviewers were very nervous, as mentioned above.

Others have **special needs**, such as autism. One young person made the comment "You can't improve [the pre-project information], I have autism so it is hard for me to follow." This is troubling, partly because it indicates that the young person in question has not assimilate into his/her right to specific support, but also that his/her difficulties were not noticed at the time. Given sexYOUality's mission and intention, I am sure the organisation will wish to avoid this in future.

There was no formal **debriefing process** for the young people after the interview. However, Rosie Squires undertook an informal debriefing process as she was driving them home from the interviews. SexYOUality might wish to include a more formal debriefing session or telephone call in a future similar project.

There was a question about **etiquette** in some instances. Miriam Lynn cited one instance where the older people wanted to invite their young interviewers out to lunch, which raised implications of manners, cost and reciprocal hospitality. A compromise was reached without great difficulty, but it has raised a point which it may be worth anticipating in future.

The celebration event

Participants, staff, well-wishers and guests attended a celebration event on Friday, 11th July, 2014 at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. My comments on this event are entirely drawn from my own observations as an attender.

The venue was ideal, giving people the chance to view the visual material (photos and illustrations, as well as some archive material supplied by participants) and to browse the interviews, which had been printed in special booklets. The space was also ideally suited to enabling participants to mingle and chat, and for younger and older participants to renew their acquaintance.

The showing of the film, using photographic stills and audio material from the interviews, was extremely moving, with the audience vocal in its response. Short talks given by younger and older participants were well-prepared and elegantly delivered. All in all, it was an extremely successful evening, and a fitting end to an important and constructive project.

Outcomes for sexYOUality

Miriam Lynn has already indicated that it is unlikely that this project will be repeated, and in that sense LGBT 20:20 has not influence future plans for the organisation. However Miriam believes that it has given sexYOUality the confidence to take on major projects, and to deliver them well.

The project will in itself have a long-lasting effect because of the online resources, the film, the illustrations and photographs. The school workshops that were part of the project will have their own impact.

As Miriam's said, *"A one-off celebration isn't going to tell the world. It's more of a launch, what we now need to do is find the funding to run a series of workshops on how we did it, what did we learn and share the amazing stories. I think there's scope here for a national conference."* She also said that one of the artists who has been working on the project has put their work forward for inclusion in an international conference.

Goodwill for the future

It is quite clear that sexYOUality has built up a great deal of goodwill on which to build in the future. It has widened the pool of younger and older people involved in its activities, and provided them with a unique experience for which there is clearly of great deal of appreciation.

Perhaps it is fitting to leave the last words to volunteer Rosie Squires, who puts her finger on the outstanding quality of the organisation which underpins its success:

- I'm not just saying this because I'm volunteering for them, but I'm a social work student and my placement officially finished in April, and I offered to come and volunteer because I have never ever worked or volunteered anywhere in my life that was so positive. It's not just positive for the young people but a positive working environment, it's a positive office... I wouldn't offer to come and work for free if I didn't think it was a brilliant place.*