



# Celebrating Intergenerational Diversity

An evaluation of three projects working with younger and older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people

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An accompaniment to this report 'Bridging the Gap: Exploring the potential of bringing older and younger LGBT together' as well as a tool kit to inspire future work can be found on [www.ilcuk.org.uk](http://www.ilcuk.org.uk).

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# Executive Summary

Between Autumn 2010 and Spring 2011, three intergenerational projects took place that were among the first of their kind in the UK in Camden, Stockport and Leicester. These projects aimed to promote solidarity and improved relations between different generations of the LGBT community. In Camden, arts workshops were held aimed at challenging stereotypes and social isolation. The project in Leicester used interviews conducted by younger participants to gather and record personal histories of older LGBT individuals. In Stockport different generations of LGBT people were involved in researching and developing local policies, including raising their issues and experiences with local service providers. All three projects aimed to enable older and younger people to share and learn new skills, improve understanding between younger and older people, foster mutual support and celebrate LGBT heritage.

This report describes the project activities; the evaluation process; provides detail on the recruitment and retention methods; outlines the pre-existing need for intergenerational work; illuminates the respective benefits of using different methods to bring older and younger people together; and assesses the success of the projects against the objectives set out at the beginning of the projects.

We find that the projects were successful in meeting most of the objectives, and set out summaries of the main benefits of an intergenerational approach used in the projects below. These benefits included:

- a. Unifying a diverse community.
- b. Reducing age stereotypes.
- c. Development of social skills and confidence.
- d. Development of practical skills.
- e. Exposure of young LGBT people to older LGBT role models.
- f. Improved understanding of the needs of older and younger LGBT people.
- g. Preservation and increased awareness of LGBT history.
- h. Sharing lifecourse experiences and providing social support.

We set out a number of recommendations on running intergenerational projects throughout the report, many of which are also included in a toolkit that accompanies this report and is available from [www.ilcuk.org.uk](http://www.ilcuk.org.uk). In recognition of the outcomes listed above, we also make the following recommendations for policy-makers:

1. **Further work is needed to understand the benefits of intergenerational work among the LGBT community.** These projects represent some of the first ones known to involve the whole spectrum of the LGBT community on an intergenerational basis. Further research and the development of new projects in different settings is needed to understand the benefits of this approach.

2. **Focus on soft skills.** Many of the outcomes resulting from the intergenerational projects included in this evaluation represent soft-skills. Furthermore, intergenerational projects, by their very nature, are often based on the development of social relationships primarily. This can make intergenerational work appear unattractive at first from a funding perspective, particularly in a tough climate of spending cuts. However, developing soft skills is critical to achieving many positive 'hard' outcomes such as changes in employment status or health. We would call for greater recognition of the value of soft outcomes that may result from projects such as those included here.
3. **Funding of intergenerational work.** In 2009 the government at the time launched a £5.5 million programme of funding for intergenerational work to be spread out over two years. However, events in summer 2011 highlight the need to continue this tranche of work and to continue to develop intergenerational relations particularly to engage younger groups. We would call for specific funding to be set aside for funding projects that aim to strengthen intergenerational relations. Furthermore, this funding should be allocated on a quota basis to ensure that all groups, including LGBT groups, are able to access this funding.
4. **Youth services and older people networks in a time of cuts.** The success of intergenerational projects is often dependent on involving existing youth and older people's network. The 2010 Spending Review has seen a huge cut in funding to local authorities that has equated to a cut in services for young people and older people alike. Future intergenerational work will suffer without existing youth groups and older people's networks to form the basis of intergenerational projects. We would call for the preservation of youth services and funding for older people's networks, such as those included in these projects, and for greater recognition of the vital role they play. In the case of services for young people, the closure of youth groups was partially attributed by some as one contributory factor to the 2011 riots.
5. **Localism and marginalised groups.** The Localism Bill includes statements about the value of community assets, although without specific provision, we may see neighbourhoods where these assets transfer only to those causes and groups that are more popular or vocal, which in many contexts may not include LGBT groups. The Localism Bill should include greater safeguards to ensure that the rights of marginalised or minority populations to access a full range of amenities and services locally are protected.

# Part 1: Context and Overview

## Context

Stonewall estimates that between 5-7% of the UK population are lesbian, bisexual or gay (LGB)<sup>1</sup>. Other recent, controversial, UK estimates from the Office for National Statistics have placed the number of LGBT people at around two per cent (Joloza et al 2010). However, this number is disputed by many as the estimate is based on sexual identity, as opposed to behaviour. Other factors cast doubt on the validity of the figures, and of particular relevance to this study is the fact that survey used by Joloza and colleagues to estimate the size of the LGB population found that younger and wealthier people were more likely to identify as LGB. It is unlikely that these trends represent true differences in the population, and are more reflective of the willingness and ability of older and/or more disadvantaged people to reveal their sexuality. However, in their own (flawed) way, the Joloza and colleagues' estimates do indirectly hint at the social changes that have occurred that enable younger people to disclose their sexuality (or gender identity).

Regardless of the actual estimate used, the LGBT population is generally estimated to comprise a non-trivial, albeit small, minority of the UK population. As a partial reflection of the size of the current community, but also reflecting centuries of societal, legal, and religious persecution and discrimination where advances have only been made in recent decades, LGBT people today face a number of issues that may disproportionately or uniquely affect them. In the accompanying evidence review to this evaluation report, we review a number of the issues that younger and older LGBT people face respectively (Potter et al 2011), and below summarise some of these findings.

### The experiences of younger LGBT people

Growing up as a younger LGBT people (under 25) may be considered to be particularly challenging, reflecting the status of belonging to a marginalised group but also reflective of the challenges that all young people may experience in the transition to adulthood, which for LGBT young people may be compounded by their identity. Whether still in education (secondary or higher education), or in attempting to establish themselves in the labour market, there is a strong evidence base supporting the claim that younger LGBT people experience social isolation and discrimination. The family environment also does not represent an exception: in a European survey of young LGBT individuals it was reported that 51% had experienced prejudice and/or discrimination within their own families (Takács 2006), leading to homelessness in some extreme cases of family rejection (Cull et al 2006).

School bullying particularly affects younger LGBT individuals. Research from Stonewall reported that almost 65% of young LGB people had experienced bullying in school, or had identified discriminatory elements in the school curriculum (Hunt & Jensen 2007). However, the evidence is inconclusive on differential educational outcomes between LGBT and non-LGBT young people that could follow from higher levels of bullying or institutional discrimination (Potter et al 2011). Nevertheless, young LGBT people are at greater risk of being penalised by unfair treatment in school, which may adversely affect attainment (EHRC 2010).

Causal associations between homosexuality and mental and physical health are not easy to establish, and not always plausible. Some studies find that gay and lesbian people are 2.5 times

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at\\_home/sexual\\_orientation\\_faqs/2694.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_home/sexual_orientation_faqs/2694.asp) (Accessed 01-09-2011)

less likely than heterosexual people to have a mental disorder, starting in early adolescence (Meyer 2003). Other evidence suggests that being a victim of bullying at school can be linked to mental health conditions such as depression and social withdrawal, that can lead to an increased consumption of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs, in turn affecting long-term physical health (Juvonen et al 2000; Bontempo & D'Augelli 2002). This kind of health damaging behaviour, usually identified as a coping strategy, might place younger LGBT people at increased risk of developing chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer in later life. Moreover, younger LGBT individuals are more likely to take sexual risks (Bontempo & D'Augelli 2002) leading to an increasing threat of sexually transmitted illnesses and HIV and AIDS.

Service providers can contribute to help young LGBT people facing these challenges; combatting homophobic bullying in schools should be one priority. This would contribute to create a positive environment for LGB students leading to a probable improvement in their educational outcomes (Birkett et al 2009). Fostering intergenerational relationships within the LGBT community can also represent one solution to improve the exclusion faced by younger LGBT individuals. Evidence shows that there is a general lack of positive role models for younger LGBT people. Younger LGBT people also exhibit high levels of distrust of older LGBT people, who they perceived to be interested in engaging with them on a sexual basis alone (Paulick 2006). However, the wider literature demonstrates the value for young people in having ethnic and gender matched role models in raising academic achievement, raising levels of enjoyment of academic related activities, raising levels of future and career planning, and in helping young people regard adults as peers (for example Zirkel 2002). In this respect, matching young LGBT people with LGBT role models may also have similar results. Furthermore, older LGBT people could provide a valuable source of social support to younger LGBT people in helping to deal with lifecourse transitions that may be unique or more challenging for LGBT people than non-LGBT people. This could result in improving the mental health of young LGBT people, and lower engagement in risky behaviours or behaviours that are likely to damage health.

### **The experiences of older LGBT people**

UK research suggests that loneliness increases with age among older people (Demakakos et al 2010), and research from the Netherlands research suggests that older LGBT people are more likely to feel lonely than non-LGBT older people (Fokkema & Kuypers 2007). Contact with children has been identified as a strong predictor of loneliness, and LGBT people are less likely to embark on family-building activities than non-LGBT people (Musingarimi, 2008a). Among older LGBT people, being childless or having poor contact with children and other family members is often compensated through forming a “family of choice”, a group of close friends that an individual perceives as significant (Musingarimi, 2008a). However, maintenance of these close links becomes increasingly difficult with age. Moreover, ageism in the LGBT community, and especially in the youth-orientated gay community, has been perceived as a key threat to maintaining social networks (Addis et al 2009), and to providing an environment where older LGBT people can be open and expressive in their identity. Intergenerational projects, such as those evaluated in this report, may be an important way that older LGBT people can maintain contact with younger people.

Intergenerational work without an LGBT focus has been associated with breaking down generational barriers, which in turn encourages older people to remain active as they age, to remain engaged with society, to continue to feel valued, and reduce social isolation and loneliness (for

example Vanderbeck 2007). The projects evaluated in this report, as discussed, are based in expectation that the same effects, and more, can be replicated among LGBT people.

There is mixed evidence regarding the mental health of older LGBT people. Some studies suggest a higher prevalence of depression, negative feelings about being gay, panic attacks and thoughts of suicide among older LGBT people (for example Valanis et al 2002, D'Augelli et al 2001). Other evidence suggests that older gay and lesbian people have greater life satisfaction, lower levels of self-criticism, wider social networks, and fewer psychosomatic problems (for example Addis et al 2009, Shippy et al 2004). While it could be argued that the mental health of older LGBT people is subject to the same societal pressures as younger LGBT people face, it should also be borne in mind that older LGBT will have lived a large portion of their lives when homosexuality was illegal in the United Kingdom. This may led to an internalisation of homophobia experienced by older LGBT people with an acute impact on their mental well-being (Meyer 2003).

Older LGBT people are also likely to exhibit a number of physical health differentials compared to non-LGBT peers. Lesbians are less likely to use gynaecological services than their heterosexual counterparts, a likely reflection of the widespread misconception that they are not at risk of sexually transmitted illnesses (Paulick 2008). However, not attending regular screenings reduces the opportunity to detect sexually transmitted illnesses in a timely and effective manner. Older gay men are increasingly likely to be living with AIDS and HIV and, despite improvements in the treatment of HIV/AIDS continue to report high levels of chronic illnesses (Power et al 2010). Older transgender people are also at risk of complications resulting from the drugs used to maintain hormonal therapies, while older transgender people who undergo gender reassignment surgery are also at greater risk of a number of health related complications (Berreth 2003).

In terms of service responsiveness, it is recognised that, due to the lack of informal and familial support, older LGBT people are more likely to use formal social care services as they get older and in need of assistance, especially older transgender people who may have complex bodily needs (Musingarimi 2008b). However, despite being frequent consumers of social care, older LGBT people are also highly likely to report discrimination from social care services professionals based on their sexual or gender orientation (Commission for Social Care Inspection 2008). Unequal treatment has also been discovered in the delivery of mental health services, where practitioners were found to make causal links between sexuality and mental health problems in dealing with older LGBT people, or were found to be openly homophobic (King and McKewon 2003).

## **The literature and the case for intergenerational work among LGBT people?**

Much of the case for intergenerational work among LGBT people derives from identifying specific problems experienced by LGBT people and recognising that several of these issues may be overcome or may be helped through adopting an intergenerational approach. However, in broader terms, intergenerational work has traditionally tended to focus on building within family relationships. To a lesser extent, more recent innovations have focussed on strengthening non-familial intergenerational relations through neighbourhood redevelopment work, particularly within disadvantaged areas (see Vanderbeck 2007). However, the current work evaluated in this report on strengthening intergenerational relations within the LGBT community takes place beyond a geographic or familial context; it is partially underpinned by the assumption that the LGBT

community can unify across the spectrum of sexual identity/gender identity, as well as across age groups, and this assumption may be crucial in determining the success of these projects. Furthermore, given that many of challenges facing younger and older LGBT people outlined above involve treatment by service providers (such as those working in education, health or social care), the added value of taking an intergenerational approach, and not simply developing projects aimed at strengthening the voice of one section of the LGBT community, may be called into question. However, as outlined above, many of the issues facing both younger and older LGBT people are related to weak intergenerational ties, particularly with LGBT people of a different generation. For example, younger people may negotiate their relations with educational and employment providers more successfully with the presence of LGBT role models. Older LGBT people, conversely, may be able to develop informal relations with younger LGBT people that could ultimately lessen the need for heavy reliance on social care providers, or may help in negotiating relationships with these service providers. More widely, for both younger and older LGBT people, the intergenerational aspect of these projects is aimed at ensuring that the LGBT community forms a strong multigenerational community that is open, inclusive and can offer social support to all LGBT people, regardless of age or identity. This case is set out in the aims and objectives of the projects, and we provide an overview and context to the projects below, before setting out the criteria and methodology for evaluation.

## **Part 2: Overview of projects**

### **Camden intergenerational project**

The LGBT intergenerational project in Central London (Camden) was led by Age UK Camden (Opening Doors) and Gendered Intelligence. Opening Doors is a project run by Age UK (formerly Age Concern Camden) that specifically engaged with older LGBT people in Camden and other boroughs in Central London, although is likely to extend this geographical reach in the future (see Phillips & Knocker 2010 for an overview and evaluation of Opening Doors). Opening Doors seeks to meet the social support and personal development needs of the LGBT community through offering a calendar of social events, but also provides help and advice in engaging with services such as housing and social care. Gendered Intelligence is a community interest group that works with young transgender people to offer support and advice, and has a specific focus on the use of arts. The group also provides training and workshops to service providers, and in schools, to raise levels of awareness of issues facing transgender young people, and the way that these needs can be best met. In Camden the intergenerational project was carried out through a series of four arts workshops aiming at challenging stereotypes and social isolation faced by older and younger people, and fostering relationships between them in a creative way. The project brought together older LGBT people who mainly identified as lesbian or gay together with younger people who identified themselves through a wide spectrum of sexual and gender identities.

The workshops were held in the Central School of Speech & Drama between October and November 2010, and consisted of four all-day sessions that took place on alternate Saturdays. A final arts exhibition showcasing the work of the project to friends, partners, press and LGBT community took place in December, and a further celebration event (see later note) involving some

project participants took place in February. Participation at each workshop was encouraged, although attendance at each workshop was not mandatory, and participants were free to attend as few or as many workshops as they chose. Lunch and travel expenses were covered for all participants.

The participants were mainly recruited from within the existing networks of Opening Doors and Gendered Intelligence using the regular newsletter, specific mailshots and word of mouth. Some participants were also recruited through flyers that were circulated, as well as through word of mouth from within the LGBT community more widely. The number of participants numbered around 20 for each workshop and an estimated 30 individuals were involved overall. The flexible approach in terms of attendance meant that every workshop started with an introductory session to facilitate the understanding of aims and structure of the project for new joiners. This introductory session was designed to ensure that the environment was perceived to be welcoming and safe for all, and to facilitate sensitive and open discussion. Participants were not forced to pair up in particular configurations, and were able to work on an art project alone if they chose, although were encouraged to work in groups, which occurred in the majority of cases. Volunteers with particular technical and artistic skills worked along with the management team, to help with the production of multimedia art pieces. Participants were involved in photography, video and sound installation workshops trying to investigate the relationships between age and identity. The participants were asked to share stories, to explore key milestones in their lives, and to describe the historical context against which these developments occurred

### **Context: A statistical description of Camden**

The London Borough of Camden has one of the most diverse and distinct population of all the United Kingdom. The 2001 Census recorded a total resident population of 198,020. With the highest proportion of full-time students (frequently younger adults) in London, Camden's population has a disproportionate number of young people; thirty-nine per cent of residents are under the age of 30. Camden also has a very ethnically diverse population: 27% of residents belong to black or minority ethnic group compared to the 9% in England as a whole. The largest communities are Bangladeshi, Black African and Irish ethnic groups. In terms of same sex households, an inaccurate although indicative measure of the LGBT population, 0.7% of the population live in same-sex couples, substantially higher than the proportion for England as a whole (0.2%). Camden Borough encompasses some of the most deprived as well as some of the least deprived areas in the country.

All statistical information taken from the Office for National Statistics Neighbourhood Statistics website and mainly date from 2001.

### **Stockport intergenerational project**

The Stockport intergenerational project was developed as an advocacy and research project to explore and communicate the needs of the LGBT community to the local service providers and beyond. In doing so, the project aimed to involve different generations of LGBT people in developing local policies in the workforce, education and health care. The research element of the project focused on five key areas: homelessness and housing, workplace and education, health and healthcare, hate crime, and alcohol and drugs.

The project was delivered by Age UK Stockport (formerly Age Concern Stockport), along with Stockport Council Youth Services, and specifically 'the Base', a youth group for LGBT younger people up to the age of 25. The project also developed links with academics at University of Salford. As part of the project, two researchers were recruited to train participants in research methods and techniques. Questionnaires were distributed among the local LGBT population as part of the project. The results of these questionnaires served as the basis for follow up qualitative work in the form of a focus group and a workshop that brought service users together with service providers. A 'speed dating' workshop, where older and younger participants were brought together, was developed on the initiative of the participants in addition to planned activities, which consisted of younger and older people sharing information on their experiences with service providers, and other issues and experiences. The research results, also formed the basis for a drama piece, consisting of a number of vignettes aimed at highlighting the challenges experienced by both younger and older LGBT participants. This was presented at the final February event. An LGBT toolkit for social support was also developed by Salford University (Speier 2011) that outlines the challenges facing LGBT and the response needed by service providers.

The recruitment of participants was carried out mainly through networking with the existing contacts of Age UK Stockport and the Base. 'The Base', the location of the existing LGBT youth group, also served as a base location for the intergenerational project; the intergenerational project took place on the same nights that the ordinary youth group took place on Thursday evenings. The project began in September and was due to end in December, but continued until the final event celebration event that took place in February. The attendance of the sessions varied between 25-28 participants (15-18 younger and ten older people) with a core group of ten people always present. Older people were the most stable participants, whereas the participation of younger people was less consistent.

The Stockport intergenerational project received some publicity in the media. It was advertised on the Lesbian and Gay Foundation website (a Manchester based charity) and publicised through Pure FM (a Stockport based radio station) and Gaydio, a (Manchester based radio station serving the LGBT community). Additionally, the project was promoted through the intranet of the Stockport local council.

### **Context: A statistical description of Stockport**

In 2001 Stockport had a total resident population of 284,528. Stockport's population was slightly less ethnically diverse than the English average, with the proportion of White residents estimated at 95% while two per cent of the population were of Asian origin. The age profile in Stockport followed national trends with the proportion of people over the age of 65 standing at 17% and the proportion of people under the age of 24 at 30%. The student population was slightly lower than the average in England and Wales. The proportion living in same-sex couples accounted for 0.15% of the population, slightly lower than the 0.2% average for England. On a borough level, Stockport borough is the least deprived borough in which any of the three projects took place, although this does not negate pockets of deprivation within the borough.

All statistical information taken from the Office for National Statistics Neighbourhood Statistics website and mainly date from 2001.

## **Leicester intergenerational project**

The LGBT intergenerational project for Leicester was developed as a local LGBT history project. The project was delivered by Leicester LGBT Centre, a voluntary organisation established to support and provide services to the local LGBT community in Leicester city, Leicestershire and Rutland. The 'Centre' aims to provide a safe social and support space and deliver high quality professional services and training that reflects the needs of the LGBT community. The Centre recruited younger volunteers to help interview older members of the local LGBT community. The aim was to record changes in everyday life over the years, to bring younger and older LGBT people together, and to enable both generations to interact with the aim of improving their understanding of the LGBT history. The chosen benchmark for local history was 1967, the year when the Sexual Offences Act was passed, which effectively decriminalised gay male sex. This benchmark served as a base to record the personal histories of older members of the LGBT spectrum. The interviews were intended to create a snapshot of life for older LGBT people and to record changes in terms of life for LGBT people. The intergenerational component was specifically intended to dispel prejudices and pre-conceived ideas held by both older and younger members of the local LGBT community.

Recruitment began in November 2010, and continued throughout. The project was advertised in the local LGBT press (Midland Zone, the largest LGBT publication in the region), although word of mouth among people already involved with the Centre was found to be the most effective recruitment method. The project received initial publicity in the local press through two stories printed in 'The Leicester Mercury'.

The project began with a number of training sessions that included mainly young LGBT volunteers. These training sessions were delivered by academic staff from the East Midlands Oral History Archive, based at the History department of Leicester University and provided training in research methodology, the use of the recording equipment and interview techniques. The initial training sessions began in December 2010, scheduled on Friday evenings, and participants were asked to commit to carry out two to three interviews with older volunteers, and to be involved in the analysis and writing up of these interviews. The interviews were conducted, usually at the home of an older LGBT person, in pairs with young LGBT interviewer paired with a member of support staff (either a member of staff from the Centre, or from Leicester University). One member of the board of directors of the Leicester LGBT centre, a prominent LGBT rights campaigner, who is also a member of the local board of directors of the local branch of Age UK, served as connection for the recruitment of older people to interview. Further older LGBT people eligible for interviews in the project were identified by other interviewees, essentially snowball sample recruitment.

The ultimate aim of the Leicester project was to create an exhibition to celebrate the LGBT heritage to be displayed at the local library; some of this information was displayed in the final celebration event. However, the aim of the project expanded as the project received news of continuation funding from the Big Lottery fund, enabling the project to continue for a further three years. While this is welcome news, from an evaluation perspective this is conceptually challenging, and many of the findings for the Leicester project are likely to represent interim findings, and this represents a caveat of this report.

### **Context: A statistical description of Leicester**

Leicester's population actually experienced a decrease of 0.5%, when, in the same period, figures regarding England and Wales showed an overall increase of 2.5%. Leicester has a relatively young population, with 38% of the residents under the age of 24 and 13.5% over the age of 65. In terms of the ethnic composition of residents, in 2001 two-fifths of residents were non-White, making Leicester one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in the country. Residents of Indian origin composed the largest minority ethnic group (25.7%). Being home to two universities, the proportion of students is substantially higher than average. The proportion of persons living in same-sex couples in Leicester (0.23%) is similar to the proportion in England (0.2%).

All statistical information taken from the Office for National Statistics Neighbourhood Statistics website and mainly date from 2001.

### **Intergenerational Celebration Event**

In addition to the individual activities, all the projects were brought together for a final celebration event at London Zoo in February 2011. This was an opportunity for project participants from all three projects to showcase their projects' achievements. While this was the first time that participants from all three projects were brought together, regular project management meetings meant that the main Age UK leads from all three projects had discussed their projects together earlier. The celebration event consisted of presentations and speeches from the leads of all three projects, as well as contributions from the supporters of the project and a notable member of the LGBT community.

## Part 3: Project Objectives and Key Evaluation Questions

In this section, we introduce the aims of the projects and set out the objectives outlining how these aims would be met.

### Overarching aims of projects

- a. Pilot the feasibility of running intergenerational projects among the LGBT community
- b. Pilot the feasibility of different methodologies to bring older and younger LGBT people together
- c. Develop key learning points for future work that aims to replicate the aim of bringing older and younger LGBT people together

### Project objectives

1. Up to 50 older LGBT people to be recruited in three English regions
2. Up to 50 younger LGBT people to be recruited in three English regions
3. Younger participants will enhance their educational, training and employment prospects through skill development
4. Participants will report that they have someone to turn to for informal support

5. Participants will gain a greater understanding of each other's generation and the stereotypes attached
6. Participants will report a more positive outlook at the end of the project
7. Participants will gain new skills and confidence, including skills and confidence from those of a different generation
8. Foster a greater understanding between older and younger LGBT people and aim to lower the feelings of social isolation
9. Recruitment of three teams of professional workshop leaders and youth workshops

In evaluating the projects, we developed the following key questions to guide the evaluation.

- Did the individual projects meet the overarching objectives of the LGBT intergenerational projects?
- Did the projects meet their individual project objectives?
- Did the individual project format alter performance according to overarching performance indicators, and did the project type-location choice work?
- Did the projects show an equal impact among older and younger participants and were there any other differences by socio-demographic characteristics?
- Which elements of each individual project should be retained and which should be changed in the future?
- What lessons can be learned for future projects working with different generations of LGBT participants in terms of project recruitment, delivery, outcomes, aims, and monitoring and evaluation?

## **Methodology & Data**

### **Evaluation Methodology**

In evaluating the three intergenerational projects, we adopted something of a mixed methods approach to the evaluation using both quantitative and qualitative methods, an approach growing in favour (for example McDavid & Hawthorn 2006). The mainstay of our findings is based on a series of semi-structured interviews that were conducted with older and younger participants, as well as project staff. In addition, information on the social profile of participants, as well as some information on their experiences of the project, was collected through our own evaluation forms as well through participation forms supplied by one of the project funders. We outline the rationale and advantages and disadvantages of our choice of approach and methodologies in the following section.

### **Approach**

Qualitative evaluation approaches aim to simultaneously understand whether phenomena occurred, but more distinctly, the reasons and circumstances as to how the phenomena occurred. Such an approach can also help to explain reasons as to why a phenomena did not occur. In this respect, the qualitative approach is particularly useful in terms of showing how an individual participant

experiences a given event, but more importantly in the case of evaluation research where a greater focus exists on outcomes, the meaning and value attached to this experience (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). Given the dearth of intergenerational work among LGBT people, a qualitative approach was favoured for the majority of the evaluation to reflect the inductive nature of the projects. In other words, because the emphasis of the evaluation was on learning about how outcomes were achieved among these groups, and the key drivers and mechanisms, more so than on empirical differences, the less structured tools associated with a qualitative approach were particularly appropriate here. The relatively small numbers of participants involved on each project also meant that reliance on quantitative methods alone would only result in superficial descriptive accounts of the project activities.

### **Methods: Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews of open-ended questions formed the basis of our qualitative work, complemented by a number of written open-ended questions on our evaluation forms (both profile and outcome forms). The interviews were completed towards the end of the project in Camden and Stockport, and part way through the project in Leicester. The interviews lasted between 15 minutes for some of the younger participants, to over an hour for interviews with staff and some participants. The interviews took place usually in an informal manner in a quiet setting on site with project activities taking place nearby, or for staff, usually in private offices.

All the interviews with participants for the Camden project took place between one (male or female) interviewer and one participant. In Stockport, there was more of a mixture, with some interviews taking place with two interviewees and one interviewer at once. For Leicester participants interviews took place between two interviewers (male and female) and one participant. While different interview configurations may threaten the validity of our responses (see for example Knox & Burkard, 2009; Hansen, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006), perhaps more so when dealing with the broad range of gender identities and sexual orientation (for example Berg et al. 2004, Lee 2008), we would also highlight that these configurations reflected pragmatic considerations, as well as an iterative learning process in our interviews. In addition, we would argue that having several configurations for interviews, with the same common themes emerging, adds to the 'trustworthiness' of our findings, and furthermore that the results from group interviews allowed us to learn more about both the individual and contextual circumstances surrounding our findings (see Lambert and Loiselle 2008). As a generalisation, our experience was that interviews conducted with two interviewers elicited answers that revolved around perception and opinions, and less so around personal background (contextual) experiences.

A further caveat to the results is in the selection of participants for evaluation interviews. While some participants were randomly picked by the interviewers on site on the day, other participants were chosen in advance by staff on the projects. The obvious drawback of this process is that staff may have cherry-picked participants that they thought had benefitted the most and who would give the most favourable responses in interviews, leading to a positive bias in the results. However, a combination of logistical issues and the small-scale nature of the projects meant that a more probabilistic approach to sampling and recruitment would have been impossible. Furthermore, there are also several reasons to suspect that a positive bias was not introduced specifically by staff in selecting respondents for the evaluation. Firstly, the project workers, who essentially acted as gatekeepers to participants, were genuinely interested in discovering the strengths and challenges

of their work, as is evidenced in later in the results section. Secondly, participants on the projects, by the very nature of their continued participation, already constituted a group with positive perceptions of the project, although we discuss the implications for those who were not recruited later. Thirdly, and finally, despite the potential positive bias, as we show later, we encountered a broad cross-section of opinion, some of which did tend towards the negative.

Semi-structured interviews are associated with a range of advantages, particularly when working with a client group with diverse needs. These advantages include: the ability to engender a rapport between evaluator and participant; high validity (in some cases); complex issues and questions can be explained in full; participants can actively direct the interviews (Holstein and Gubrium 1995); and greater equity to the roles of interviewer and interviewee (Lee 2008). However, some of the advantages outlined above can also represent disadvantages, and in addition, semi-structured interviews can also be time consuming; difficult to replicate; too rigid for some respondents; difficult to generalise to a wider population; and difficult to analyse in terms of determining relevance. For the purposes of this evaluation, where we aim to understand the activities from the perspective of respondents, but also the circumstances underlying participation in the intergenerational projects, the advantages of semi-structured interviews in engendering rapport and giving time to explore complex phenomena outweighed any disadvantage. However, for this particular project, the use of semi-structured interviews was not without its challenges. The method is less participatory in nature than other evaluation techniques. For the Camden project in particular, there was a disjoint in the way that the project was delivered in a very participatory way compared to the more formalised delivery of the evaluation, and arguably greater integration of the evaluation into the project early on may have led to a more harmonised evaluation process.

### **Developing a Topic Guide and Ethical Issues**

We developed a topic guide that was loosely based upon the key evaluation questions and aims of each project. The overall topic guide was checked with project workers before use with participants – while the broad content did not change (to maintain the independence of the evaluation) this stage was essential in identifying inappropriate terminology.

Working with older and younger LGBT people did pose some ethical considerations, and the research adhered to the internal ethical guidelines maintained by the International Longevity Centre, which mirror those of the Social Research Association (see SRA 2003). Before the interviews began, all respondents were given an information sheet outlining information on the researchers and the organisation, the purpose of the evaluation, what the interviewees could expect from the interview, and the expected outcomes and how the information could be used. The interviewees read from the information sheet and all respondents were then asked to initial a consent form to determine that they had understood the information and agreed to be interviewed; no potential interviewees declined to be interviewed having received information about the interview process. All interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and to prevent disclosure, all original recordings were deleted after transcription. Furthermore, only pseudonyms are used for project participants in this report, and any potentially disclosive information given in interviews was later deleted. While this report refers to young LGBT people, none involved in the evaluation were aged under 16 years. Generally, young people aged 16-18 with sufficient understanding are able to give their full consent to participate in research independently of their parents and guardians, although we paid particular attention to explain the purpose and outcomes of the research with those aged under 18 years.

## **Methods: Evaluation Form and other techniques**

In addition to the use of semi-structured interviews, the evaluation used profile and outcome forms devised to capture basic information about the characteristics and experiences of participants in a more quantitative form. One advantage of using the profile and outcome forms was that they offered all participants the opportunity to feedback on their experiences on the three projects, something which was not possible through interviews due to logistical issues .

In addition, with the evaluation of the Stockport project, we attempted to use Facebook as a means of gathering information from (mainly) younger participants in the project. However, the method was wholly unsuccessful in this case as we were unable to gather any new information due to a lack of response. This is thought to be primarily due to cuts in funding to youth services by the Local Authority, which disrupted contact between youth workers and participants, and meant that the youth centre itself was under threat of closure. However, such methods involving new technologies hold potential for engaging with young people in future projects if introduced early on and fully integrated within the project. Twitter and other networking sites are also worthy of exploration for use within future projects.

## **Data Analysis**

In terms of analysing our interviews, had this report represented research and not an evaluation, then the novelty of exploring intergenerational relations among LGBT communities would have lent itself to a grounded theory approach to analysing the information. However, given that the evaluation was exploring outcomes along specific themes, we adopt an approach more akin to Template Analysis (see King 1998). This involved constructing a coding template which contained the broad themes we knew were important to examine, and would help us to organise the data in a useful and meaningful way. From these broad themes, we developed further codes that represented successively narrower fields within these themes. Once we had developed our coding template, we applied this to each of our interview transcripts, adapting and creating new codes as appropriate.

## **Key Learning Points: Evaluating LGBT Intergenerational in future work**

- Aims and objectives should be clearly set at the beginning of each project. Setting these early on will help shape and steer the direction of the project. These are usually pre-set before the evaluation begins.
- The evaluation should be integrated into the project early on, whether this represents a final or mid-point evaluation. The evaluation should consider the method of delivering the project, and reflect this in the evaluation tools, particularly in creating a system of performance management.
- Specific funding requirements may mean that a number of items of information need to be collected that do not necessarily reflect the project content. This may mean that additional measures need to be taken to ensure that participants are informed as to why the information is needed. This may require further information from the funding body themselves.
- The use of new media in the evaluation was broadly unsuccessful in evaluating these projects. However, the use of new media could be successful in evaluating projects in the future. This could include the use of Facebook, text messaging, smartphone applications or twitter for more quantitative information.

## **Part 4: Findings: Participants and Recruitment**

Combined, the projects sought to engage with up to 50 older and 50 younger participants from across the LGBT community. We show in the information presented below that this aim was broadly met, and each project engaged with between 20-30 participants each. In the case of Leicester, where the project has received funding to continue for a further three years, this number will continue to grow. Furthermore, in the case of Leicester, where the project consisted of an LGBT

history project where younger people were interviewing older people, information on the older people involved in the project was not always collected, as they were not strictly considered project participants. In the case of Leicester therefore, the number of older people involved in the project does represent an undercount.

**Table 1: Total number of participants by project**

Project	Camden	Leicester <sup>§</sup>	Stockport
<b>Number of Older Participants Engaged</b>	15*	8**	10**
<b>Number of Younger Participants Engaged***</b>	15	13	18
<b>Total Number of Participants</b>	30	21	28

Notes: \*based on evaluation forms and numbers responding to questions specifically for older participants \*\*based on the numbers aged over 25 who returned an evaluation form; all were aged under 40 \*\*\*information collected as part of funding requirements <sup>§</sup>Numbers for Leicester continue to grow.

For this evaluation we conducted in-depth interviews with thirty people involved with the projects, and we outline the characteristics of the participants below. We failed to interview any participants who defined themselves as bisexual (either older or younger), although the number of bisexual participants involved with the projects was relatively low.

**Table 2: Participant Demographics: Semi Structured Interviews**

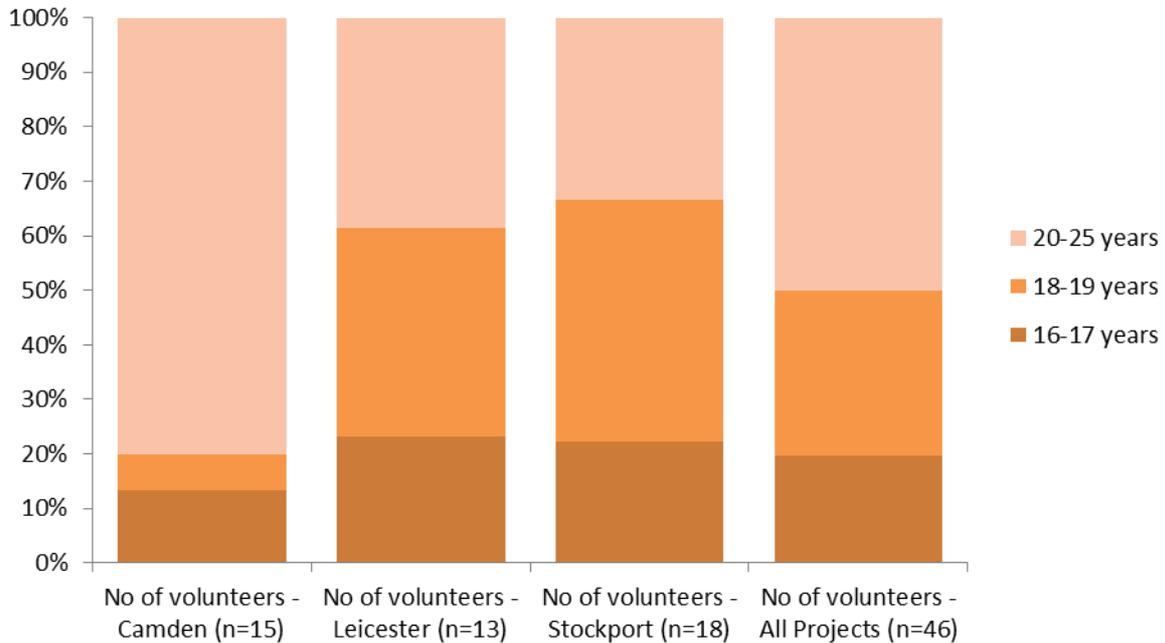
	Younger Participants				Older Participants				Project Worker	Total
	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Trans-gender	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Trans-gender		
<b>Camden</b>	1	1		2	4	1			4	13
<b>Leicester</b>		3*		1		1			3	8
<b>Stockport</b>	1	2				2		1	3	9
<b>Total</b>	2	6	0	3	4	4	0	1	10	30

Notes: \*Includes one participants in his thirties

## Age of participants

For the purposes of funding requirements, summary background information on younger participants on the projects was collected. In this case, younger participants were defined as being 25 years old or younger, although age was not used as criteria for actual participation on the projects.

## Age of younger participants



Most of the younger participants in the Camden projects were in their twenties, while for both other projects there was a more even spread of participants from across late teenage to mid-twenties (and beyond). Age was a relatively important factor for some of the youngest participants, who spoke of their surprise that more teenagers were not involved, feeling that they would also have benefitted from the project. While in the example below, being the youngest participant was not an issue for the individual, particularly given the support of project staff, this may not be the case more generally for projects dealing with sexuality and age. Future intergenerational projects working with the LGBT community may need to ensure that the youngest participants on projects are given additional support to reflect the depth of the issues covered in projects.

*Yeah, like I said I'm pretty sure I'm the youngest person here. If there had been a few more teenagers then I think it would be a bit better. Teenagers were a bit underrepresented - I'm 16/17 and the oldest person next to me would be 20. I think though if you advertise it to most teenagers that they'd be interested.*

Younger lesbian woman, Camden project

Adopting a more cross-generational approach, as opposed to an intergenerational approach, was identified as one way in which the projects could expand. Participants and project workers across the projects felt that the presence of those in their thirties and forties would have enriched the projects and represented a missed opportunity. Furthermore, the projects may have benefitted those of this age group, as much as they may have been enriched by their presence. The literature supports the notion that age discrimination within LGBT spaces can start at a relatively young age (for example Boxer (1997) finds that those as young as 32 can define themselves as 'old' within

LGBT spaces); those aged in their thirties and forties may already be experiencing some age discrimination for which a cross-generational approach could be beneficial. Within the projects, those in their thirties and forties could have acted as a natural bridge between the younger and older generations. Moreover, if one aim of the projects was to create multigenerational social networks within the LGBT community, the omission of those in their thirties and forties in the projects would have obvious detrimental consequences in meeting this aim.

*I have to say also that I think there is space to have people in their 30s and 40s involved as well that you can have all the age ranges so as long as there was not a dominance of the people in the middle age range, but I like the idea that intergenerational things can have all the generations, you know, including that middle range as well, they don't like...people don't want to be called middle aged but people in their 30s and 40s I would like to have seen.*

Older lesbian woman, Camden project

However, the project in Leicester did successfully recruit some participants who were aged in their thirties and forties (a quarter of those recorded through the evaluation forms). In addition, while all three projects emphasised that they were intergenerational projects with an aim of bringing together younger and older LGBT people, 'younger' and 'older' were not formally defined and no potential participant was denied a place on account of their age. In addition, maintaining an intergenerational as opposed to cross-generational focus may also have assisted in keeping a focus on age – the projects were essentially built on the premise of a disjoint between younger and older generations and altering the intergenerational focus may change this dynamic. Overall, while the projects were intergenerational in theory, in practice, these were essentially cross-generational projects, and future projects in the field are also likely to benefit from a similar inclusive approach.

### **Age and special provision**

In working with participants who may be older, provision was made to accommodate their particular mobility or other needs. This included arranging taxis or other transport to venues and ensuring that there was enough room for mobility scooters or other walking aids. All three venues were either situated on the ground floor or had lifts to activities taking place on higher floors. In addition, all three venues were centrally located in each area, which helped those reliant on public transport to access the activities.

*We made sure the older participants know how to get there and get taxis and what not to and fro. Certainly from an accessibility point of view it's great. Older people who can't get on the tube we've sorted out transport*

Project worker, Camden project

*The only issues we have had to sort are mobility issues. Some have their own little scooters they park and it's fantastic and some are in the centre itself.*

### **Ethnicity of participants**

In Leicester, almost a third of participants defined themselves as belonging to a non-White ethnic group. In Stockport, no participants defined themselves as belonging to a minority ethnic group, while in Camden one participant defined themselves as belonging to a minority ethnic group. Project staff from all projects discussed the challenges of recruiting participants from BME backgrounds, particularly older participants.

*...at a workshop in Tower Hamlets for instance I learned that there's no Bangladeshi word for gay - a lot of cultures don't have a concept. Certainly men will get off with men and women with women but there's no concept. Some of the cultures are notoriously homophobic. So recruitment from BME has been difficult.*

Project worker, Camden project

*It's impossible [to attract older BME LGBT people]! It is like being gay in the sixties. The number of people out is absolutely minimal, they are not out in the gay scene. Some younger BMEs joined the project, but with older BMEs is absolutely impossible. I can't think about any older LGBT BMEs that I know, I can't think about anyone. The gay scene is almost all white.*

Project worker, Leicester project

However, all of the projects made attempts to specifically recruit participants from minority ethnic groups, with mixed success. This was usually through sending publicity materials or making specific contact with BME LGBT networks. Longer, more established projects may have greater success in recruiting BME participants and arguably, there may be an even stronger case for strengthening intergenerational relations among BME LGBT people.

*We tried to make contacts with their BME group but it did not happen. I imagine it is not a group that wants to receive a lot of publicity. I think they want to try to remain invisible.*

Project worker, Stockport project

## **Case Study: Challenges of running Intergenerational work with the LGBT community – Criminal Record Bureau checks**

Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are used to check on the criminal backgrounds of workers and volunteers. Checks include spent and unspent convictions and other cautions, reprimands and final warnings given by the Police. CRB checks are requested when volunteers have regular contact with 'vulnerable clients' including children and young people either aged 18 years and under or aged 16 years and older. Where young people are "beneficiaries" or "service users" or "clients" or "recipients of services", CRB checks are needed for volunteering adults who are in regular contact with those under the age of 18. However, where young people are in volunteering situations themselves, CRB checks are needed for volunteering adults who are in regular contact with those under the age of 16.

In some cases, older gay men involved on projects may not be eligible to work with younger people due to a criminal history involving sexual offences which may include convictions for homosexual acts between gay men that took place before 1967. Homosexual acts between men were punished under "gross indecency" and "buggery" charges before the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which legalised homosexual acts in private between two men aged 21 or more (relationships between women have never been explicitly illegal in the United Kingdom). It wasn't until 2004 that offences for consensual buggery between two men were repealed. While past convictions for offences that are no longer illegal ought to be withdrawn from the citizens' criminal record, many gay men who have been convicted before 1967 still have a criminal record. The situation came to prominence recently through the case of John Crawford who is campaigning to clear his name and criminal record for offences committed in 1959<sup>2</sup>. He was informed that his criminal record would remain until his 100th birthday.

However, a debate on the clause 82 of the Protection of Freedom bill at the House of Commons on the 12th of May 2011 may change this situation. The debate concluded that the decriminalized offences such as buggery between two persons over 16 should not be disclosed in criminal records in the future. This change may help the situation of an estimated 16,000 men who have a criminal record for homosexual offences committed prior to 1967. However, before this change takes effect, the law needs to be amended. One source of support in the meantime for older gay men providing advice on removing past convictions is the charity Galop ([www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)).

Having a criminal record for homosexual acts committed before 1967 did impact on the experience of some older gay men on one project, and meant that some older men were not allowed to participate unsupervised. Until a change in law, having a criminal record for homosexual offences that took place before 1967 is also likely to impede on the participation of older gay men in future similar projects, and represents a challenge to intergenerational work among the LGBT community.

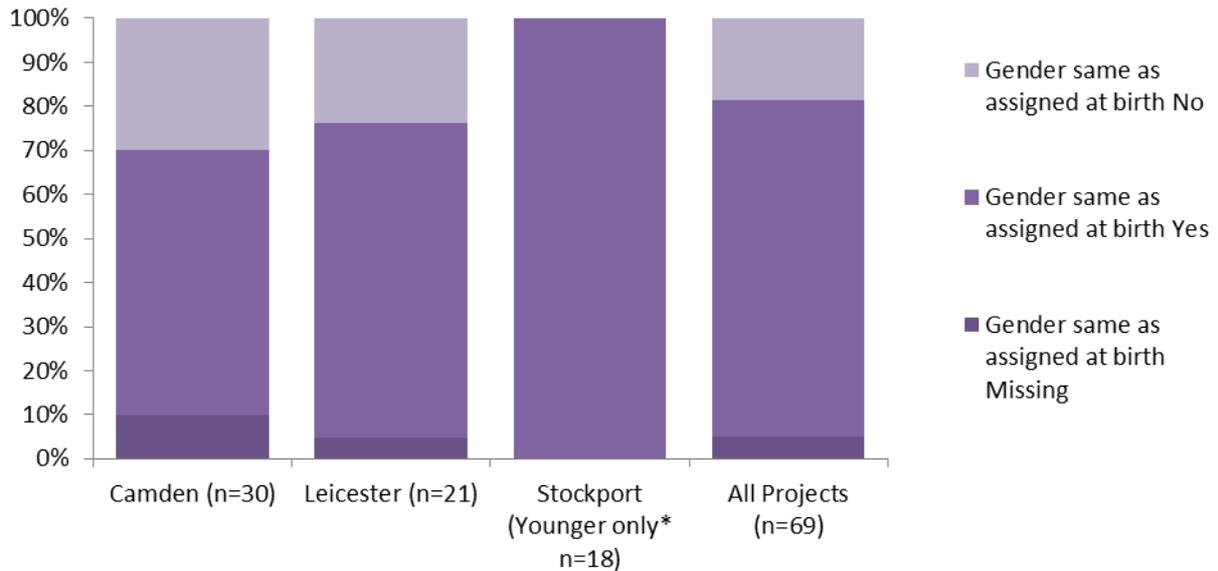
### **Working across the LGBT spectrum**

All three projects recruited participants from across the LGBT spectrum, and as displayed in the charts, no one group represented a majority group by a substantial margin. Although some project

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/feb/15/buggery-criminal-record>

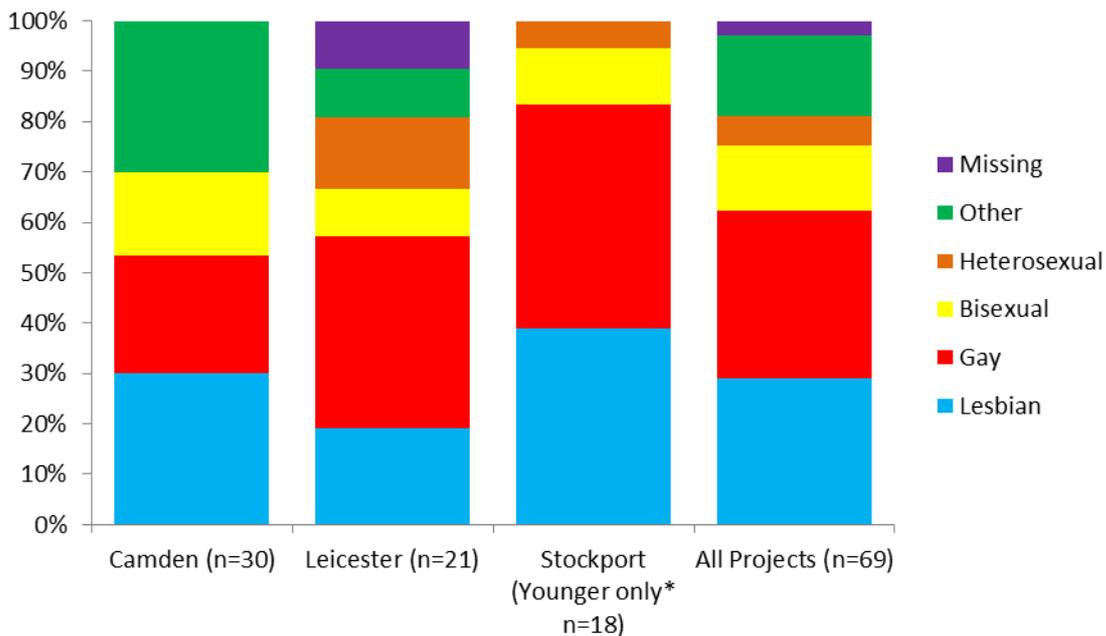
workers expressed concern that they had not recruited participants who defined themselves as bisexual, this was not borne out in the numbers. Across the projects combined, we estimate that around 20% of participants were transgender; around a third of participants were lesbian, a third gay and the remainder made up of participants who were bisexual, heterosexual, defined themselves as queer, or who defined themselves in another way<sup>3</sup>.

### Gender Identity of Participants\*



Notes: \* Younger participants only included for Stockport project

### Sexual orientation of Participants\*



Notes: \* Younger participants only included for Stockport project

<sup>3</sup> However, this excludes information from older participants in the Stockport project, where some information on the profile of participants was unable to be collected.

Adopting an inclusive approach across the LGBT spectrum added a further dimension to the projects in addition to exploring intergenerational relations. Several projects that have worked with the LGBT community in the past have worked with only one specific group within the community and adopting a broad based approach was felt by project workers and participants to substantially contribute to the learning experience. This was particularly the case for older LGBT people, who were more likely to have experienced life at a time where gender norms were more strictly adhered to and expression of identity and gender was more challenging.

*It's an eye opener for the older ones because they're not used to this gay stuff - for the older population they're not used to being out, gay, being who you want to be with no controls. And there's an element of wariness from older people but the workshops are breaking this down and kind of saying it's okay to be .....spangly!*

Project worker, Camden project

The projects were perceived by many, not only as making a contribution to unifying disparate communities on the grounds of age, but also on the grounds of identity. Several project workers and participants described initial reluctance to participate on the grounds of the inclusiveness of the projects, and older participants in particular welcomed the opportunity to mix beyond their own gender/orientation social groups.

*I was quite pleased really because I usually only choose to socialise with women and lesbians. So I was quite pleased that I was doing this because I was just stretching myself a bit. I found it okay, because it's not in your face because you're both focussing on something you do and it's not turned into a big thing or anything.*

Older lesbian Woman, Camden project

For some older participants, the diversity of identities was a draw to the project, without which they were unlikely to have participated.

*I prefer to mix with all kind of people - I can't stand to mix just with trans people – I like to have a more balanced perspective.*

Older transgender woman, Stockport project

However, the diversity of identities was recognised by some older people as being a challenge, one which they generally welcomed, although one which they also recognised as impeding the participation of older peers; this was also identified by project workers. However, while all participants did feel that the inclusiveness was a positive attribute of the projects, a small minority felt that there was room for future projects to work within one group alone.

*I think it's fulfilled its aims - and that was to work intergenerationally with LGBTQ - I think that's very useful. It's not something I'd choose myself because feminism is about women being hidden and this kind of thing can hide lesbians under the blanket. You can't get funding these days unless it's across the board though..... It's still a patriarchy and women are very badly treated in it. Also, gay men can be just as sexist as their heterosexual brothers - you can't generalise - but for the majority that's true.*

Older lesbian woman, Camden project

In addition, some participants described previous activities that had attempted to raise issues concerning other sections of the LGBT community in single orientation/identity groups as being unsuccessful. This indicates both the lack of cohesion across the LGBT community, and the challenges in taking a broad-brushed approach. In this respect, the projects succeeded in creating safe environments where participants' identities were explored, discussed and accepted. The projects also highlight the need for activities that work across the LGBT community to continue, given the degree of misunderstanding that may exist between different groups.

*[in describing an activity laid out for an older gay men's group] ...it was a film called boys don't cry. I don't know how many started watching it but we ended up with 7. One of the guys behind me just started laughing at one point and I thought, this is just bloody inappropriate. I mean the way people's mind stops, then that's what bothers me. It does come across because it's about trans - I was a bit disgusted with my own fellow gay people.*

Older gay man, Camden project

Not only does working across the LGBT spectrum meet a need for bringing often disparate groups together, the broad based approach can enrich the outcomes of the projects. Participants and project workers described in Camden how the broad approach enriched the art projects produced; in Leicester, histories from across the LGBT community were used to explore differences and commonalities in the development and treatment of different groups; in the Stockport project, including experiences from across the LGBT spectrum was perceived to strengthen the arguments made to service providers. Some participants also described how the diversity across the LGBT spectrum increased their own personal development and confidence. While working across the LGBT community may not be suitable for all types of projects, certainly the methodology and focus of the three projects evaluated here lent themselves well to a broad approach.

*I think there are definitely benefits because a wider spectrum means more choices of interviewees that have to deal with different situations and experiences. I don't think it would have had the same effect and would have been able to have a wide range of information you are going to get back and the broadness of details and possibly even stories.*

Younger gay man, Leicester project

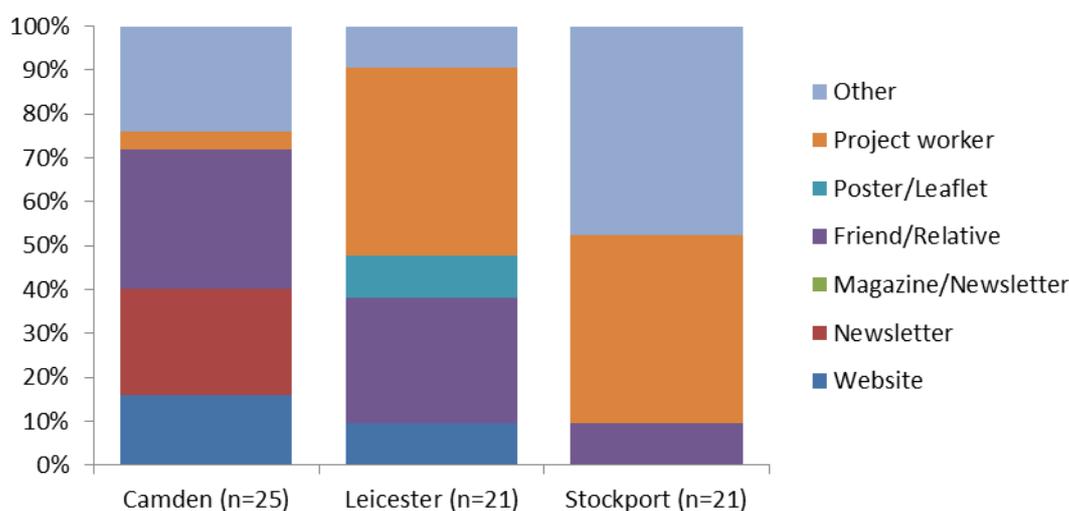
*It has certainly given me a lot of confidence as well, working in a group and with younger people and other older people, different gender people.*

Older lesbian woman, Camden project

## Recruitment and Retention

All three projects used different strategies for recruiting participants. In Stockport most participants were recruited by word of mouth as most participants were engaged in either existing older or younger LGBT networks. In Camden, a number of participants were also recruited through word of mouth. However, other methods were also employed. In particular, the use of a newsletter sent to mailing lists was particularly successful in recruiting older LGBT people and young transgender people on the project. Project workers also ran preliminary sessions with older LGBT groups in order to encourage participation. These were successful in encouraging the participation of older LGBT people, and such activities should be considered in the future in establishing activities aiming to work with harder to reach groups. The Leicester project used three main ways to recruit participants including placing an advert in a local LGBT newspaper, advertising on the Leicester LGBT Centre website and through contacting specific groups that are run out of the main centre. Of these, the advert placed in the local media was felt to be the least successful, and was also the most costly.

### Where did you hear about the project?



While different strategies were used to recruit younger and older participants, to a certain extent, future projects may wish to further develop some of the strategies used in these projects further. For example the use of social networking sites may be particularly effective in recruiting younger LGBT people, and were used in the Camden project with a notice on Facebook. While efforts were made on these projects to recruit those who were not already engaged with LGBT networks, and who arguably could benefit the most from the aims of intergenerational work, future projects that are of a longer duration may wish to consider how to target this group more directly.

In Leicester, where the project involved interviewing older people, the project was very dependent on social contacts of key individuals in order to access interviewees across the city. Interviewees

needed to be reassured about the confidentiality of their responses to ensure their participation. However, this may apply more widely in working with older LGBT people in similar intergenerational projects in the future, who may need to be reassured about publicity from activities or other aspects that may impinge on their privacy.

*All the people I have spoken to were really interested, but maybe when it comes to do an interview they actually did not want to do it. It is very personal, some older people feel at risk (police investigation, prosecution). So the interview needs to be confidential. The concept of coming out did not exist years ago, it was just a matter of who to trust.*

Project worker, Leicester project

All projects reported that some participants dropped out, but also reengaged with activities. All projects adopted a relatively relaxed approach to participation, and participants were able to drop in and out of activities dependent on their other commitments. This meant that, for example, some participants may only have participated in one session activity. In this evaluation we are not able to comment on how the level of participation may have affected outcomes. However, the relaxed approach to participation was welcomed by younger participants, who also valued that activities took place outside of normal working or study hours to encourage participation. Running activities at appropriate times and venues is also important to maximise participation from older people – many of the older people involved in this project were still working and those who had retired tended to have many other commitments. In the Camden project, activities took place on alternate Saturdays, while activities in both Leicester and Stockport took place on weekday evenings, around existing activities in the case of the former. Nevertheless, there was some degree of attrition in participation, particularly in Stockport and Leicester, where activities took place on a weekly basis and over a longer period of time. Attrition can affect the composition of the group; for example in Stockport, much of the attrition took place among the younger lesbian women, which altered the experience for those who did remain. In addition, a lack of continuity can impede on the overall experience for other participants, and can be disruptive in terms of achieving project goals. In addition, some younger people with other commitments are also particularly susceptible for dropping out.

*Those who are over the age of 19 tend to be university students, the downside of that is that they do come and go.*

Project worker, Leicester project

*There was not continuity, people were coming and dropping because for their age, attitudes and commitments.*

Older transgender woman, Stockport project

## **Key Learning Points: Participants and Recruitment in future work**

- Projects recruited a diverse set of participants in terms of age, gender identity and sexual orientation.
- Recruitment from across the LGBT spectrum undoubtedly enriched the projects in terms of outcomes for participants. The projects uncovered an unmet need in terms of projects that work across the LGBT spectrum, particularly with older people. While this approach is unlikely to be suitable for every project and every subject, in these projects this approach fulfilled an unmet need and helped foster understanding between groups that had previously been divided and disparate.
- Intergenerational projects in the future should recognise that working across the LGBT spectrum may be an approach that is unfamiliar to many LGBT people, particularly older LGBT people.
- Projects building upon this work may choose to adopt a cross-generational as opposed intergenerational focus. An intergenerational approach may help projects focus on issues surrounding age and identity. A successful approach used across all three projects here was to allow participants to self-define themselves as either young or old, through which no potential participant was denied a place on the basis of their age.
- Future projects may wish to consider the needs of the youngest participants (16-17 years) who may need additional support, although the youngest participants across all three projects involved in this evaluation did receive necessary support.
- In some cases, older participants who are involved in on-going projects involving young people aged 16-17 (and younger) and who are classified as 'service users' may need to undergo a CRB check. For some older gay men, this can prove problematic on the basis of convictions received when homosexual acts between two consenting men was illegal. Future projects will have to consider firstly whether CRB checks are necessary and secondly how to respond to the needs of participants who may have criminal convictions for offences that took place before 1967.
- While all three projects did make special provision to recruit participants from BME groups, these were not always successful, and reflect the difficulty in recruiting LGBT participants from BME groups, particularly older LGBT participants.
- All three projects planned activities on weekends and evenings to maximise participation. The needs of younger and older participants in terms of frequency of activities, location, and time and day of activities should be considered, as was the case in all three projects evaluated here, in future intergenerational projects. For example, activities taking place where there is a high student population may need to fix activities around term time to ensure recruitment and retention of the student population.
- Older LGBT participants may have special mobility and access issues that need to be considered in planning future intergenerational work.
- Provisions may need to be made and reassurances given to ensure the participation of older LGBT people in future work. This may include assurances that the participation of older people may not be included in subsequent publicity of the project, and that their contribution remains anonymous.

## Part 5: Findings: Pre-existing need for intergenerational work among the LGBT community

In this section, we explore the evidence collected from the projects for the need for projects that bring together older and younger LGBT people. Many of the themes raised in the evidence review that accompanies this report (see Potter et al 2011) were found in the responses of participants in this evaluation, and reinforce a pre-existing need for intergenerational work to take place among the LGBT community. Here, in this section, we review this evidence – later sections examine the methods used across the projects and the outcomes of this work.

Older participants were asked if and how a project that brought together older and younger LGBT people would have been useful when they were younger. For the majority of the older participants on the projects, the process of constructing an identity as an LGBT person took place against a context of substantial homophobia and misunderstanding, and in a time where same-sex relationships between men were essentially illegal.

*When I was younger I was still a criminal for not being heterosexual!*

Older gay man, Stockport

Visualising such projects taking place was therefore difficult for some, and some respondents could only comment on the perceived benefits of working intergenerationally in the current context. Regardless, all older participants responded positively and could see the value in the intergenerational approach, with achieving a greater understanding of one's identity as an LGBT person being a commonly cited benefit. For some of the older participants, acquiring a sense of normality about one's identity early on in life was something that they had lacked in their own transitions into adulthood and beyond; for the majority of older participants, attaining a sense of normality about identity early-on was perceived to be the key advantage for young people participating on the projects. In participating on the projects, many older participants expressed altruistic sentiments about their participation and viewed their participation as an important source of social support for younger people. Younger participants also expressed views that interacting with older people was a vehicle to gaining a fuller understanding their own identity as LGBT people.

*I just think back... I think it's good to sort of see...I think looking back when I was younger sort of seeing sort of older people and really how they coped with life and, you know, you can be, you can get on with your life and it can be fine, you can manage...you can work your way through it, you know...these sort of things.*

Older lesbian woman, Camden

*Interviewer: What do you hope to get out of this project and especially from the contact with older LGBT people?*

*Respondent: Understanding properly what it means to be a gay man.*

Younger gay man, Leicester project

Older participants were universal in their perception of the need for a project that examined ageing among LGBT people. However, this was almost exclusively expressed through the perceived capacity and desire of older people to instruct younger people on LGBT history. Older participants rarely discussed the potential for older people to learn from younger LGBT people, although this was sometimes expressed later when participants described their own personal outcomes. Some older people also questioned the need for a project that explored intergenerational relations among the LGBT community specifically, and pointed to a need to bring older and younger people together from all sections of the community. However, for the majority, it was the opportunity to explore intergenerational relations specifically among the LGBT community that was the main motive for joining the project.

*Respondent: Why is it felt there is a need for it? I mean do straights have problems. I mean why do we need it more than others?*

*I: [Explains]*

*Respondent: So I should be looking for young home help!*

*I: Not exactly!*

Older gay man, Camden project

## **Negotiating relationships with services and service providers**

### **Providing a forum for debate and support**

In adopting a specific focus on needs analysis across the LGBT community, the intergenerational project in Stockport explicitly examined how LGBT people of all ages negotiated relationships with a range of service providers, including the police, housing, the local authority, and local housing services. The project created a forum for both generations to discuss their experiences with service providers and produced a drama of some of the challenges the participants had actually experienced in dealing with service providers. The drama included the experience of a lesbian woman at a GP surgery who was denied treatment for thrush because of her sexual orientation. The sketch portrayed the embarrassment of the woman in being denied treatment, as well as the homophobia expressed by the GP who did not view her sexual orientation as 'normal'. A second scene portrayed the experience of gay schoolboy in a changing room after a Physical Education class being teased by classmates, who objected to getting changed with a gay person present. Rather than reprimand those who were teasing the schoolboy, the teacher on duty was shown to

resolve the situation through removing the boy from the remainder of the class and telling him to use the staff office as a changing room, a situation which continued for the remainder of the boy's years in school. Finally, a third sketch portrayed the experience of a couple on their honeymoon after a civil partnership that had just arrived at the holiday home they were staying at. The owner had assumed that the booking made for two with the title 'Mr' had been typing error, and objected to having a same-sex couple staying at the property; the couple were forced to move to alternative accommodation.

That these scenes reflected the actual experiences of participants on the projects, both younger and older, was testament to the discrimination and homophobia that mark the lives of many LGBT people. However, the project created a space where these experiences could be shared, and the intergenerational element of the project facilitated this through: exploring a more diverse range of experiences; providing a space where more confident and experienced older participants could advise younger participants and where younger participants could gain confidence; and where younger participants could share experiences and also help older participants understand their own situations. In fact, the intergenerational element of all three projects implicitly involved the discussion and experience of discrimination faced by LGBT people historically in accessing services equitably, as discussed in later sections.

*I enjoyed the integration. If people don't interact, whatever group they are and don't talk to each other, you don't understand their problems and as a consequence also your problems as well.*

Older trans-woman, Stockport project

Furthermore, some younger participants across all projects expressed the view that being part of an LGBT community helped them make sense of earlier experiences, particularly of difficulties experienced in school years. For those same respondents, gaining a snapshot into the lives of older LGBT people, and gaining the support and confidence from older LGBT, was said to be an important part of overcoming these earlier difficulties.

*I came out in secondary school when I was 14 through no fault of my own.....I think if you have an older and younger group separate you never really learn from each other and having something like this really helps.*

Young lesbian woman, Camden Project

## **Needs analysis**

The Stockport project undertook a survey of needs across over 150 older and younger members of the LGBT community in Manchester. While the LGBT community had enjoyed some success in the North West, with the Canal Street area being one of the most prominent markers of success of the LGBT scene, this had had not been without its problems. Canal Street itself was described in the research as a 'ghetto' that was increasingly dominated by younger white gay men and heterosexual 'tourists' and was also becoming increasingly associated with drugs and crime (Speier, 2011); these

views are also shared elsewhere in the literature (for example Casey 2004). The project undertook research examining:

- Homelessness and Housing
- Workplace and Education
- Health and healthcare
- Hate crime
- Alcohol and drugs

The research highlighted the need for services providers to account for the needs of LGBT clients specifically. A fifth of respondents to the survey had experienced negative treatment in educational establishments based on their sexuality or gender identity, with similar numbers reporting negative experiences with the police or healthcare services (Age Concern Stockport 2011). Three-in-ten respondents (30%) had been the victim of a hate crime while almost half (49%) thought that it was important for health professionals to be aware of their gender or sexual identity. The research participants both identified examples of good practice and developed a number of recommendations on how to service providers could improve the services they provide to LGBT people including :

(relating to Drugs and Alcohol services): *“My alcohol worker is supportive of my sexuality and asks questions so she knows the best way to support me around my sexuality”*

(relating to Education): *“Make teachers challenge the [homophobic] words that were used”*

(relating to Education): *“Employ more LGBT people to empathise”*

(relating to Healthcare services): *“Next of kin questions – should be accepted no matter what the sexuality”*

(relating to Healthcare services): *“NHS nurses should be supportive of same-sex partner visiting”*

The results of the research were also used to form a ‘toolkit for social support’ among LGBT people, focussing on the experience of service users. While it is possible that research focussing on the needs of LGBT people could have been carried out with either a younger or older group, an intergenerational approach enriched the research. Many of the services that were the focus of the needs analysis provide services for people across the lifecourse – focussing on one age group alone would not have provided an accurate representation of the needs of LGBT clients. The high number of respondents reporting experiences of unfair treatment from service providers based on their sexuality uncovered the need for further intergenerational work to research and combat discrimination that LGBT people of all ages may encounter.

Finally, while not indicative of a pre-existing need for intergenerational projects in itself, the majority of participants who took part in all the projects reported greater knowledge of LGBT specific services available. For example, just over half (56%) of respondents from the Camden project reported that their knowledge of LGBT services had improved; similar results were found for the Leicester project, while almost all of those on the Stockport project reported improved knowledge. An emerging body of evidence reviewed in Potter and colleagues (2011) highlights the difficulty that

LGBT people, both younger and older, may experience in accessing services; these results suggest that an intergenerational work may represent one method that could be used to improve relations and knowledge.

## **Strengthening intergenerational ties in the absence of strong familial ties**

For some, the projects represented an opportunity for LGBT people to recreate some of the cross-generational ties and dialogue that members of the LGBT community may not experience in the family environment. This was related to the supposition that older LGBT people were less likely than older non-LGBT people to have children and grandchildren of their own, thereby limiting familial contact. Younger LGBT people may also be less likely to have familial contact than non-LGBT peers – family relations may have become strained due to younger people recently having come out and there may be some social distance between young people and their families while they establish their identity (see Potter et al 2011).

*“For many people the family environment is a heterosexual set up and so if you are a younger person who is LGBT you are not going to have that kind of conversation with your grandparents, people from different generations and I think there is some value bringing LGBT people together across generations to share some of those exchanges to basically form bonds in the way you do within family life and vice versa.”*

Project worker, Camden project

Similarly, the intergenerational approach was also viewed as a way of providing support and guidance for young people in negotiating familial relationships through difficult times. The intergenerational dimension was viewed as particularly helpful to young people in sharing experiences and dealing with coming out to family and friends. In the literature, coming out was highlighted as a difficult stage in life for most LGBT people, although particularly for transgender people who, in some cases, faced a double coming out as initially identifying as lesbian or gay before realising their transgender identity creating a second wave of rejection and confrontation (Takács, 2006). In this research, young transgender people also talked about the ways in which meeting older LGBT people helped deal with coming out.

*If someone in my situation as trans comes and says they need to find something vital, like how to tell parents, for example, and see how people did it in the past and how they reacted to their parents' reactions. You'll find people who've been excommunicated by their parents, but you see that you survive it...it's not the end of the world if it happens.*

Young transgender woman, Leicester project

Young people from across the LGBT spectrum in all three projects discussed the benefits of working intergenerationally in showing how to deal with common experiences and emotions,

including coming out. The projects opened up a space for the discussion of these common issues, without these necessarily being the focus of the projects, leading to the discussion of these experiences being a more organic process.

*It helps knowing that there are other people going through the same things and the project allows you to express information that you might find difficult to talk about as well. So you can use it in an abstract way...still getting out a lot of emotions without being direct about it. Yeah, basically I think it can help.*

Young gay man, Camden project

## **Providing LGBT Role models for young people**

Some literature highlights the paucity of LGBT role models for younger LGBT people (Paulick 2008, Talburt 2004). Role models are said to help young people cultivate self-esteem and counter negative stereotypes. A lack of role models among LGBT youth is said to increase the risk of drug abuse and depression (Paulick 2008, pp13). Reasons for the lack of role models among the LGBT community are likely to reflect the years of marginalisation, with workplace discrimination possibly limiting success among LGBT people, or limiting success while outwardly identifying as an LGBT person. Among all three projects, younger participants spoke of the value that an intergenerational approach had, both in providing role models for negotiating difficult lifecourse stages such as coming out (also discussed earlier), but also in providing examples of older LGBT who were succeeding in their careers.

*...there's the idea of having models, sort of inspiration in a way in the way they handled their lives and how people responded to that in the 60's. Life is a lot easier these days even if there are still idiots around....*

Young transgender woman, Leicester project

*Project worker: So when we went to the university did you think Simon was gay - did you think it was possible to be a professor and be gay?*

*Participant: Well, no I didn't really, not before.*

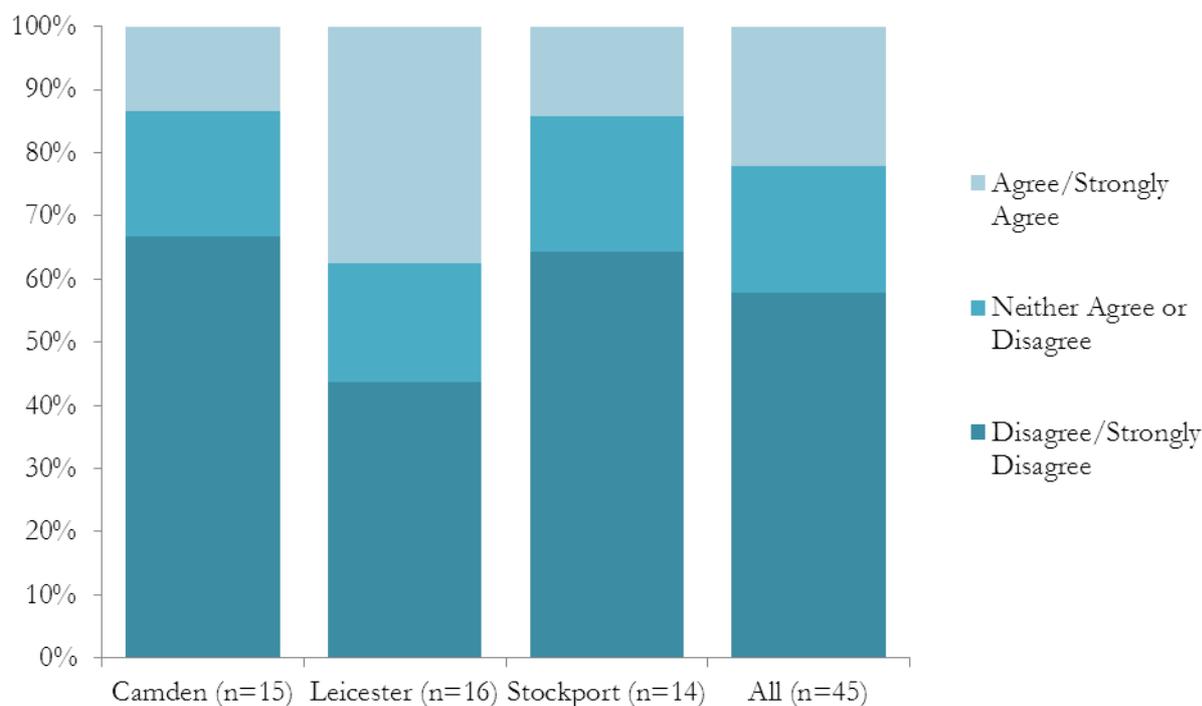
Group interview with project worker and young lesbian woman, Stockport project

*I think there for a lot of younger people, seeing older people in a way gave them thought about the way they want to be [in the future]. For example, the range of different professions that were in the room - I think this really encouraged younger people to think where they want to go with their lives and how they approach life and be positive.*

Project worker, Camden project

Finally, our own evaluation survey showed that less than a quarter of younger people had older LGBT role models before they participated on the projects. It is particularly concerning that less than a quarter of a small population of young LGBT people who are already engaged with LGBT networks claim to have older LGBT role models, as this is likely to represent an underestimate among a more representative population of LGBT young people.

As a younger LGBT person, I had older LGBT role models



## Reducing discrimination and stereotypes within and beyond the LGBT community

In terms of overcoming discrimination and stereotypes, particularly among the LGBT community, younger people were more likely to cite the need for intergenerational projects from the standpoint of older people. In turn, they were less likely to perceive themselves as having been subject to age or identity based discrimination, both within and beyond the LGBT community. This conforms to the arguments of some that LGBT resources and entertainment – such as bars and clubs which constitute a large part of the ‘scene’ – are more likely to be sorted on the basis of age (Boxer 1997).

*But I've also noticed that there is some young ones of 18, 19, 20 who look at people 25 and older as if they shouldn't be out on the gay scene because, that past 25 you are too old to go out and should be at home with some cocoa wrapped up watching TV. Sometimes they don't say it, it's just that they look like it and I'm thinking "wait until you get to 25" and you will get the same thing.*

Younger gay man, Leicester project

However, this was tempered with the recognition that those who were likely to be the focus of ageism within the LGBT community were also those who were most likely to have experienced discrimination from wider society. In fact, for some younger participants, learning about the experiences of older LGBT helped to contextualise their own experiences of homophobia within wider society.

*The old ones sometimes are irritated I think when they see how easy it is now and how they [the younger generation] take it for granted...they sort of like don't get it...and think [identifying as LGBT] it's about being free to walk in a gay bar. They take that for granted while the older generation had to be behind locked doors.*

Younger gay man, Leicester project

Young people across the projects were asked to describe their own pre-existing thoughts about older people. A number of the young people we spoke to stated that they held no pre-existing stereotypes. This is a likely reflection of the type of young people who would be attracted to an intergenerational project, but may also reflect a form of social desirability bias, where respondents tailor their answers to gain the approval of others. For those younger participants who did acknowledge that they may have held preconceived ideas about older LGBT people, they were also likely to admit that these prevented intergenerational contact.

*....I thought that older people were rude and not approachable, I don't know why, but they are not like that.*

Younger gay man, Stockport project

Bringing older and younger people together on the intergenerational projects was found to be one way of overcoming stereotypes. Some older people also stated that intergenerational work was also important for overcoming negative views held by older LGBT people about younger LGBT people. One specific advantage for older people of working intergenerationally within younger LGBT people specifically was that this allowed older people, who may otherwise be disconnected from the mainstream LGBT community, to learn about the plurality of identities that are held by young people. While these identities may not necessarily represent new constructs, the social context of recent history means that the plurality of identities may previously have been hidden. As described by a project worker below, for older LGBT people who may have had to adopt heteronormative behaviours, and even going as far as entering into marriages, in order to gain partial acceptance or to keep their identity hidden, the plurality of identities among LGBT people can initially arouse feeling of wariness and misunderstanding. All three projects constructed a forum for dialogue which included discussion on the plurality of identity. In Camden, the project was delivered in partnership with Gendered Intelligence, a support group that work extensively with transgender youth, and the expression of gender and sexual identity through arts was a particular focus of this project.

*There is a lot of ageism but not just towards older people, but also coming from older people towards younger people. I think we need to work on this gap between them.*

Older gay man, Stockport project

*...and there's an element of wariness from older people but the workshops are breaking this down and kind of saying it's okay to be ...'spangly'!.... I think that the message that's coming across is 'I don't understand what it's like to be trans but were in the same room and it's fine'. So it's breaking down those boundaries by breaking down the ignorance.*

Project worker, Camden project

## **Improving social support, social skills and mental health**

Working intergenerationally was identified by younger participants as being beneficial in improving their social skills and particularly their confidence when interacting with people. The intergenerational element in particular was perceived as helpful to young people's confidence through opening up the discussion of the difficulties LGBT people faced in the past and contrasting with the present day situation – this was viewed as an empowering process for younger people. The intergenerational element also boosted the confidence of younger people when interacting with older people – skills that have transparent benefits for the personal development of younger people.

*I suppose I trust people more than before and I am coming out of my shell.*

Younger gay man, Stockport project

This was also a beneficial process for older people. On a broad level, all older participants enjoyed the process of working with younger people on a common goal. However, among older LGBT people, years of living in a climate of criminalisation or severe discrimination based on sexual or gender identity was recognised as being a threat to mental health. This fits into the minority stress model that hypothesises that stigma, prejudice, and discrimination create a hostile and stressful social environment that causes a higher risk of mental health problems (Meyer 2003). The model describes the way in which stress processes including the experience of homophobic events, expectations of rejection based on one's sexuality, concealing one's identity, and internalized homophobia, can lead to an elevated risk of developing mental health disorders among LGBT people compared to non-LGBT people. The process of discussing the experience of living through years of criminalisation was identified by younger and older participants as an opportunity to counteract years of internalisation of negative emotions or fears for older LGBT people.

*It could help them come to be aware of how people react, to see that it's not criminalized anymore. Yes some people don't like it, but it's not the case everywhere, and to see that it's now accepted. It can make them realise that people want them to talk about it and might help them being comfortable with whom they are.*

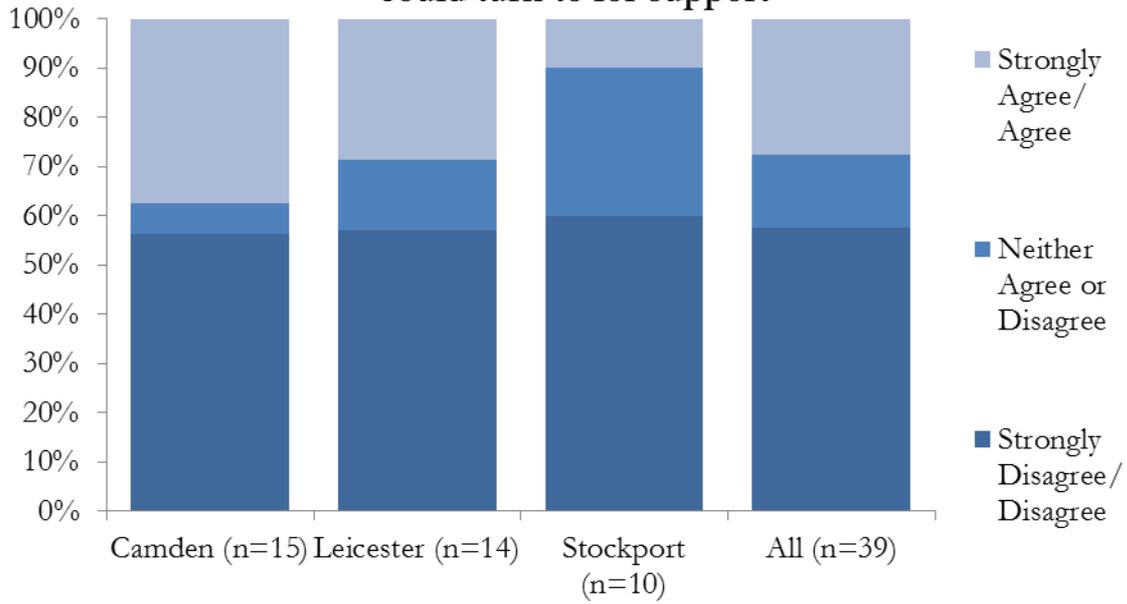
Younger gay man, Leicester project

*People need to be reassured you understand their situation. For a number of years being homosexual was against the law and people of my age may internalise it still. It takes time.*

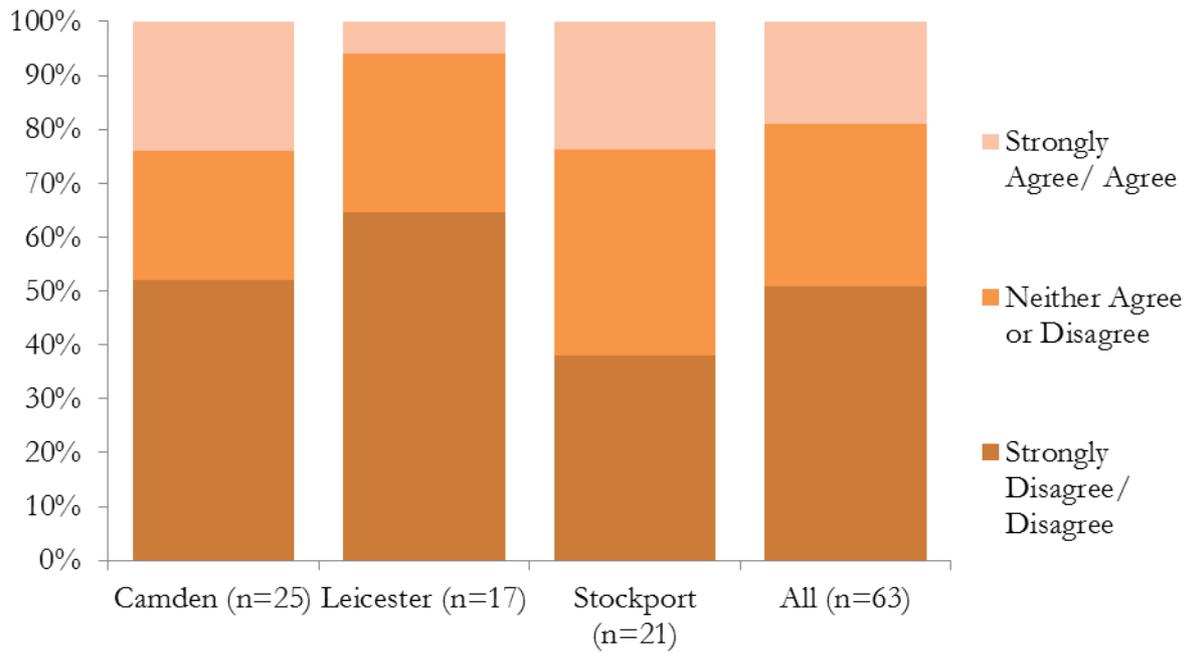
Older gay man, Stockport project

Our own evaluation survey showed that among a small sample of older LGBT people, the majority reported that they did not have a younger LGBT person that they could turn to for support. While based on a small sample, the results nevertheless provide indicative evidence that older LGBT people generally report low levels of interaction with younger LGBT peers, and that this translates into lower levels of social support. Similarly, the results showed that only around half of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they were lonely. This is particularly surprising given that the majority of participants were recruited from extant LGBT social networks (discussed later). It would be expected that this group of socially engaged people would be at relatively low risk of loneliness. One explanation for this relatively high level of loneliness could be the low level of intergenerational interactions found among LGBT people (see Potter et al 2011). Other literature also supports the notion that intergenerational contact itself is predictive of lower levels of loneliness (for example de Jong Gierveld et al 2011). If this is the case, we may expect that the relatively high levels of loneliness among LGBT are symptomatic of an unmet need for social interaction and particularly intergenerational social interaction, and that all three projects represent a method of reducing loneliness among LGBT people through fostering intergenerational relationships.

**As an older LGBT person, I have younger LGBT people I could turn to for support**



**I often feel lonely**



## **Key Learning Points: Pre-existing need for working intergenerationally among the LGBT community**

- Younger and older participants value an intergenerational approach
- A number of participants of the projects had experienced discrimination on the basis of their sexual or gender identity from service providers including those delivering services in health, education, housing, crime and the workplace. An intergenerational design to projects provides an alternative forum for debate and support for younger and older LGBT people to discuss their needs as service users. The intergenerational element explicitly allows for comparisons to be made between historical and current contexts; this empowers LGBT people to understand how situations have changed, to improve their knowledge of the services that are available, and allows service providers to understand how to better improve the services they deliver to LGBT people.
- For younger LGBT people, intergenerational projects provide a space where young people can talk to older people about common experiences. Many young people on these projects valued the opportunity to discuss lifecourse issues that were specific to LGBT people, such as coming out, with older LGBT who had successfully negotiated these experiences. The benefit of this experience for younger LGBT people's self-esteem and mental health are transparent.
- For older LGBT people, intergenerational projects provide a space where older people can interact with younger people.
- The majority of young LGBT people do not report having an older LGBT role model. We find some indicative evidence that the lack of cross-generational dialogue between younger and older LGBT people may lower career aspirations. Intergenerational projects where older LGBT people and younger LGBT people interact can expose younger LGBT people to a diverse range of career choices that they may not otherwise have considered. More broadly, meeting older LGBT people who are comfortable and confident in their identity can provide role models for younger LGBT people.
- Some participants reported that older LGBT people were likely to be shut out from mainstream LGBT culture on the basis of age. Some younger participants also reported that they held negative views of older LGBT people before the projects began. Intergenerational projects provide a space where such negative perceptions can be challenged.
- For the perspective of older LGBT people, intergenerational projects also provide the opportunity to challenge some of the negative views they may hold toward younger LGBT people. In particular, intergenerational projects allow older LGBT people to learn about the diversity of sexual and gender identities that exist among younger LGBT people; in comparison such freedom of identity may have been substantially restricted in the youth of today's older LGBT population.
- Our results indicate a relatively high degree of loneliness and social isolation among LGBT people. We also posit that this could represent an underestimate given that the sample population includes mainly those who are already engaged with LGBT social networks. Intergenerational projects represent one way in which this social isolation can be overcome.

# Part 6: Findings: Running Intergenerational Projects using different methods among the LGBT Community

## Using arts as a methodology

In the Camden, the intergenerational project used the arts as a method to bring older and younger LGBT people together. The project consisted of four arts based workshops run from the Central School of Speech and Drama on alternate Saturdays, with a final exhibition event later. At the planning stage, the arts theme initially included photography, video, installations, sound and creative writing, although expanded to include more traditional arts based media such as painting to accommodate the interests of older people in particular. This followed a concern that focussing on new media alone would not attract sufficient numbers of older people. Nevertheless, many older people did engage with new media in producing pieces for a final exhibition, which for some represented one of their first experiences in working with new media, and contributed to the learning experience.

*Yes, I did a [video] piece with a young trans man and I am an older lesbian so we both wrote a piece, a text and then we lip-synced each other and I found it really good.*

Older lesbian woman, Camden project

However, project organisers and participants did speculate that for some, and particularly older gay men, the arts theme was not in itself an attractive media for an intergenerational project. Nonetheless, there was substantial participation from this group on the project, and those that did attend valued the opportunity to share their experiences of being LGBT in the past as well as learning about other people's experiences.

*In the photograph I was someone aged 14 and for someone aged 14 in my environment in the 60's it was very difficult and I felt completely isolated. The story is there in the exhibition I think.*

Older gay man, Camden project

Before the project began, project workers went to recruit potential participants at an older men's and an older women's group. This was an important step in gaining participation from older people as it gave project workers the opportunity to discuss the project, address any questions, and provide reassurance as to the content of the workshops and the arts based methods. Future intergenerational projects should consider this recruitment strategy, and incorporate this into project planning.

*You can express through art in many ways because when I first heard about the project, my immediate reaction was "oh, that's not me" but when I talked to them about it and they said "of course it's for you, you don't have to be an artist, you can just come and try things out" and that's what I did...I am glad they encouraged me.*

Older lesbian woman, Camden project

Usage of the arts reflected the interests of the project workers, who have a long-standing expertise in delivering arts based projects to LGBT people, and LGBT youth in particular. Project workers were enthusiastic about the potential of the arts to bring people together and to help people identify some of the challenges that they may face in their lives. In doing so, this also paved the way for discussing ways of overcoming some of these challenges.

*Art is part of our cultural life. Cultural performances and behaviours are often homophobic, transphobic or kind of sexist and misogynist and for us we want to open and disclose that, this sort of is a cultural norm, if you like. It is not easy to do because you cannot always see this kind of behaviour and people have a poor understanding of what it means to be LGBT. I think art is a really good way to represent and visualise these norms in a really subtle way and to challenge what we would call heteronormativity and hopefully this education through arts will shift people behaviour on how they treat older and younger LGBT people.*

Project worker, Camden project

*Art lets people show their inner selves instead of just outer selves that people see all the time...so being in touch with your state of being or state of mind...art is a good way to do that.*

Younger transgender man, Camden project

However, running an arts project was not without its challenges. While participants were encouraged to work together in pairs or larger groups, many worked alone; this may have impeded the intergenerational learning component of the project for some. From a pragmatic level, it also meant that a number of volunteers were needed to be on hand to assist participants with their art pieces, particularly those participants using multimedia equipment.

*It's like spinning plates and you have to keep them going - people using software that they just haven't used before - just so much going on that you need that many people on it.*

Project worker, Camden project

In addition, the usage of different media meant that not all the participants worked in the same space at once. Those using video and editing equipment worked alone on their pieces, which again may have impeded the experience and the intergenerational component of learning, although none

of the participants interviewed in the evaluation expressed this opinion. However, had there been restrictions placed on the number of arts media available for participants, this in turn may have impacted on recruitment of participants.

*I think it would be interesting maybe to form slightly larger groups because I do think that some people doing editing spent a lot of time on their own and in the future I need to manage better the expectations of people going down that road. And I think people might have felt lonely at times, but they were also committed to finish off their products and I think they were really happy about what they have achieved.*

Project worker, Camden project

Participants were neither required to work in pairs or to attend all sessions. As it was important to establish a safe environment where all participants could express their views and opinions, each workshop began with an induction session. For those participants who were regular attendees, this would prove to be repetitive. In addition, different people attending different sessions may have compromised the development of social relations between participants, and may have impinged on the development of a group dynamic and identity. Some participants in interviews reflected that they appreciated the natural way in which bonds between people were allowed to develop, although some did reflect that it wasn't the lack of paired work that impeded the development of social relations, but the short duration of the project. Nevertheless, over a third of participants (9 of 26) reported an improvement in the way that they mixed in social situations, which suggests that the project did successfully foster social relations for many involved.

*we didn't pair or put people together to make an art work...that was entirely through conversations that they had or relationships and discussion that were formed and maybe that is something we would do differently*

Project worker, Camden project

*I think there is a drawing back in people sometimes ...and you have to be around people a bit longer for them to get to know you.*

Older lesbian woman, Camden project

Finally, both participants and project workers reflected that the arts represented a concrete theme with which to bring people together. There was a consensus that bringing people together simply to discuss their issues would not be enough for a project to succeed and the arts theme and the final exhibition gave the project focus.

*Yes, I think that the art focus is fantastically important and I think that...I think it...because there is going to be an end product it focuses people and avoids some of the self-consciousness about what*

*we are here for and some of the feelings of slight artificiality you can get in getting people together just to discuss, although that in itself it can be valuable, but I think it was particularly that it had the art focus.*

Older lesbian woman, Camden project

## **Using advocacy and research in an LGBT intergenerational project**

The project in Stockport used advocacy and research as the main theme. In this project, older and younger participants came together initially to discuss and research their experiences with service providers. The group went to Salford University to develop their research skills, which also allowed the group to take ownership over the research. The research consisted of a survey of local LGBT people (see Part 4 for most information) and the group then conducted three workshops and focus groups with younger and older LGBT people and with service providers. The results of the workshops and surveys have since developed into a toolkit for service providers to understand the experiences and needs of LGBT people (Speier 2011). This project was the only one of the three to specifically engage with service providers. In Leicester, and to a certain extent Camden, much of the focus was on a historical perspective to understand the identity and treatment of LGBT people and how this may have changed. In Stockport, however, the focus was very much on the contemporaneous treatment of LGBT people by service providers, albeit with some recognition of how this may have changed.

Much of the content delivered in Stockport was relatively challenging for participants, who had to both learn new research skills, as well as discuss openly their experiences with service providers. However, the activities were also delivery in a participatory way. For example, most participants recalled what was termed a 'speed dating' night, which comprised a session where younger and older people had a short time to quiz each other on treatment by service providers, and most expressed that they had enjoyed the experience. In addition, the findings from the research and workshops were translated into a drama to make the findings more accessible.

Participants were positive about the use of advocacy and research in the project and the project has left a permanent legacy in improving the lives of the local LGBT population, not only through the production of the toolkit, but also through open and frank discussions that took place with service providers. However, some of the younger participants and project workers did express the view that the content of the project was sometimes a little too challenging, and that some work was needed to repackage the academic focus.

*Make it less confusing, especially for the younger ones, because when we came out of that place, the Hatworks, the younger ones were like what were they talking about - what are we doing - I didn't even know what we were doing - I thought I had my head round it and then I went and realised I didn't!!!*

Younger lesbian woman, Stockport project

*If I'm honest, what confused it was that there's a very big piece of it that's academic and big toolkit and to translate that to the young people has been too difficult .....I think the bit that will come out, that will be great, but it's been very difficult to translate it.*

Project worker, Stockport project

Nevertheless, most participants would recommend the project to others. Furthermore, all participants who responded (n=14) reported that they had improved their knowledge of LGBT services available. In addition, the focus of the research on issues surrounding health and risk, including involvement with drugs and alcohol services, also had some impact in reducing reports of engaging with risky behaviours. Participants were asked to express agreement or disagreement with the statement 'I often found myself in risky situations I could otherwise avoid, or doing things that could damage my health or happiness', and to reflect at the beginning of the project and at the end. Almost two fifths (8 of 21) were less likely to agree with the statement at the end of the project than at the beginning, with the remainder expressing no change.

The project was scheduled to continue for three months, although went on for longer. Participants themselves suggested that even more time was needed as the project started off at a relatively slow pace. Given that advocacy and research may be less participatory methods of bringing older and younger LGBT people together than, for example, arts, this additional time may be needed in order for social relations to build. Older people, more than younger people, cited that it took some time for social relations to build and for them to feel comfortable in participating. For older people, this may have reflected the fact that the older group were using a space that was usually only occupied by the younger LGBT group, as opposed to a space that was neutral to both groups. However, the length of the project also meant that this issue dissipated in importance as the project progressed.

*I think we would have needed more time, originally was meant to be a 3 months project, but it went longer than that. It took a while for people to accept and participate and it would have been useful to use different themes to stimulate participation. It could have it done double the time!*

Older transgender woman, Stockport project

In pragmatic terms, the project did encounter a number of issues that were related to both the intergenerational nature of the project and to some other administrative issues. As discussed earlier, participants on the projects were subject to CRB checks, reflecting the length of the project and age of the participants and this was problematic for some older gay men convicted for homosexual offences committed when consensual acts between gay men were illegal. In addition, some of the activities involved travel to other venues, which required parental consent for some of the younger participants. Administratively, this was an added layer of bureaucracy. However, for some younger participants who may not have come out to their parents, obtaining parental consent for an LGBT activity is problematic for other, transparent, reasons.

Finally, the project was based in the Base, an LGBT youth centre, which at the time was run by Stockport Local Authority Youth Services. While the Local Authority had been generally supportive of the project, there were some issues encountered in terms of publicity. Over the course of the

project, it became clear that funding for the Base was about to end imminently, as Stockport Local Authority was to withdraw funding for a large portion of its youth services. From the perspective of continuing the work of the project, this is a catastrophic development, as precludes the use of the venue and access to the younger LGBT network, without continuation funding. From an evaluation perspective, this made obtaining access to younger participants difficult, despite the best efforts of the project workers. Closure was imminent as the intergenerational project drew to a close, despite the positive outcomes from the intergenerational project and the vital work of the Base in supporting young local LGBT people more generally.

## **Using LGBT history as a methodology**

The intergenerational project in Leicester focussed on history as a way of fostering intergenerational relations between older and younger LGBT people. Younger participants were trained in interview techniques by staff from the local university to interview older LGBT people. Participants were asked to attend training sessions that were delivered on Friday evenings at the Leicester LGBT Centre, before carrying out interviews. Young people were generally paired, and were also accompanied by a member of the project staff when interviewing older people (either staff from the Centre or from the university). Young people were expected to interview at least 2-3 older people, and to be involved in the transcription and analysis of interviews, and to have a role in production of a final exhibition. However, as discussed earlier, this project received continuation funding for three years, and therefore measuring final outcomes and impact is problematic for this report.

Most of the participants involved spoke positively about the experience of learning interview techniques. There was a consensus that their involvement in the project was worthwhile as participants felt like they were making a contribution to their own community. Firstly, this was on the basis of recording history from older LGBT people, as it was generally felt that the history of LGBT people had been neglected. Secondly, participants felt that the act of talking to older people was in itself altruistic; as much as younger people would capture the histories of older people and learn about life as an LGBT person in the past, younger people also felt that older people could learn about life as a younger LGBT person. As a result of the training session delivered before young people conducted interviews, issues that may have faced older LGBT people in the past had been raised and discussed, and younger participants already exhibited substantial levels of awareness and sensitivity as to the discrimination older people would have faced on the grounds of their sexuality. The training sessions in this sense served to cement young participants' commitment to the project and their interest in interviewing older LGBT people. Young participants also expressed the view that the act of interviewing older LGBT people, and allowing older people to tell the stories of their lives, would in itself be beneficial for older people.

*It's true that there isn't any documentation or anything on LGBT history so hopefully with this project we can do something about that.*

Younger transgender woman, Leicester project

*You can hope they [younger people] will have a better understanding of the LGBT History because they have to listen and understand what they're being told. There are other benefits and I think that getting older people to be interviewed - older people enjoy telling their stories, especially for historical records which 'value' people's life stories. The process is sometimes as important as the result in these projects. So they will just talk and listen to each other.*

Project worker, Leicester project

Younger participants were enthused about the experience of interviewing older people, as they perceived this to be a process helping to develop their skills as well as their understanding of LGBT history.

*I have already done one interview and it went really well. I did that with Colin from Leicester University and it was a fantastic training.*

Younger gay man, Leicester project

The process of collecting data first hand, as opposed to using secondary sources, was perceived to have added value and had a much greater impact on the experience of participants. This added value was usually expressed through sentiments about a greater understanding of what life was like as an LGBT person in the past, which gave a greater appreciation for advances in LGBT rights, but also helped identify where further progress was needed.

*It is in the way that when you hear people who speak about what they've gone through, it has a bigger of an impact than if you just read it because you can really get the emotion which gives a you an idea of what it really means and how fortunate you are to be in a situation where you don't really have to be worried about being arrested of being outcast.*

Younger gay man, Leicester project

*We may think that for the LGBT community things were worst in the past but it might not be the case and these interviews are useful for both young and older people to realize that.*

Project worker, Leicester project

Several younger participants hoped that the experience of interviewing older people and meeting new people would help to develop their confidence. At the beginning of the project, almost half of participants did not agree with a statement that 'I mix well in social situations' (8 of 19). However, a number of the younger participants we spoke to in the evaluation reported that they felt more confident in speaking to older people after undergoing the interview training and conducting interviews. Furthermore, some participants felt that the experience of mixing with young people with a diverse range of identities as part of the project was also beneficial in raising levels of confidence and self-esteem.

*I think the project makes relationships more accessible as some people don't have the confidence to talk to me usually.*

Younger transgender woman, Leicester project

However, despite the appeal of LGBT history for those participants who continued on the projects, it was recognised by project leaders that recruiting participants, particularly younger participants, was a challenge. This partially reflected the methodology, and future LGBT intergenerational projects using oral history as a method to unite the generations may need to incorporate this challenge in recruitment strategies.

Collecting histories from older LGBT people can also pose challenges both in terms of recruitment, but also in terms of the precautions that need to be taken to gain older LGBT people's trust. As discussed earlier, this applies in particular to older BME LGBT people, and may mean that the final product is absent of input from this section of the community. This was reflected in the initial training sessions, which contained information on sensitivity and ethical issues encountered in conducting and analysing interviews. The additional precautions taken meant that for some of the younger participants, the pace of training was felt to be too slow. However, this opinion was by no means universal, with some participants expressing the opposite view that the pace of the training was too quick. Future projects may wish to consider running (optional) review sessions for those participants who either missed sessions or for those who wish to revisit any part of the training, which may help set a pace suitable for all participants. This is likely to apply to any project where there is a substantial element of training or development of new skills.

*I would pick up the pace of the training, let people come at different times and spread the group in two and let people collaborate more.*

Younger gay man, Leicester project

Finally, the success of collecting histories from a wide range of older LGBT people in this project was a testament to the work of one notable local activist. Without the presence of a well-connected gate keeper, other projects wishing to replicate this work are unlikely to succeed in the same way.

## **Challenges of working intergenerationally**

Among project workers across the three projects, the intersection between discussing age, identity, gender, sexuality and sex was identified as a challenge in terms of moderating the activities, although one which had great rewards when it was overcome. Project workers across all three projects were consistent in stating that marking boundaries in terms of conduct was a key facilitator in helping to establish an environment where all participants entered on an equal footing.

*Sometimes it is incredibly difficult and they do have a lot of reservations and so if it is just set up in a structured and sensitive way it can be potentially really really positive because it can actually break stereotypes and make people feel they are allowed to talk about gender, sexuality and attraction, especially with people of different ages.*

Project worker, Camden project

Most participants we interviewed held a consensus that it took a relatively long period for social relationships and group dynamics to develop, a likely reflection of bringing people together who differed generationally as well as on the grounds of sexual or gender identity. This suggests that some of the key aims of working intergenerationally, as outlined earlier in terms of building social support and developing role models, could only be met fully through longer projects. Nevertheless, even those projects that were shorter in duration did succeed in creating a platform for future work and in creating a space for intergenerational exchanges to take place which could be built upon at a later date.

Some older participants spoke of other difficulties encountered in working with younger people. For some, the experiences represented a 'shock', as some older participants rarely held conversations with younger people in general in their normal lives, and even fewer with LGBT younger people. Other participants spoke of more specific difficulties encountered in group working, expressing some degree of stress in the need to correctly portray life as an older LGBT person. However, all participants did move on to discuss the positive aspects of working intergenerationally. Similarly, younger people occasionally spoke of some frustration in working with older people and in having to alter the pace of activity or the tone of conversation, expressing this as being a stressful experience over a prolonged period of time. Again, however, those young people would move on to describe working intergenerationally in a positive light.

*What I found more difficult was being with somebody I knew - another woman - near my age with younger people because you need to speak for yourself and sometimes I felt she was putting her agenda on me to these younger men. So, it's easier not to know the person in your group. But that was unfortunate because we just did 1-2-3-4 (random) and it just happened that way.*

Older lesbian woman, Camden project

*It gets too much for some of the younger ones and it gets too much for me as well, and I'm only 21 but some of them are 15 and stuff and it's just too much. ....It's just a bit too much in one night innit [sic]. A bit tense, yeah, I mean it used to never bother me but now I'm a bit older it's a bit like 'oh god, I've just finished work and you know'*

Younger lesbian woman, Camden project

One challenge that generally wasn't encountered in any of the projects was the development of feelings of attraction between people of different generations. This was, however, identified as a barrier that had prevented such work from taking place in the past. It was felt that older LGBT people, and older gay men in particular, could be portrayed in a predatory way, and this had hampered intergenerational work previously. While it would be unwise to assume that feelings of attraction between people of different generations would not develop in future intergenerational projects on the basis of the three small projects included in this report, the results from these projects show that this doesn't have to be the case, and that this concern is not a justifiable reason to preclude future work. Most project workers asserted that activities took place on the basis of sexual or gender identity, as opposed to sexual behaviour, although where behaviour did form part of the conversation, this was dealt with sensitively and appropriately.

*For older and younger people openly have this conversation [about sex and sexuality]...there could potentially be worries about the attraction with people of different ages. That is something that is incredibly sensitive and again it is naïve to ignore that because it does exist and people are going to have these concerns and because you are talking to a subject that matters, you are not just chatting, you are talking about gender, sexuality and attraction and so we have to do it sensitively.*

Project worker, Camden project

Some interviewees asserted that an intergenerational approach was only suitable in meeting certain goals. An intergenerational approach was identified as valuable in terms of conducting a needs analysis for the LGBT community, although it was felt by some on the Stockport project that in order that for the work to progress to a change in policies, that a more disparate approach was necessary.

*Learning each other's needs is good but to meet them you're going to have to do something separate.*

Project worker, Stockport project

The Stockport project involved older LGBT people joining with an existing younger LGBT group. The activity took place on the same night that the existing youth group met, and for a period of three months essentially replaced one night of the youth group. This was a source of resentment for some of the younger participants, who felt that this impeded on the usual youth group activities. However, the same participants were not adverse to intergenerational work. In practice, future projects may wish to consider how intergenerational elements can work alongside existing groups, as opposed to superseding or replacing existing successful activities. This may be as a regularly occurring event or meeting and may be particularly relevant where the planned activity is intended to take place for a long duration.

## **Key Learning Points: Running Intergenerational Projects using different methods among the LGBT Community**

- Each of the projects used different ways of bringing younger and older LGBT people together, each with its respective strengths and limitations. Each project worked towards a common goal through the production of an art exhibition; a local LGBT history exhibition and archive; and the production of a toolkit for LGBT people and service providers. In the latter example, the output is expected to change the way that service providers engage with LGBT clients. In the Leicester project, the documentation of people's experiences will lead to a permanent archive, especially in light of continuation funding. All three projects succeeded in creating a platform where views and experiences could be shared.
- The intergenerational projects that were evaluated here were successful as they had a definite theme and shared goal. It may not be enough to simply bring older and younger LGBT people together for an intergenerational project without setting a common purpose and goal.
- While a number of participants reported improved confidence and abilities in terms of mixing in social situations, a number also reported that longer projects were needed if social relationships and friendships were to develop between younger and older people.
- Participants across the projects were enthused about the intergenerational component of the projects, and felt that this added a new dimension to understanding issues facing LGBT people. In addition, many participants spoke of gaining new confidence in communicating with those of a different generation as a result of participation on the project.
- The use of Arts as a theme for the intergenerational works well in settings where there are enough resources to produce a number of distinct artworks. The success of the Camden arts project was in part a reflection of resources that were made available to the project, and the number of skilled volunteers that helped deliver the project.
- Arts was generally an attractive medium for most people, although was deemed to be a less attractive medium for some older participants. Strategies were employed to make the project more attractive to older participants through offering the opportunity to produce pieces using more traditional methods. However, for some older people (older gay men), the arts theme was still perceived to be somewhat unpopular, although this should not discourage future work in the area. Instead future projects may need to replicate some of the additional recruitment activities used in the Camden project.
- Future intergenerational projects should carefully consider the space that will be used for intergenerational work. It is preferable to use space that is neutral, or is used equally, by younger and older people. This is particularly the case for projects that are short in duration, where it takes a longer period for social relationships to develop. Similarly, it may be preferable for intergenerational work to be developed alongside activities that take place with younger or older LGBT groups, as opposed to replacing existing activities.
- In one of the projects included in this research, the local authority withdrew funding from a partner organisation. Although the project did successfully run its course, this did nevertheless impact

accessing participants for the evaluation, and did compromise any plans for continuation.

- The use of oral history as a method successfully attracted a wide range of participants. However, there was some perception that this was not always an attractive theme for much younger participants (for example aged 16-17 years). Again, this does not preclude the use of this theme with this age group, although may, for future projects, impact on the type of marketing and recruitment strategies employed, as well as in the strategies used for retaining participation.
- Participants on projects welcomed the potential to develop their skills, particularly younger participants. However where there is a substantial learning component to the projects, additional sessions that revisit some of the topics may be needed to accommodate a wide range of learning needs.
- The projects evaluated here were successful in facilitating groups that intersected on age, gender identity, sexuality and behaviour. This was through the establishment of boundaries early on where participants were encouraged to respect each other and to respond to people's experiences with sensitivity. In these projects, no project workers reported any case where participants overstepped these boundaries. Furthermore, many perceived the lack of intergenerational work among LGBT to be a reflection of concerns about intergenerational attraction or romance occurring between participants. This was not reported to be case in these projects.

## Part 7: Findings: Outcomes and Benefits of Working Intergenerationally

In this penultimate section, we address whether the projects addressed the outcomes they set out to achieve and examine other outcomes that may have resulted from the work.

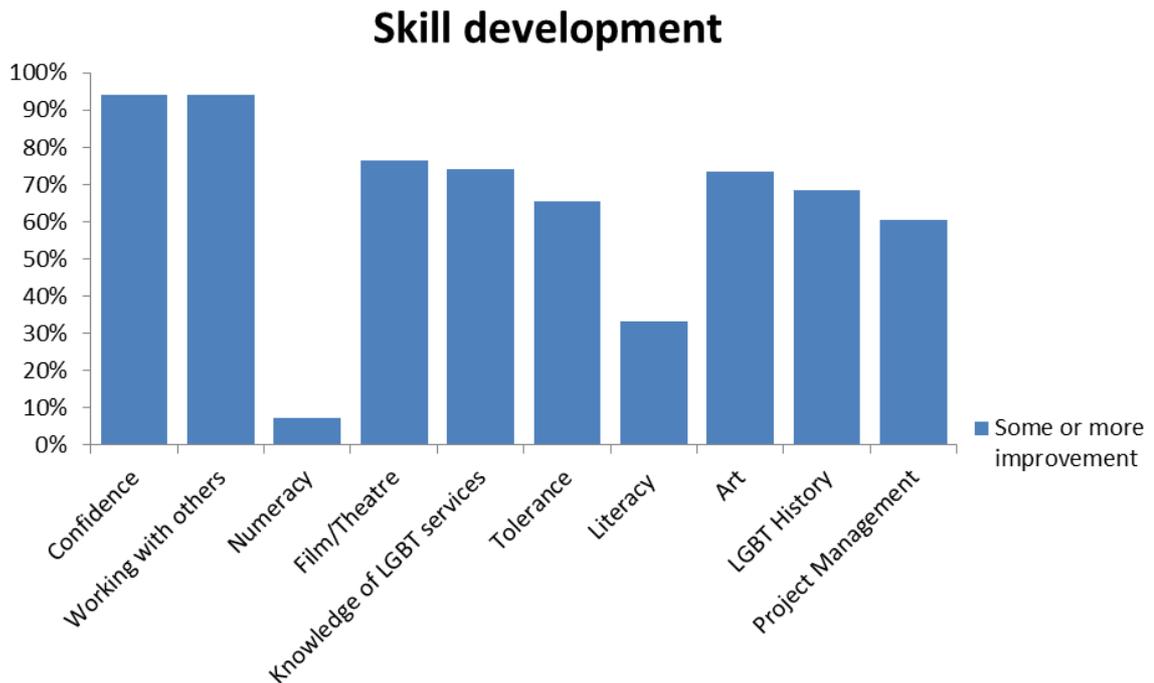
### **Objectives 1 and 2: Up to 50 older and 50 younger LGBT people to be recruited in three English regions**

**Achieved:** A total of 79 participants were recorded as participating on the projects. However, this number represents an undercount for two reasons in Leicester. Firstly, the evaluation of the Leicester project represents something of a mid-point evaluation given that the project has received continuation funding for three years. Secondly, although the project involved older people (aged 50+) as interviewees, these people were not recorded as project participants for the purpose of the evaluation. Therefore, the total involved in the intergenerational projects is likely to number over a hundred.

### **Objective 3: Younger participants will enhance their educational, training and employment prospects through skill development**

**Achieved for both younger and older participants:** The projects were particularly useful in developing soft-skills such as confidence and working with others, which can certainly enhance employment prospects. The projects also exposed participants to working with academics from notable institutions. However, for skills developed related to research methodology and arts to translate into enhanced employment prospects for participants, longer periods of training are likely to be needed; this is reflected in participants' feedback on the evaluation forms, where most stated that they had experienced 'some' as opposed to 'full' improvement in the relevant skill(s) for that project. Nevertheless, the projects were one way of reconnecting younger and older people who may have lost touch with training/education institutions, and based on the interviews, the experience of working with staff from the institutions was highly positive.

### Example evidence (objective 3):



Notes: Total number of responses vary between 28-35 and information is based on valid responses only. Includes both older and younger participants. Excludes data from Leicester as responses in this case were reflective of the mid-point of the project

The chart shows the proportion of participants who reported some improvement or more across a range of skills, a large number of which could enhance employability. It shows that the projects did not develop 'hard' skills such as literacy and numeracy (as would be expected), but did improve soft skills such as confidence and working with others among the majority of respondents. Furthermore, some responses for those who did not report improvement in these soft skills indicated that they felt that they had no room for improvement, and were therefore not necessarily a reflection of their experience on the projects. Soft skills have been shown to be particularly valued by employers in some literature, particularly those relating to interpersonal and communication skills (Newton et al 2005); in these projects, over nine-out-of-ten participants reported positive development in confidence and working with others.

#### **Objective 4: Participants will report that they have someone to turn to for informal support**

**Achieved in part:** The evaluation forms showed that in the Camden project, a similar number of older people reported that they had a younger LGBT person to turn to for support at the end of the project compared to the beginning; in Stockport the number grew very slightly. Again, there were only small gains in the proportion of younger and older LGBT people who reported that they had someone to turn to in a crisis. However, the results from the interviews showed that the majority of participants did plan to stay in touch with new people who they had met on the project, either those of the same generation or of a different generation.

All three projects created an environment where older and younger LGBT people could meet and find common ground. In doing so, the projects created a platform for relationships to emerge, some of which were intergenerational. However, relationships that facilitate support between people to occur take considerable time to develop. In the case of the Leicester project, where three years' of continuation funding has been awarded, this outcome may yet be observed.

As such, the relatively short duration of the projects mean that this objective was unlikely to have been met, although certainly the projects showed that this outcome could potentially develop organically from the work of three projects.

#### **Example evidence:**

While there was little difference in the proportion reporting that they had someone to turn to at the beginning of the project compared to the end, the interviews revealed that a number of participants planned to stay in touch with someone they met off the project. However, participants also deemed that the projects could have been longer in duration to allow time for relationships to build.

*I hope to stay in contact...yes, definitely I will, because we have already exchanged, you know, email...yes, definitely, I would love to stay in contact.*

Older lesbian woman, Camden project

*Whenever you bring younger and older together, regardless from their sexuality, it is difficult for them to gel together. I think it went really well, but it could have done with a longer duration.*

Older transgender woman, Stockport project

#### **Objective 5: Participants will gain a greater understanding of each other's generation and the stereotypes attached**

**Achieved:** This objective was met across all three projects. All three projects created environments conducive to older and younger people sharing ideas and discussing issues. This was either on a more structured basis so that younger and older people were encouraged to share ideas and experiences through group activities, or on a more casual basis simply through the discussions that occurred as older and younger people worked together on a common focus.

**Example evidence:** For older and younger people alike, the experience of working with LGBT people of a different generation was positive. Some younger people openly described the stereotypes they held about older people before the project began and described how these had been diminished through working with older people on a common focus. (continued...)

*I think I am more positive about growing older because I am seeing more people in the older LGBTQ community and I am realising that you don't get old and decrepit and die...you become quite beautiful and you evolve as a person and there are services out there for you if you need help if you are an older LGBTQ person*

Younger transgender woman, Camden project

Older people were also forthcoming in describing some of the negative stereotypes that were applied to them; in particular, they described how sexuality among older people was generally frowned upon, and that belonging to a group that was characterised by its sexuality as an older person could be challenging. Older lesbian women described the intersection between age, sexuality and gender as placing them in a particularly marginalised societal position that was characterised by several stereotypes. It was this group of older people that was most vocal in describing the benefits that intergenerational work could hold in terms of the potential to reduce stereotypes associated with age, gender and sexuality.

*There is ageism towards older people in terms of their sexual orientation and sexuality, for heterosexual people as well, there is so much ageism about sexuality in general that it is all part of that.*

Older lesbian woman, Camden project

Older people also recognised that their participation on intergenerational projects could also reduce the stereotypes they held about younger people, although younger people appeared to be less aware of negative perceptions of older people.

However, while the projects did help to overcome the stereotypes held by participants about LGBT people of a different generation, it was also evident in participants' responses that many parts of LGBT culture, and 'the scene' were heavily age stratified. While this in itself may not be substantially different to non-LGBT culture, for LGBT people this may have more severe consequences given that 'the scene' may be the only place where it is accepted to be open with one's identity.

*I have noticed that a lot of older people have not come out in the scene very often and I am not sure if it is related to the attitudes of younger LGBT people.*

Younger gay man, Leicester project

**Objective 6: Participants will report a more positive outlook at the end of the project**

**Achieved in part:** A heightened sense of wellbeing and a more positive outlook are ostensibly outcomes that can follow from skill development, greater self-confidence, and the breaking down of age stereotypes; however, quantifying this is difficult. Participants were asked about their happiness and life satisfaction, although there was little change in the perception of happiness before the project compared to after the project. However, the literature demonstrates a link between some of the softer skills developed on the projects, such as confidence, and happiness and wellbeing (for example Cheng and Furnham 2002). Therefore, a more positive outlook may progress based on the other skills developed, and is more likely to develop from a longer project.

**Objective 7: Participants will gain new skills and confidence, including skills and confidence from those of a different generation**

**Achieved:** This objective was achieved, and most participants reported that they were more confident in communicating with those of a different generation (see earlier chart for objective 3). Certainly, in terms of developing confidence, the intergenerational component and recruitment from across the LGBT spectrum were important dimensions in developing confidence and other skills.

**Example evidence:** Over nine-in-ten participants on the project combined reported that they had improved their confidence and their ability to work with others. This was also echoed in qualitative interviews where some participants emphasized that it was the intergenerational component in particular that ensured the development of confidence and working with others.

*I have certainly seen some people, younger people in the group, sort of seeming to blossom a bit more, get more confident about talking in mixed groups...you know...*

Older lesbian woman, Camden project

**Objective 8: Foster a greater understanding between older and younger LGBT people and aim to lower the feelings of social isolation**

**Achieved in part:** We deem this objective to have been achieved in part as many people did report that they had gained understanding of the needs of different generations, and this was certainly a specific focus of all three projects in different ways. As reported earlier, participants, and in particular younger participants, reported that the projects succeeded in overcoming the stereotypes they may have held about those of a different generation.

We also presented evidence earlier that highlighted relatively high levels of loneliness among LGBT people of all ages (around 20% agreed or strongly agreed that they were lonely when the project started), and low levels of social support for older LGBT people (less than 40% agreed or strongly agreed that they had a younger LGBT person they could turn to for social support). What made these numbers even more startling is that recruitment for all three projects was mainly composed of participants who were already engaged in some form of LGBT network, which could suggest even higher levels of need among those who are not members of existing LGBT networks.

However, for meaningful social relationships to develop that can overcome feelings of social isolation, participants reported that a longer duration was needed.

Nevertheless, participants from all three projects reported that they were likely, or were keen to, stay in touch with new people that they had met on the projects. As highlighted earlier, these could develop into social relationships that in turn could lower feelings of social isolation. In addition, the process of sharing lifecourse experiences can also help lower feelings of social isolation for both younger and older people alike. This was a particular benefit of the intergenerational approach cited by younger people in relation to coming out.

**Objective 9: Recruitment of three teams of professional workshop leaders and youth workshops**

**Achieved:** This was achieved in full. All workshops and sessions across all three projects were staffed by professional youth workers, professionals in the field, and professionals experienced in working with older people. In addition, staff and volunteers were recruited from nearby academic institutions including Leicester University, Salford University and the Central School of Speech and Drama.

**Example evidence:** See project descriptions.

## Part 8: Conclusions: Key Outcomes of Intergenerational work and Recommendations

The projects included in this report highlight the need to bring older and younger LGBT people together as well as the potential positive outcomes in doing so. The fact that the project met their objectives, or with additional funding could meet their objectives, suggests that an intergenerational approach is a valuable approach to take. However, this report also points at aspects of running projects that are challenging and illuminates ways in which project designs could be altered to better facilitate an intergenerational approach – several of which are presented in the accompanying toolkit.

The projects included in this report represent some of the first to bring a diverse spectrum of younger and older LGBT people together to work on a common project that highlights the diversity, history, and needs of the LGBT community to wider society. However, it is worth questioning why such an approach is so uncommon, and this was something we asked project leaders and participants. Some responded that they felt that it reflected a lack of funding available for LGBT projects, while others linked the novelty of the approach to misconceptions about older LGBT people, and in particular a negative stereotype of an older predatory gay man. In fact, older people of a variety of sexualities and gender identities spoke of the negative imagery surrounding being older and identifying as sexual or gender minority.

*They see it as a problem bringing together younger people that might be perverted by older people and this idea contributed to the stigma surrounding older people. Especially for gay men there is a lot of focus on sex as opposed to identity.*

Project worker, Stockport project

Perhaps what was most interesting from the data collected is what wasn't mentioned by participants, and particularly younger participants, in that there was no support for the negative stereotypes of older LGBT people. There was also no mention of any romantic or sexual relationship developing between participants of different generations on these projects – which was also cited by some participants as a possible reason for the paucity of intergenerational projects among LGBT people.

In fact, the projects demonstrate how an intergenerational approach is an effective one to take within the LGBT community and brings with it advantages that would not necessarily be replicated with a narrower focus in terms of sexuality/gender identity or age, and these key outcomes and benefits are highlighted later in this chapter. An intergenerational approach to social support within the LGBT community is gathering pace across the Atlantic as exemplified through the online 'it gets better' project. In this project those who were older and LGBT uploaded videos discussing their experiences as LGBT youth and showing that although growing up as an LGBT person can be challenging, that the lives of LGBT need not be less successful or happy than non-LGBT people – this was essentially one component of the three projects included in this report. However, the

results from these projects show that the benefits of an intergenerational approach are multifaceted and felt more widely by younger and older LGBT people alike.

## Key outcomes from intergenerational projects

1. **Unifying a diverse community.** All three projects successfully attracted younger and older people from across the LGBT spectrum. For many participants, not only was this a novel experience in terms of participating on a project with a person of a different generation, but also in terms of participation on a project with a diverse spectrum of people with different gender identities and sexual orientations. All three projects created a platform for dialogue between groups that have historically been disparate in nature.

**Example evidence:**

*I was quite pleased really because I usually only choose to socialise with women and lesbians. So I was quite pleased that I was doing this because I was just stretching myself a bit. I found it okay, because it's not in your face because you're both focussing on something you do and it's not turned into a big thing or anything.*

Older lesbian Woman, Camden project

**Importance:** Through bringing together contrasting groups that identify as LGBT these projects and similar future work can help to increase the cohesiveness of the LGBT community. Improving the cohesiveness of the LGBT community can help to strengthen efforts to achieve equality and transform attitudes.

2. **Reducing age stereotypes.** All three projects succeeded in reducing pre-existing stereotypes that some participants held about people of a different generation. For many participants, this was their first experience of working on a community project with people from a different generation, and the experience helped to illuminate the commonalities between generations.

**Example evidence:**

*...I thought that older people were rude and not approachable, I don't know why, but they are not like that.*

Younger gay man, Stockport project

**Importance:** Many facets of LGBT culture are perceived to be structured along age lines, and many aspects of LGBT culture are perceived to be inaccessible to older LGBT people. Reducing age stereotypes helps to increase the cohesiveness of groups identifying as LGBT and provide a unified voice in efforts to achieve equality and transform societal attitudes more generally. Furthermore, reducing age stereotypes can help to increase intergenerational exchanges, which holds additional benefits, some of which were outlined earlier while others are described below.

3. **Development of social skills and confidence.** Participants across all three projects reported improved levels of confidence. This was applicable to both young and older participants in communicating with those of a different generation, as well as confidence in dealing with social situations more generally.

**Example evidence:**

*It has certainly given me a lot of confidence as well, working in a group and with younger people and other older people, different gender people.*

Older lesbian woman, Camden project

*I suppose I trust people more than before and I am coming out of my shell.*

Younger gay man, Stockport project

**Importance:** For both younger and older people, communicating with service providers will often be synonymous with communicating with people of a different generation. Improving confidence in communicating with people of a different generation may have benefit participants' negotiation skills with service providers. Some literature also links happiness and wellbeing with confidence and self-esteem.

4. **Development of practical skills.** Participants across all three projects were exposed to training and were mentored in the development of various skills. In Camden this represented improved skills and knowledge of the arts. In Leicester, this represented improved skills in terms of interview techniques, research methodology and methods used in historical research. In Stockport, skill development focussed on building capacity in terms of research methodology. In all three projects, training was delivered by academic staff from noted academic institutions.

**Example evidence:**

*I have already done one interview and it went really well. I did that with Colin from Leicester University and it was a fantastic training.*

Younger gay man, Leicester project

**Importance:** Training delivered by academics and other experts in the field will provide some grounding in the subjects outlined. Skill development can enhance employability of participants as well as providing a springboard for further training or education.

5. **Exposure of young LGBT people to older LGBT role models.** Younger LGBT people were exposed to older LGBT people who were successful in their career or in life more generally and were comfortable in their identity more generally. In essence, younger people were exposed to older LGBT people who could represent role models. Many parts of the training in practical skills was delivered by academics and other experts who identified as LGBT; for some young LGBT people this was the first time that they had realised that being LGBT did not represent a barrier to success

**Example evidence:**

*Project worker: So when we went to the university did you think Simon was gay - did you think it was possible to be professor and be gay?*

*Participant: Well, no I didn't really, not before.*

Dialogue between project worker and young lesbian woman, Stockport project

**Importance:** A growing body of literature has highlighted the paucity of role models available to LGBT young people. The availability of role models that reflect the demographic and personal characteristics of young models has been linked elsewhere as a determinant of future academic and career success.

6. **Improved understanding of the needs of older and younger LGBT people.** The project in Stockport involved conducting an analysis of the needs of older and younger LGBT people in the local areas. However, the project went much further through presenting this research directly to local service providers. The project established a number of workshops where the views and needs of local older and younger LGBT people were presented directly to service providers across a range of different services including those: responsible for providing housing, education providers, health service providers, those involved in preventing hate crime, and those providing services for those with alcohol and drugs issues. These views and discussions were recorded and amalgamated with the results of the research into toolkit for service providers to respond to the needs of LGBT people.

**Example evidence:** see toolkit available from Age UK (Stockport)

**Importance:** Our own literature review highlighted the challenges that LGBT people face in negotiating equitable and tailored treatment from service providers from across the spectrum. The creation of a toolkit outlining the needs of LGBT people of all ages will serve as a guide for service providers in planning and delivering services to LGBT people in Stockport and beyond.

7. **Preservation and increased awareness of LGBT history.** The intergenerational project in Leicester specifically focussed on collecting oral histories from the local LGBT population. This information will be used to form a repository of oral history, as well as forming the basis of a local exhibition. This was the first time that the lives and experiences of older LGBT people had been systematically collected in the area, one of few such projects in the country, and possibly the only one where these histories were collected by younger LGBT people. While history was not the focus of the projects in Camden or Stockport, these projects also involved younger LGBT people learning about the lives and experiences of older people.

**Example evidence:**

*It's true that there isn't any documentation or anything on LGBT history so hopefully with this project we can do something about that.*

Younger transgender woman, Leicester project

**Importance:** LGBT history has traditionally been overlooked, a possible reflection of the lack of civil liberties experienced by LGBT people in the recent past. The numbers of LGBT people who were involved in World War II, for example, may now be dwindling, and their histories as LGBT people in the war may be lost without preservation as the stories of LGBT people are not represented in many archives. Additionally, history can be valuable tool for

assessing progress in terms of achieving equality and awareness for LGBT people, and to highlight the challenges that lie ahead.

8. **Sharing lifecourse experiences.** The intergenerational dimension was viewed as particularly helpful to young people in sharing experiences and dealing with coming out to family and friends. In the literature, coming out was highlighted as a difficult stage in life for most LGBT people, although particularly for transgender people who, in some cases, faced a double coming out as initially identifying as lesbian or gay before realising their transgender identity creating a second wave of rejection and confrontation. In this research, young transgender people also talked about the ways in which meeting older LGBT people helped deal with coming out.

***Example evidence:***

If someone in my situation as trans comes and says they need to find something vital, like how to tell parents, for example, and see how people did it in the past and how they reacted to their parents' reactions. You'll find people who've been excommunicated by their parents, but you see that you survive it...it's not the end of the world if it happens.

Young transgender woman, Leicester project

***Importance:*** Coming out is one of the most difficult lifecourse experiences that young LGBT people will face. However, some studies indicate that individuals who disclose their sexual identity have higher levels of wellbeing. The intergenerational approach adopted in these projects helped younger LGBT discuss ways of overcoming challenges in coming out with those who had experience.

9. **Promote the visibility of the LGBT community.** All three projects undertook exhibitions and dissemination activities to showcase the work of the projects to the LGBT community and beyond. In doing so, the projects highlight that intergenerational work among LGBT people can not only improve understanding within the LGBT community, but can also help to educate and promote awareness within wider society about the LGBT community.

***Example evidence:*** see project descriptions

***Importance:*** The LGBT community has traditionally occupied a marginalised societal position and LGBT individuals have not enjoyed many of the freedoms enjoyed by non-LGBT people. Intergenerational projects can represent one way of highlighting the diversity of the LGBT community and its history and raise awareness of current and future needs.

## **Recommendations and calls to action**

The intergenerational approach is a valuable approach to take although is one that is rarely adopted among the LGBT community at the time of writing. As such, we make the following recommendations that we hope will enhance the scope of this work in the future.

1. **Further work is needed to understand the benefits of intergenerational work among the LGBT community.** These projects represent some of the first ones known to involve the whole spectrum of the LGBT community on an intergenerational basis. Further research and the development of new projects in different settings is needed to understand the benefits of this approach.
2. **Focus on soft skills.** Many of the outcomes resulting from the intergenerational projects included in this evaluation represent soft-skills. Furthermore, intergenerational projects, by their very nature, are often based on the development of social relationships primarily. This can make intergenerational work appear unattractive at first from a funding perspective, particularly in a tough climate of spending cuts. However, developing soft skills is critical to achieving many positive 'hard' outcomes such as changes in employment status or health. We would call for greater recognition of the value of soft outcomes that may result from projects such as those included here.
3. **Funding of intergenerational work.** In 2009 the government at the time launched a £5.5 million programme of funding for intergenerational work to be spread out over two years. However, recent events in summer 2011 highlight the need to continue this tranche of work and to continue to develop intergenerational relations. We would call for specific funding to be set aside for funding projects that aim to strengthen intergenerational relations. Furthermore, this funding should be allocated on a quota basis to ensure that all groups, including LGBT groups, are able to access this funding.
4. **Youth services and older people networks in a time of cuts.** The success of intergenerational projects is often dependent on involving existing youth and older people's network. The 2010 Spending Review has seen a huge cut in funding to Local Authorities that has equated to a cut in services for young people and older people alike. Future intergenerational work will suffer without existing youth groups and older people's networks to form the basis of intergenerational projects. We would call for the preservation of youth services and funding for older people's networks, such as those included in these projects, and for greater recognition of the vital role they play. In the case of services for young people, the closure of youth groups was partially attributed by some as one contributory factor to the 2011 riots.
5. **Localism and marginalised groups.** The Localism Bill includes statements about the value of community assets, although without specific provision, we may see neighbourhoods where these assets transfer only to those causes and groups that are more popular or vocal, which in many contexts may not include LGBT groups. The Localism Bill should include greater safeguards to ensure that the rights of marginalised or minority populations to access a full range of amenities and services locally are protected.

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- (+ article about John Crawford –about the criminal records:  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/feb/15/buggery-criminal-record> Plus the Sex Offenses Acts of 1956, 1967 and 2003)





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