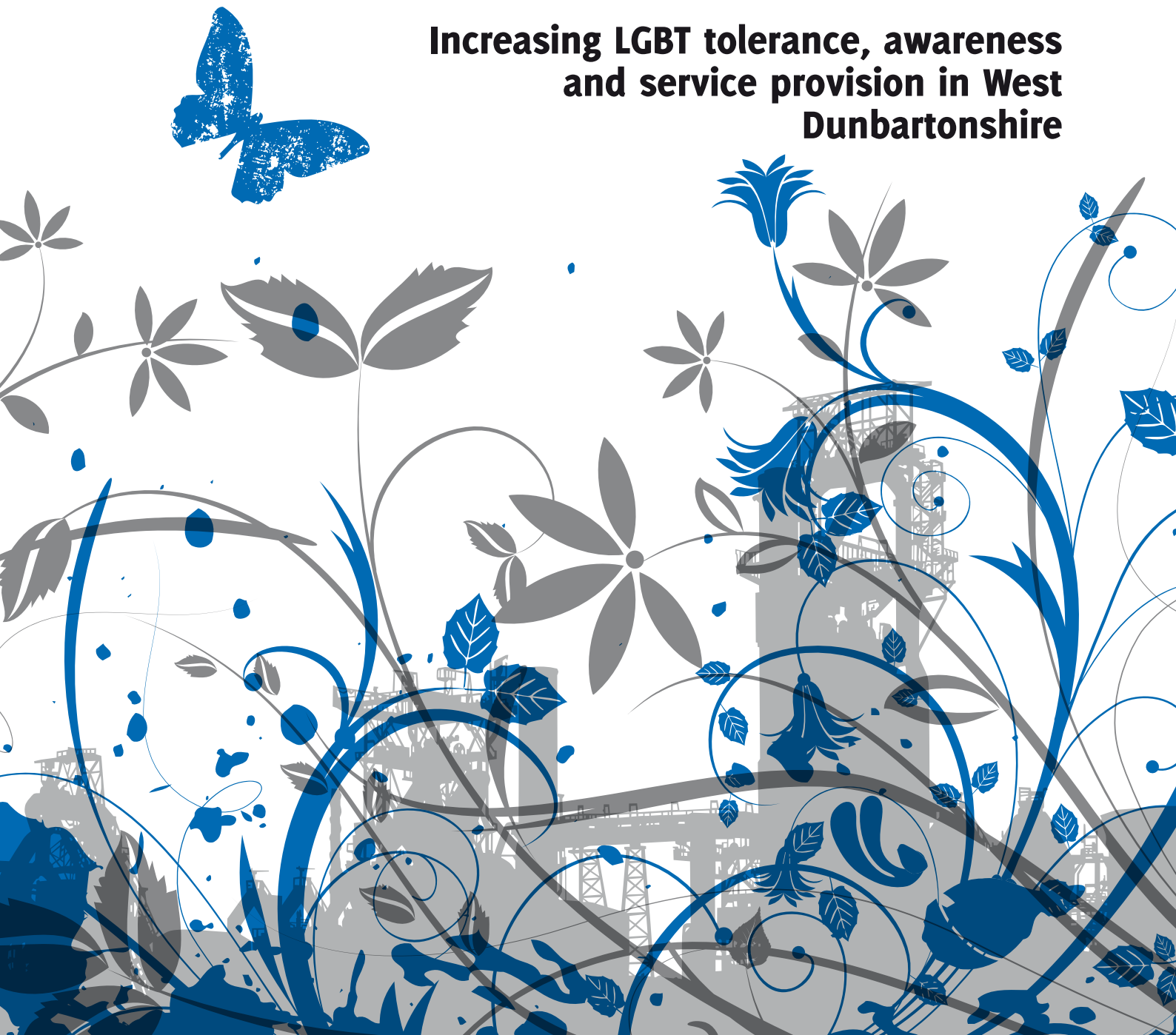


# Stronger, Safer and Supported

**Increasing LGBT tolerance, awareness  
and service provision in West  
Dunbartonshire**



# Foreword

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## **Foreword from Councillor Marie McNair, Chair of West Dunbartonshire Council's Equality and Diversity Working Group.**

I am pleased to provide my support to this report. As an elected Councillor, I take a strong interest in equalities.

I fully support the need to improve support and services to the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire. More must be done to identify need and ensure local people are in the driving seat when services are developed. To ensure this happens we must promote equality and eliminate discrimination, creating an environment that encourages people to have the confidence and security to be heard.

I recently spoke at a civic reception to celebrate and show support to our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens. It's important to me as an elected member that this kind of public support takes place. It sends a clear message about our commitment to the LGBT community, their partners, friends, and families.

The word civic, among other things, refers to the concept of citizenship. Citizenship is the status given to a citizen with all its rights and duties.

**The message from me, and I am sure from my colleagues, is that our LGBT citizens must have the same rights and respect as everyone else in our community.**

It has pleased me that for the last three years we have flown the rainbow flag over our civic buildings. The flag is the internationally recognised symbol of freedom and equality for LGBT citizens. Our flying of the flag sends out a strong political message that many welcome.

I congratulate and praise the work of the West Dunbartonshire LGBT Equalities (Officers) Network. They help set the equalities agenda and work hard to raise awareness and increase the visibility of LGBT people locally.

We must explore what services are needed for the LGBT community and the network will play an important role in this.

I hope these remarks give you an indication of my strong commitment to our LGBT community and I look forward to progress being made. We must all work together to make West Dunbartonshire a safer and more responsive place to the needs of our LGBT citizens.



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# Introduction

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in this research. In order to build on this work, the West Dunbartonshire LGBT Equalities (Officers) Network has emphasised its desire to engage more fully with the LGBT community and further local knowledge of LGBT experiences and use of services in the area. However, it can be difficult to obtain hard evidence on which to base future decisions. This work aims to further current understandings of the lives of LGBT individuals in West Dunbartonshire, identify the needs of the LGBT community and provide recommendations for how West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC), various partners and the LGBT community can successfully continue to work together in the future to build a safer, stronger and better supported LGBT community.

Recent reports suggest that there is a general misconception that LGBT people do not exist outside of large cities in Scotland (Equality Network 2008, 2011). This contrasts with even the most conservative estimates which suggest that approximately 5% of the population identify as LGB or T in our towns and cities. In West Dunbartonshire alone this would constitute over 4,500 LGBT people. In spite of this, previous reports have highlighted a lack of LGBT specific groups, organisations, LGBT bars, clubs and services directed at the LGBT community outside of Scotland's main cities (Equality Network, 2011). This report considers the experience of LGBT people living in the West Dunbartonshire area, just outside of Glasgow, and, more specifically, the use and experience of local services, groups and support. In doing so, it aims to produce findings that will help ensure that the LGBT community is adequately supported by WDC, partner organisations and services, and that it is well-integrated into the wider local community.

Whilst the LGBT and Me (Smith Alastair, 2010) report suggests that members of the LGBT community might be inclined to use services in Glasgow, which is between 7 and 15 miles from the main towns of Dumbarton, Clydebank and Alexandria, it also implies a lack of services in the West Dunbartonshire area and demonstrates that many LGBT people want local LGBT-specific services. This study builds on this report through exploring the extent to which LGBT individuals require LGBT specific services, exploring what services are needed and the treatment of LGBT individuals in current services. In this respect this study is, in part, a reflection of the desire of the Community Planning Partnership, WDC and partner agencies to stamp out LGBT discrimination in service provision (see 'Service with a Smile, and City Lights' – Stonewall Scotland). Building on their previous pro-LGBT equalities work, it demonstrates a commitment to working with the LGBT community and providing more inclusive services in the future. In addition, this report considers other aspects



# Introduction

such as homo/trans/biphobia in the area, opportunities for support and the possibilities of meeting other LGBT individuals which together will help provide a picture of the day-to-day lives of members of the LGBT community living and working in West Dunbartonshire today.

Finally, the need for local authorities to take an active interest in issues around LGBT equality must be understood, in part, as a response to the Equality Act 2010 which stipulates that public bodies must advance equality and eliminate discrimination and harassment related to gender identity and sexual orientation in a more comprehensive way than under previous legislation. This includes the provision of services, which all local authorities are involved in. This report outlines some of the ways in which West Dunbartonshire's services and organisations can ensure they are in accordance with such legislation by making recommendations to increase equality and reduce discrimination towards LGBT people in services locally. In this respect, the outcomes of this report aim to help West Dunbartonshire Council, other public bodies and their partners work together to build a stronger, safer and better supported LGBT community as more stringent equalities legislation is implemented.



# Why this Research is Important

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In general this research will provide a more in-depth understanding of the lives of LGBT individuals living in West Dunbartonshire than any previous work and will illustrate the needs of people who identify as LGBT in the area in relation to local services, support groups and social opportunities. The main justifications for this research are listed below:

- » Most current research into LGBT communities in Scotland is predominantly based in Edinburgh and Glasgow leaving us with a poor understanding of the experiences of those living out with these cities, whether rurally or semi-rurally.
- » The Equality Network's Sector Survey 2011 and Voices from Outside the Belt (2008) project suggest a lack of LGBT services and groups outside Edinburgh and Glasgow generally. However, there appears to be little understanding of the current situation in West Dunbartonshire.
- » West Dunbartonshire Council and other public bodies require knowledge of the needs of the LGBT community in order to ensure that their needs are adequately supported and to plan future service provision.



- 
- » There are no local LGBT specific groups or organisations open to the public in West Dunbartonshire and the effect of this on the LGBT community remains largely unknown.
  - » The LGBT and Me (Smith Alastair, 2010) survey suggests that many LGBT individuals in the area would like to see local LGBT-specific services, but as this was a snapshot exercise, these issues were not explored in any detail.
  - » The importance of providing services that are inclusive of the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire is particularly important given the outlawing of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender reassignment the provision of services.
  - » Studies, such as Watkins and Jacoby (2007) suggest that more work needs to be done outside big cities, such as Edinburgh and Glasgow, to explore how stigma related to gender identity and sexual orientation impacts the lives of LGBT people.
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# Research Focus and Key Questions

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The main areas of focus for this research project are as follows:

- » To give an insight into the experience of LGBT individuals living in West Dunbartonshire.
- » To identify the needs of the West Dunbartonshire LGBT community, particularly in terms of social and support services and groups.
- » To illustrate where service provision is lacking.
- » To make recommendations as to how the quality of LGBT lives can be improved in the area.

In concentrating on these areas the following key research questions have been identified:



## Key Questions

- 1.** What are the needs of the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire?
- 2.** To what extent are these needs currently met? What can be done to ensure they are met in the future?
- 3.** What is current service provision for the LGBT community like in West Dunbartonshire?
- 4.** Are LGBT services, support groups and social venues frequented in the local community or elsewhere e.g. Glasgow?
- 5.** What can the council and others do to help improve the life experience of LGBT individuals living in West Dunbartonshire?

These questions informed the focus group and survey questions included in the report appendices.



# Research Methodology




The key aim of this research is to give a better understanding of the thoughts, opinions and experiences of LGBT people living in West Dunbartonshire. In particular, the research considers experiences of homophobia, use of services and support groups and ability to meet other LGBT individuals in the area. Thus, research was divided into two main sections: focus groups with members of the West Dunbartonshire LGBT community and an online survey on surveymonkey. The survey consisted of 15 questions<sup>1</sup> and broadly covered the key questions outlined above. The survey data gave a numerical overview of the current opinion of, and access to, local services, support and social groups in West Dunbartonshire and allowed participants to give their opinions related to being LGBT in the area.

In addition, three focus groups took place in the three largest towns in West Dunbartonshire: Clydebank, Dumbarton and Alexandria. They each lasted approximately one and a half hours. The focus groups took a participatory approach in which participants were asked to work in groups to answer questions and, using post-it notes and self-constructed posters, discussed findings and presented them back to the group for general discussion. This interactive approach was viewed as most appropriate since it helped facilitate conversation and put participants at ease. This was especially important since many participants did not know each other before the focus groups.

The benefits of the focus group participation are wider than simply contributing to this research through providing data. The opportunity to meet and talk about issues related to sexuality was described by several participants as a useful and empowering experience (see Wilkinson, 1998). Participants generally appreciated that they had been consulted regarding issues that affect the LGBT community and the opportunity to give their opinion and meet others from the local LGBT community. For example, one participant was grateful of the opportunity to meet other LGBT people, commenting 'I didnae even know there was anyone else LGBT in Dumbarton! This was the first time I found out tonight!'

Due to the short duration of this research it was decided that running focus groups would be the most effective way of capturing the thoughts, opinions and perspectives of LGBT people living in West Dunbartonshire since it enabled up to twelve participants to take part in each session. Whilst using



focus groups was helpful in reaching a relatively high number of participants in a short amount of time, one disadvantage of this method was that less confident members of the group often seemed unable to vocalise their thoughts and opinions. For similar projects with a larger time frame we would suggest conducting a mixture of focus groups and interviews to increase the likelihood that the perspectives of more introverted participants are included in the study. This is especially important since talking about sexual orientation and gender identity are not comfortable subjects for many people, especially those who are not 'out' or have recently 'come out'.

A second barrier in conducting this research was reaching the local LGBT community. This is most likely a reflection of the lack of channels to contact the LGBT community in the area, such as websites, forums, LGBT services and social venues. Thus, the LGBT community are relatively invisible in West Dunbartonshire making them a 'hard-to reach' group. One way in which this was addressed in the research was by offering a £10 participation incentive, although the benefit of this was difficult to assess and many participants commented that they would have attended meetings without this. More promotion in the media might help increase participation in future studies more effectively.

## **Research Overview**

### **Being LGBT in West Dunbartonshire**

#### **Survey**

- » Numerical overview of LGBT individuals' lives in the area.
- » Brief comments related to personal experiences, particularly related to homophobia and service use.
- » Completed by 30 people.

#### **Focus groups**

- » Exploring survey themes in more depth.
- » Insight into thoughts and experiences of being LGBT in West Dunbartonshire.

# Results





# Experiences of being LGBT in West Dunbartonshire

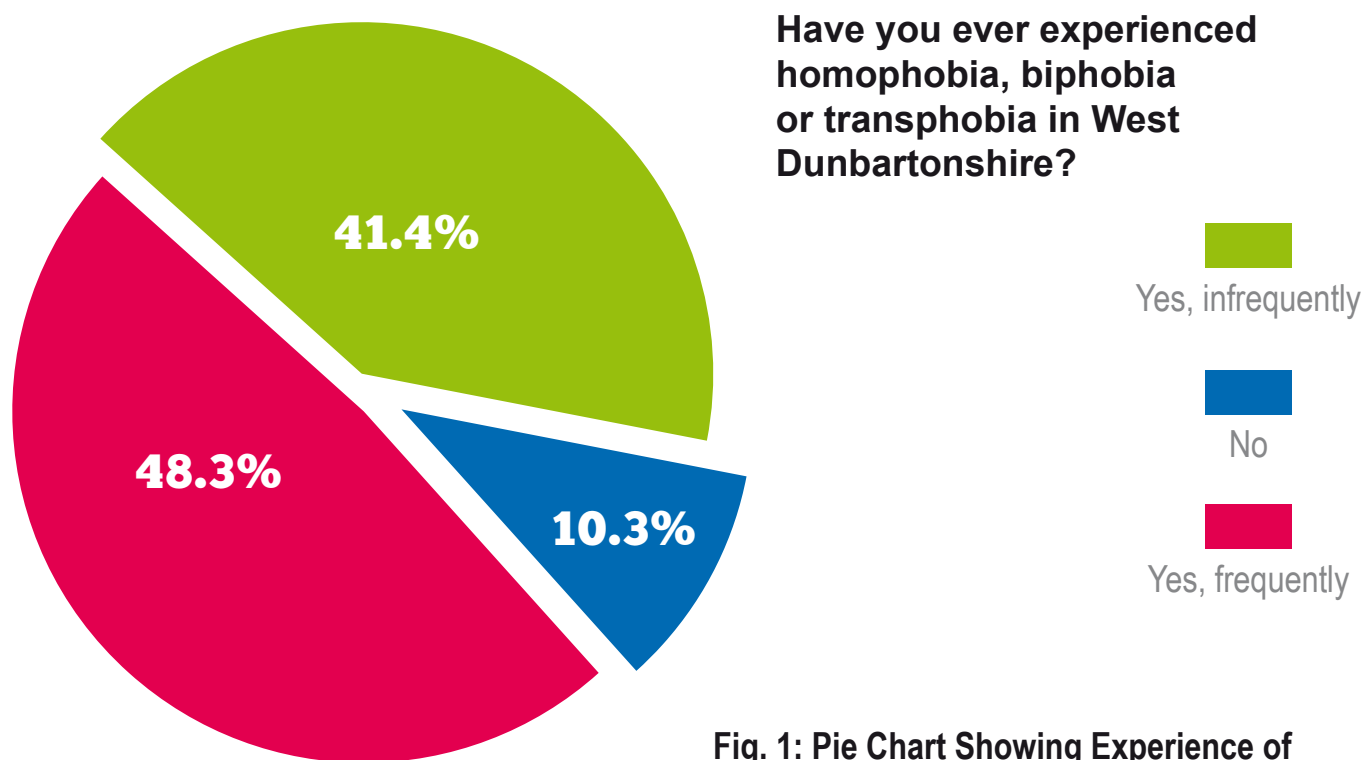
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1/3

of participants  
stated West  
Dunbartonshire  
is **not a  
tolerant area**  
for someone  
who is LGBT.

Overall, participants' experiences of being LGBT and living in West Dunbartonshire were mixed. Some participants had very positive experiences, where their sexual orientation and gender identity was generally accepted and they did not experience prejudice, whilst others were 'out' to a relatively small amount of people and frequently experienced discrimination. 33% of respondents stated that West Dunbartonshire was not a tolerant area for someone who is LGBT, compared with 13% who said it was very tolerant. Almost 6 out of 10 participants had experienced homo/bi or transphobia (see fig. 1). Comments suggested this was largely verbal, although there were some cases of physical discrimination too. Questionnaire comments included one respondent who wrote 'funny looks and name-calling' and another who stated 'shouting, insulting comments on the street'. In focus groups several participants talked of experiencing physical homophobia. One participant stated that her neighbours had smashed her windows in a homophobic attack and another commented that she had been hit with food and a beer can. In certain cases discrimination was directed at family members and friends of participants. One questionnaire respondent commented 'My children have experienced indirect discrimination as a result of my sexuality'.





**Fig. 1: Pie Chart Showing Experience of Discrimination Related to Gender Identity of Sexual Orientation and Percentage of Respondents**

On the whole, though, participants identified an ambiguous, rather than a directly prejudiced, attitude towards the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire. LGBT individuals were not tolerated unquestionably, but were generally able to live their day-to-day lives without severe cases of discrimination. This was mirrored by comments made by one focus group participant:

**‘There is some gay tolerance in this area. Like people are fine if you do things in private, but public displays of affection are not big in this area. There is outward homophobia, but it’s quite rare. It’s not as bad as it could be’**

Although prejudice related to sexual orientation and gender identity was fairly common, it was not universal as fig. 1 shows; a minority of respondents



## Experiences of being LGBT in West Dunbartonshire

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# 59%

of respondents  
had  
experienced  
homo/bi/  
transphobia.

stated that they had not experienced homophobia. One participant commented 'I've never had it. I go into these places, even the women's clothes shops in X and the staff are great...I've never had a problem in any of them'.

The majority of respondents were out to most of their family, friends and work colleagues, suggesting a degree of tolerance towards LGBT people in West Dunbartonshire. Of 28 respondents, 82% are 'out' (have disclosed their gender identity or sexual orientation) to their friends, whereas 68% are out to their family and 58% to their work colleagues. This compares with 41% of participants who are out to their neighbours.

When participants came out the reactions they experienced were diverse. Whilst some were positive, such as one participant who commented 'Our family is really OK with it, they're really supportive of it' many participants experienced, or worried about experiencing, negative reactions after coming out.

Asked whether he had come out to his family, one participant commented 'I haven't told them. I know that it'd be a negative thing. My brother especially. He'll be watching TV and he'll just be like "Oh, look at that poof!" I just couldnae. I'd just feel awkward...I just know it's not going to be right to tell them'. Participants who had children, in particular, often worried about the consequences of their coming out on the rest of their family. There was a concern that they would face discrimination from school or workmates and data suggests they had good reason to be concerned since discrimination was a common experience of relatives of people who had come out.



# Experiences of being LGBT in West Dunbartonshire

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One survey respondent commented ‘My children have experienced indirect discrimination as a result of my sexuality’.

## Positive experiences of being LGBT in West Dunbartonshire

In surveys and focus groups participants were asked to identify positive and negative experiences related to being LGBT in West Dunbartonshire. Undoubtedly, participants were more forthcoming with negative experiences and many stated they could not think of anything positive about being LGBT and living in West Dunbartonshire. However, several positive experiences were relayed. These included:

- 1. LGBT issues are a priority for the council, especially apparent when compared with other councils.** This was highlighted through reference to flying of the rainbow flag and lighting up of the Titan crane in rainbow colours.
- 2. LGBT friends live close by** – many had made acquaintance with other LGBT individuals living locally.
- 3. Some participants had little personal experience of homo/bi/transphobia.**
- 4. Some participants felt safe and comfortable in their neighbourhood,** often related to the fact that they have made acquaintance with their neighbours.

# 41%

Of 28 respondents, 41% had come out to most neighbours.



# Experiences of being LGBT in West Dunbartonshire

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## Negative experiences of being LGBT in West Dunbartonshire

The majority of focus group participants and survey respondents stated that they had had negative personal experiences related to being LGBT and living in West Dunbartonshire. These can be grouped under the following headings:

- 1. Social isolation** – not knowing LGBT individuals in the area and **lack of social opportunities** with other LGBT people.
- 2. Personal experiences of discrimination** related to gender identity or sexual orientation.
- 3. Lack of LGBT services locally/poor treatment in local services** e.g. health services, HIV/AIDS support and LGBT social groups.
- 4. LGBT issues are not visible** in the area.
- 5. Anxiety related to disclosing sexual orientation or gender identity.**

Of the points above it was a lack of social opportunities and resulting social isolation, and LGBT-specific services which were most frequently mentioned by focus group participants. One participant commented 'It's not great for gay people. There's not really anywhere to go and hang about. Where do you go if you need a bit of help? There's not really anyone to contact'. This was mirrored by another participant who commented:

**'There's nothing in West Dunbartonshire other than yersels. There's nowhere you can comfortably walk in for a coffee or a meal or whatever without feeling like you shouldn't be there. I don't think there's anywhere friendly enough that seems to accept you'.**

In general participants felt that there was a lack of LGBT specific services and LGBT social opportunities in West Dunbartonshire. As a consequence many stated they were obliged to travel outside of West Dunbartonshire to access





# Experience of Service Use in West Dunbartonshire and Beyond

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# 25%

Of 28 respondents, 25% stated that public services in West Dunbartonshire are LGBT friendly.

In general participants were undecided as to whether public services in West Dunbartonshire were LGBT-friendly or not.

64% of 28 respondents stated they were unsure about whether LGBT services were LGBT-friendly or not. On the whole access to services was seen as satisfactory and access to LGBT services was seen as poor in West Dunbartonshire.

Many participants commented that the lack of LGBT-specific services represented a significant problem for the LGBT community in the area.

## Treatment Accessing Services

Treatment in accessing services in West Dunbartonshire was often negative and many participants were concerned that they would not receive fair treatment. This mirrors Stonewall's 'Service with a Smile' (2009) report that indicated that 65% of LGBT respondents worried about the service they would get using public services. In West Dunbartonshire many participants experienced discrimination because of their gender identity or sexual orientation. In one of the most shocking cases one participant said she was told that her home represented an 'unhealthy environment' by a social worker because she was in a relationship with another woman. She was told that her partner should not be in the home, despite the fact that her children 'loved



her to bits' and were experiencing domestic stability for the first time in a number of years. The severity of the example was highlighted when she said the continuing issues with the social worker were extremely tiring and left her close to tears and described feelings of helplessness. Indeed, this was the principal reason she came to the focus group. Other participants relayed stories of discriminatory treatment in other services in West Dunbartonshire, such as NHS health services and the Jobcentre. This included both frontline staff and staff providing services. One particularly striking case was of a transwoman who was turned down for a place on a Jobcentre course because of the perceived negative reaction from other participants and the staff member's fear that 'people going on the course would stop' if she attended. As a consequence she stated that she was not getting enough help from the Jobcentre and felt that she was 'going round in circles'.

Although many participants had experienced discrimination accessing services in the area, there were also many positive experiences related to service use in West Dunbartonshire, especially in treatment at health centres, with the police and in the Jobcentre. One participant stated for every social worker that shows prejudice it should be remembered that 'there are a handful that are good'. Indeed, in contrast with the negative experience above, one respondent recounted an incident of good treatment in her local jobcentre:

**'You know I was in the Jobcentre the other day and [daughter] was with me. It was the school holidays and that and the two girls that were working there were like, 'Are you giving your mum grief?!' and things like that. And she was like, 'No, it's not my mum, it's my step mum!' And one of them just said to her 'Well that's alright, you can have two mums' and I was quite impressed by that'.**

In another example, one participant stated that she received respectful treatment from police officers who were 'really good' when they were dealing with a personal incident of homophobia.



## Experience of Service Use in West Dunbartonshire and Beyond

**'They took my details and then they wrote to me and they told me, these are the police in West Dunbartonshire and if you want to take this any further here are the details and this is what you can do and then I started getting letters from victim support, they took it really serious'.**

Thus, the problem appears to be the highly variable treatment of LGBT individuals in services across West Dunbartonshire, rather than universal discrimination. Data collected for this study suggests, then, that measures are needed to provide consistent, non-discriminatory treatment of LGBT individuals in services, such as social work, health centres, Jobcentres and in emergency services. Several participants suggested ways in which this could be achieved.

These included: drawing up policy guidelines for service providers, ensuring that staff follow policies in place, educating staff on issues of gender identity and sexual orientation and ensuring that the council withholds funding to service providers giving discriminatory treatment.

Focus group quotes related to tackling homo/trans/biphobia in service provision in West Dunbartonshire are highlighted below:

**‘They have to stop funding some of the programmes that they fund that have got homophobic attitudes and make it part of their criteria’.**

**‘They need to get the policies in place, get the staff trained up, increase awareness’.**

**‘The council here need to start checking out what sort of practice goes out, out there...we need to be checking it out, not just ticking boxes and then it’s finished’.**

**‘That’s back to training, training your employers about where people can turn.’**

**'It's about making people aware of it'**

**'I think it can only be changed over time and it's only with being confronted by LGBT people on a daily basis...you know, people need to be familiarised with it to be OK'**



## Experience of Service Use in West Dunbartonshire and Beyond

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**‘Welfare rights should know about things like that [transgender issues] and they don’t. Welfare rights were asking me who they should contact!’**

**‘It’s really down to education, they really need a load of education and training’.**

In cases where individuals experienced discrimination in service provision they were often unsure of their rights and how to make a complaint, were worried that their case would not be taken seriously or were worried about the repercussions of making a complaint. When asked if she had complained about discrimination from a social worker one participant replied ‘No because we don’t know how that could affect us. I mean the social worker can say all sorts of things if we say something!’ In another case one participant was unsure whether she had a strong enough case to get in touch with the police after having her windows smashed in a homophobic attack from neighbours: ‘Is that not trivial to contact the police?!’ The problem of LGBT people not wanting to come forward and complain, or being unsure about how to complain in the case of discrimination was highlighted by one participant who stated that although the police are aware of issues of discrimination against the LGBT community ‘there are not people coming forward and talking to them and saying there is, so there’s nothing they can do about it’. Thus, survey and focus group data shows that information related to over-arching legislation and individual service-provider policy must be more visible and guidelines about complaining in the instance of discrimination are needed on council, service-provider and police websites. This was reiterated in the following exchange:

***Participant one:*** ‘You need to get more people who, if they experience homophobia, will report it. People just don’t say anything because if they do report it they’re going to get fired or whatever, so people just keep it to themselves. If something happens, then report it, because I don’t think people are very aware of the laws.

***Convener:*** Are some people worried about reporting that?

***Participant one:*** Yeah some people are, yeah.

***Convener:*** How could we go about changing that then?

***Participant two:*** Getting information out there I suppose.



# Experience of Service Use in West Dunbartonshire and Beyond

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## Recommendations

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- » Sufficient training in LGBT issues for employers providing services, including frontline staff (possibly from national organisations e.g. Equality Network).
- » The council needs to ensure service providers have policies in place, and are aware of national policy related to discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- » Clear guidelines on complaining in instances of gender identity and sexual orientation discrimination should be displayed, e.g. on service-provider, council and police websites as well as information related to policies against discrimination.

# 76%

of 29  
respondents  
do not access  
LGBT-specific  
services.

## Accessing LGBT Services

Survey and focus group data suggests that there are very few LGBT services, such as counselling, treatment centres and sexual health providers in West Dunbartonshire.

This was implied by the fact that the majority of LGBT individuals living in West Dunbartonshire (76%) do not access LGBT specific services. Of the eight individuals that do access LGBT specific services, seven did so outside of West Dunbartonshire (six being in Glasgow). It was clear that this was a consequence of a lack of LGBT services in the area. These included, sexual health, counselling and a gender clinic.

When asked why services outside West Dunbartonshire were accessed the following responses were given:



## Experience of Service Use in West Dunbartonshire and Beyond

**‘Because Glasgow holds most of the LGBT services around here, WD [West Dunbartonshire] has nothing’.**

**'Don't know of any in the local area. Parents live in Edinburgh where there are LGBT services'.**

**'Glasgow has bigger and better services'.**

**'I wouldn't feel comfortable coming out to staff in the local health centre. More about perceptions than actual negative experiences'.**

**'There are no LGBT specific services that I know of in West Dunbartonshire'.**

**'All services are in the Glasgow area. Sandyford hub does not have a facility in the area'**

### 'None in the area'

Although accessing LGBT services outside West Dunbartonshire was not a problem for all participants, including one who commented ‘it doesnae bother me, they pay my fares’, for the majority it was time-consuming and relatively expensive. This was particularly the case for those living in Alexandria and Dumbarton. One participant stated that at £6 it was ‘really expensive’ for someone not working to get into Glasgow and another stated that if she did not have free travel she would not be able to access the trans-specific clinic she attends in the city. The problems travelling to Glasgow to access LGBT-specific services were also related to the infrequency of transport links as highlighted in the following exchange:

**Interviewer:** Are there any problems with going through to Glasgow to access services?

**Participant one: Bus services...**

**Participant two:** It's a nightmare coming back and the taxis are so expensive! That's the one problem. It used to be that the 66 was quite efficient and used to run right through the night, now there's the 62, but that's just at weekends...I think the last bus is half eleven or something. Unless there are a big group of you, like four of you and you can share a taxi.

## Experience of Service Use in West Dunbartonshire and Beyond

86%

Of 28  
respondents,  
86% said  
more LGBT  
services are  
needed in West  
Dunbartonshire.

Data clearly shows that (more) LGBT specific services are needed in West Dunbartonshire. The vast majority of respondents are in favour of more LGBT specific services and time and cost factors make travel outside of the area to access services difficult.

However, since setting up completely new services requires a considerable amount of resources a more viable solution would be ensuring that current service providers cater for the needs of the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire. In particular, participants commented that sexual health and counselling services should provide support for individuals that are LGBT and the Sandyford clinic in Alexandria should provide support and treatment for the local trans community. Ensuring that current services address the needs of the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire is vital as time and money represent barriers in access to LGBT specific services elsewhere and this leaves many members of the LGBT community without the support they need and at a higher risk of physical and mental health problems.

## Recommendations

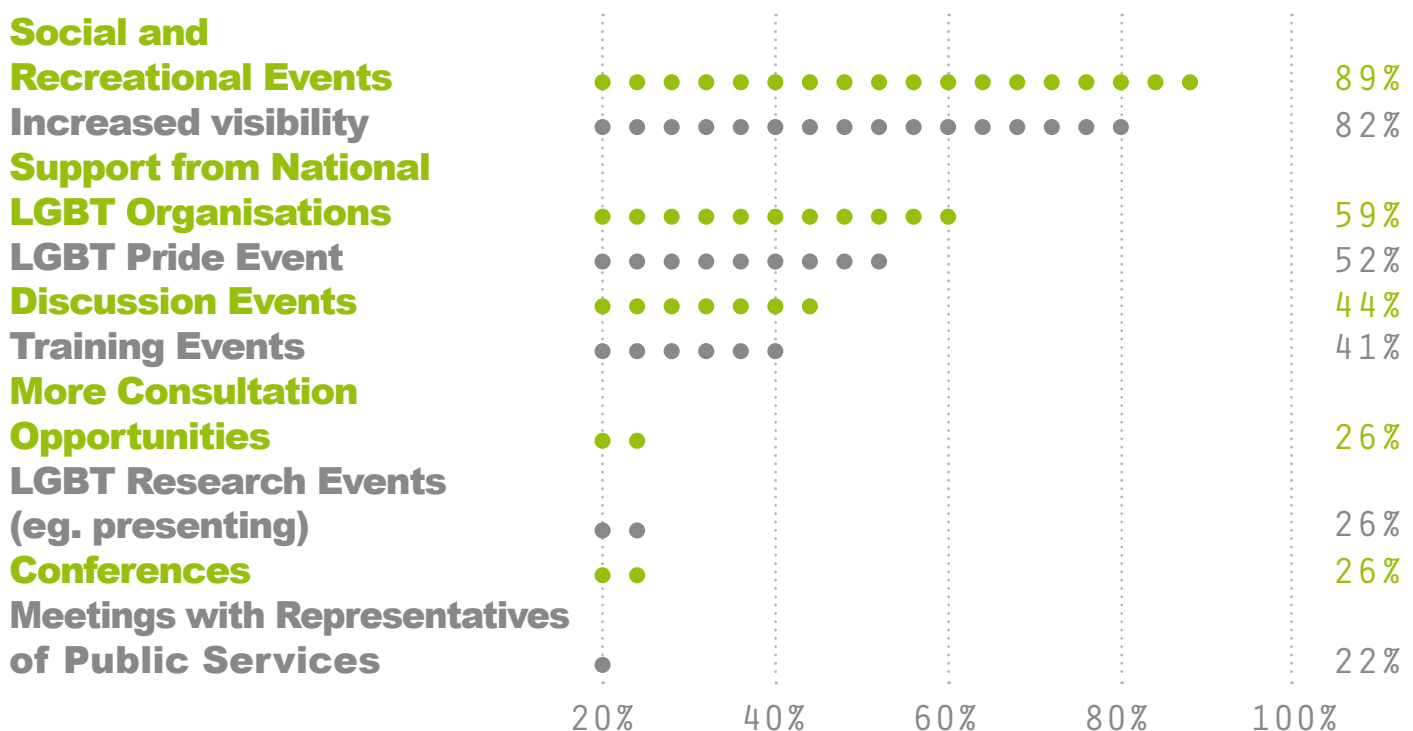
- » Current service providers, such as counselling, sexual health and gender clinics should provide local services for the LGBT community. This will require training on LGBT issues.
- » Service providers should ensure existing services are flagged up to the LGBT community using multiple approaches.



# Building a Stronger LGBT Community

Focus group and survey data suggests that there are specific areas that can be addressed to build a stronger, better integrated LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire, these include (i) opportunities for social interaction within the LGBT community, (ii) education in schools and the workplace on LGBT issues and (iii) an awareness raising campaign. When asked what would help make the LGBT community stronger in West Dunbartonshire the most popular choices were social and recreational events, selected by 89% (of 27) respondents and increased visibility, selected by 82% (of 27) respondents (see fig. 2).

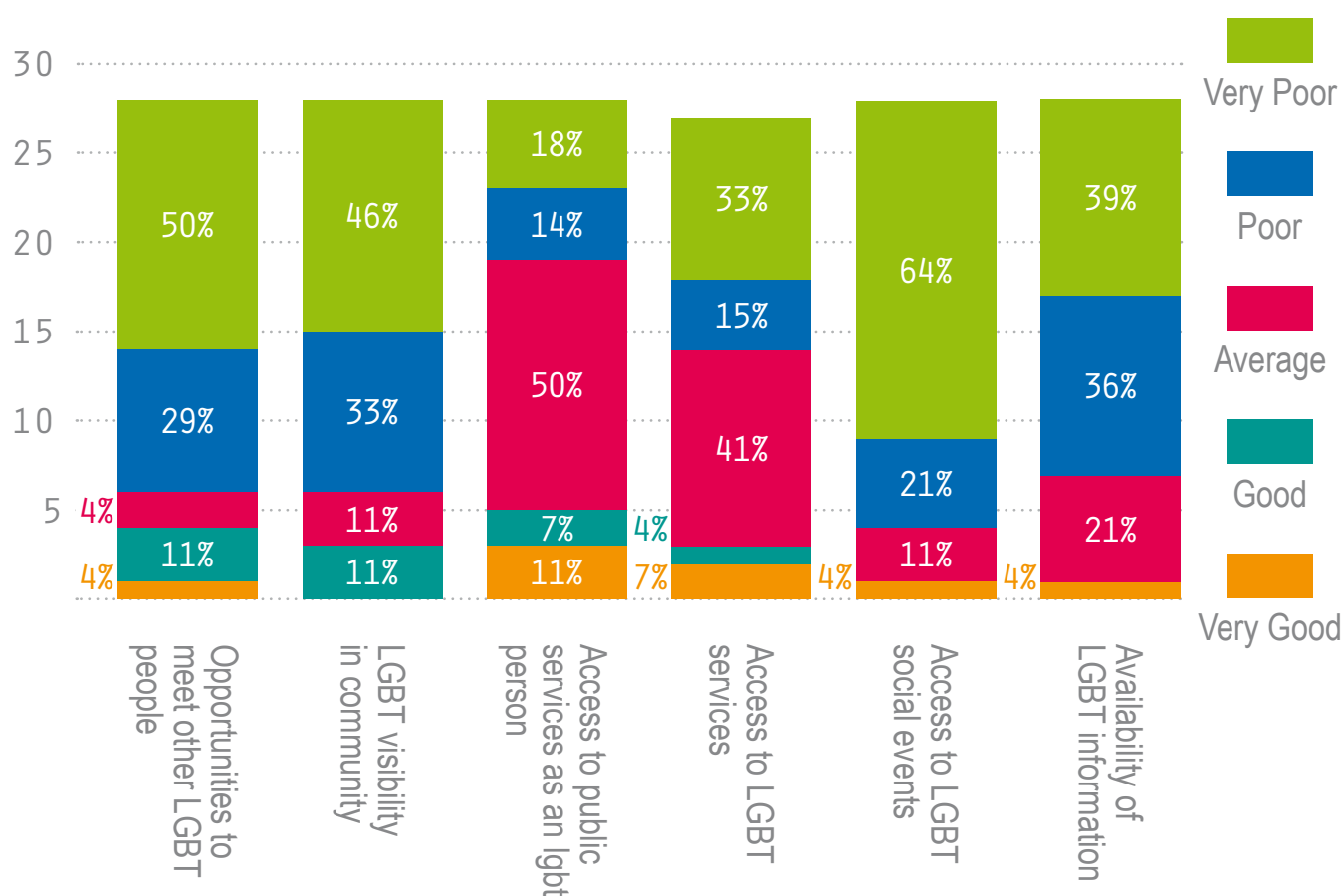
**Which of the following would help the LGBT community to become stronger in West Dunbartonshire?**



**Fig. 2: Bar chart showing ideas and percentage of people who made that selection**

## Building a Stronger LGBT Community

The findings above were reiterated when respondents were asked to rate their experience of being LGBT in relation to various aspects. Opportunities to meet other LGBT people and access to LGBT social and recreation events were almost exclusively rated as poor or very poor. Visibility in the LGBT community was also rated poor or very poor by the majority of respondents, as was availability of LGBT information, such as flyers, posters and websites. Access to services, LGBT and otherwise was viewed as less of a problem, although still generally viewed as average or poor by respondents (see fig. 3).



**Fig. 3: Stacked column chart showing number of people rating different factors as very poor, poor, average, good or very good in West Dunbartonshire.**

## Social Space

The most frequently mentioned complaint in focus groups and survey responses was a lack of social spaces for LGBT individuals in West Dunbartonshire. Indeed, almost all focus group participants criticised the lack

## Building a Stronger LGBT Community

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of social opportunities for LGBT people living in the area. This is highlighted in the focus group quotes below:

**‘If we can get a group together, even just once a month to have a social night as well. We can’t just go out in Clydebank, you know because too many people know you and you get looked at. You get frowned upon...you know? So even just for a social night where you can all sit and just have a wee drink or whatever’.**

**‘We’ve got a lack of social events, pubs...anything for LGBT people’**

**‘You don’t need to feel so isolated in the community’**

**‘I think a good meeting space would be good. Even a hall where people can meet up’**

**‘There are no social events for gay people, there’s nothing here for gay people!’**

Several participants commented that even if a social group had the primary aim of bringing LGBT people together it could strengthen the LGBT community in other ways too, primarily through organising events that would increase visibility of the LGBT community and providing training. One participant stated:

**‘I mean if you look at that thing about more social space in bars and clubs. If you got this group up, that’s something they could do [advertising]. So maybe a priority would be about getting a community group up, running and resourced, then the community group could take up most, if not all of these issues and not just training for council and services, but also training for ourselves’**

There were two worrying consequences of the lack of LGBT social opportunities. Firstly, as previously stated, LGBT people often feel isolated and cut off in West Dunbartonshire. This is likely to increase mental health problems, which, studies show, disproportionately affect the LGBT community. Secondly, the lack of social opportunities meant that LGBT individuals often have to endure verbal, and at times physical, discrimination related to their gender identity or sexual orientation. Most of the cases of homophobia mentioned in focus groups were related to non-LGBT specific social places





## Building a Stronger LGBT Community

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in West Dunbartonshire. One participant stated that there was ‘not one decent pub in Clydebanks that you could say is safe’ for someone LGBT. Discrimination was rife in pubs across the area. Individuals were asked to leave bars, pubs and clubs for a variety of behaviours from showing same-sex affection to being too effeminate. One respondent talked of her friend who got evicted from a pub in Clydebanks ‘because she was kissing her girlfriend in the bar’. Another participant recounted an incident with a friend:

**‘I suppose if you’re really flamboyant you’re gonnae get abuse. Like a guy that I worked with in [name of place]. He was flamboyant and used to get abuse shouted at him constantly and at clubs as well, he’s been chucked out before for being too flamboyant. They said he was making people feel uncomfortable and the bouncers asked him to leave’.**

Homo/bi/transphobia experienced in non-LGBT specific social places shows that social opportunities for the LGBT community are vital in West Dunbartonshire. But what format should it take? Participants’ comments suggest that it should be somewhere informal, open to all members of the LGBT community and democratic without, as one participant stated, individuals ‘pushing their own agendas’. One participant commented that social groups should represent ‘relaxed, informal types of meetings’, whilst another simply stated that it was important there existed ‘somewhere to just have a drink and meet other people’. Another respondent stated that it should be somewhere that is ‘family friendly’ as there is nowhere she can socialise and bring her child along.

Many participants referred to the old Glasgow LGBT centre as an example of a good LGBT social space. Although an LGBT social group/space in West Dunbartonshire would, obviously, be smaller than the Glasgow centre, participants claimed that it had benefits that should be kept in mind when planning something in the area. Key advantages identified were that the Glasgow centre represented a safe space where LGBT people felt comfortable, it provided a space where LGBT individuals could meet each other and find information, and it provided a variety of activities and entertainment opportunities. In addition, it was a family friendly space to which adolescents could go alone and parents could bring their children. Participants’ comments suggest that incorporating such advantages into a West Dunbartonshire social space/group would ensure that the LGBT community can meet others in a safe environment that meets the needs of the local LGBT community.



## Building a Stronger LGBT Community

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Participants of various ages also stated that there needs to be a social group aimed specifically at LGBT young people. One participant commented 'My cousin does Y Sort- It, but there's not really enough focus on gays'. Several respondents worried about young people travelling to and from Glasgow for a night out and younger respondents, in particular, stressed that cost was one barrier for leaving their local area and that this prevented them from meeting other LGBT young people. Current options for socialising for young LGBT people generally consist of non-LGBT specific clubs which were often described as intolerant and homophobic or non-LGBT specific youth groups, such as Y Sort It. Nightclubs, in particular, often represented intolerant spaces for LGBT young people. One participant described his local club as 'the most homophobic place', with which others agreed. The excerpt below represents a typical response made by a younger focus group participant regarding the need for a youth social space in the area:

**'There needs to be a social group for young people. Somewhere you feel comfortable, where people that are here can go and have different experiences. I suppose a bit like this' [the focus group].**

Several young people stated that an LGBT youth group would help form a stronger LGBT community, help individuals come out and ensure that young people have access to the advice that they needed. This was highlighted in the following exchange:

***Interviewer:*** What do you have as a priority?

***Participant One:*** That you can meet people in the same situation. It can make the community more close-knit.

***Interviewer:*** Do you mean things like this or meeting people at school?

***Participant One:*** Both

***Participant Two:*** If you do that then people would understand it and other people would come out or whatever. So, they'd be a lot more people that you can talk to about these things, instead of getting bad advice.

***Interviewer:*** So, maybe if you have people to talk to you're more likely to come out?

***Participant One:*** Yeah, you'd feel more comfortable.



# Building a Stronger LGBT Community

The need for more LGBT social groups in West Dunbartonshire and more youth groups, in particular, was reiterated in responses to a question asking which types of social groups, support groups and services are needed in the area. The most common answers were LGBT social groups, selected by 83% (of 23 respondents) and LGBT social spaces, selected by 74%. Following this, 65% of respondents identified a need for youth groups and 61% LGBT groups for older people. Although the former was identified as a priority in focus groups, as highlighted above, the latter was not discussed. Campaign groups were the next most popular choice, selected by 52% of respondents (see fig. 4). Participants identified several benefits of creating an LGBT social space in West Dunbartonshire. These included, a reduction in isolation and related physical and mental health problems, the creation of a space where ideas and experiences can be exchanged, the provision of information for the community (e.g. on current services), and the formation of a committed group that can strengthen the LGBT community by working on campaigns, such as those to increase visibility and reduce LGBT discrimination in West Dunbartonshire.

## What social groups, support groups and services are needed?

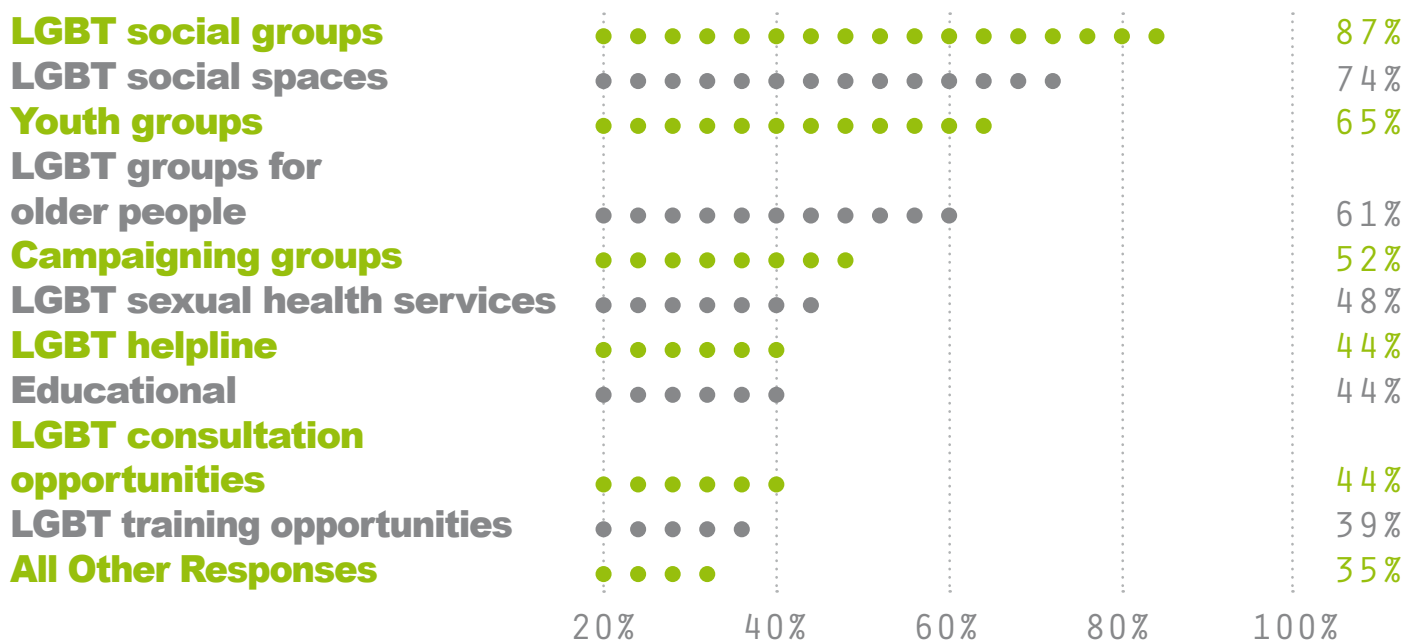


Fig. 4: Bar chart to show social group, support or service and percentage of participants.

# Building a Stronger LGBT Community

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## Education on LGBT Issues

**‘You’ve got to educate people. If you don’t educate people when they’re young they grow up with ignorance and ignorance is one of the hardest things to ‘un-educate’ people’. – Focus group participant.**

Many participants identified a lack of understanding of LGBT issues and of the needs of the LGBT community. This included homo/trans/biphobia, less explicit discrimination and understandings of notions of gender identity and sexual orientation. Research data suggests that more attention needs to be paid to educating within and outwith the LGBT community on these issues in order to increase levels of tolerance of LGBT individuals in West Dunbartonshire. Focus groups and survey data suggests that education of LGBT issues should be concentrated on three, overlapping, areas: education in schools, education in the workplace and education within the LGBT community.

# 78%

Of 23 participants, 78% felt that future services should concentrate on working with schools on LGBT issues.

### (i) Schools

The importance of educating on LGBT issues in schools was a frequently discussed issue in focus groups and often mentioned in survey responses. When asked what form future services in West Dunbartonshire should take, the largest group, 78% selected working with schools on LGBT issues.

Similarly, when asked which of the given approaches was most important, the most common answer was providing education in schools – responses from the survey and focus groups related to education have been provided below:

**‘Working with schools and younger children to make them more aware and to teach them not to discriminate’**

**‘Working in schools on LGBT issues as many schools do not discuss sexual orientation anymore’**



## Building a Stronger LGBT Community

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**‘They are all important. Working in schools is the best way to challenge homophobia, reduce stereotypical views and to challenge and reduce abuse’**

**‘Schools and youth group [sic] to embed more open culture’**

**‘You need to educate people in schools...first year, second year, educate them about it...that it’s not something wrong’**

**‘Anti-discrimination campaign, good practice guidelines for local services, working with schools’**

**‘Working in schools, raising awareness of LGBT issues from a young age, I feel [sic] would ultimately benefit the community in the long term. If young people are more aware of the community that exists, it takes the stigma attached to being LGBT away somewhat’**

This was mirrored when one respondent was asked which would be the most useful approach in tackling homophobia and replied ‘It comes down to education. We need to get into schools...as part of their education. I think education is the most important one’. Another participant stated that one of the reasons for the need to get into schools was that television programmes dealing with issues of gender identity and sexual orientation are often screened too late:

***Participant one:*** We need to get these programmes on in schools. These programmes are on at nine or ten o’clock at night. These youngsters can’t be bothered about programmes at nine or ten at night. You need to get them on in their place of education.

***Participant two:*** I think we need to go into schools, to talk to the 5th and 6th years.

School was identified as the best time to tackle prejudice, before individuals risk developing more fixed preconceptions related to gender identity and sexual orientation. The need to provide education on LGBT issues in West Dunbartonshire schools was highlighted in the many references to homo/bi/transphobia at schools across the area, and by the lack of individuals who claimed their schools broached the subject, such as in sex education lessons. When asked about whether LGBT issues were dealt with at school one



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participant replied 'it doesn't come up in school. It's just for straight people, essentially'. Asked whether anyone experienced outward homophobia at school one participant responded 'Yeah, when I came out in 4th year I had quite a lot of it...for about a year...I got shoved a couple of times'. In another example participants talked about a friend who had his house 'trashed' by schoolmates after they discovered he was gay. In addition, several participants felt that education in schools should not be restricted to students, but should also be provided for teachers to improve their understanding and capacity to deal with homophobia, as demonstrated in the following passage:

**Participant one:** Teachers don't have any real training on LGBT issues and just saying about not getting education in schools...that's because they don't make it a focus. 'Cos I know people that go into schools and teach on bullying, but LGBT bullying is never mentioned. It's never a focus. So there needs to be more focus on that.

**Interviewer:** Do people think that schools would be up for discussing it?

**Participant two:** I think they would be open for it. Maybe give teachers training so they can understand the issues. They'd have an understanding and it would help them deal with issues when they happen. I think they'd be up for dealing with it.

**Interviewer:** What do teachers do when there's homophobic bullying?

**Participant one:** I think they're quite passive really. They say, 'Don't say gay', but they don't make an issue out of it 'cos bullying gays is different to general bullying and I don't think they recognise that.

In terms of the format of school educational programmes, it was suggested that they must be informal and use participatory methods, such as small discussion sessions and activity oriented group-work.

'If you get them into groups like this and you're getting them making choices, you steer them on to it. Then you're on their level. Get them into groups and asking what they think'

Another participant commented that education in schools should be as democratic as possible, stating 'You can't just start telling them what they can and can't do'. 'You've got to know how to talk to kids at their level, talking to





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kids is an art form’ added another respondent. Clearly, whilst talking to young people is identified as important in increasing tolerance of LGBT people in West Dunbartonshire, this should be carefully planned to ensure that material is conveyed in an interesting, captivating manner and that young people do not feel they are being ‘talked down to’ and allowed to express their opinions and thoughts on the topic.

### (ii) Workplace

Education in the workplace was seen as a priority in creating more tolerance towards LGBT individuals in West Dunbartonshire. This overlaps with comments above suggesting the need to improve training for service providers. One participant commented that in order to challenge prejudice ‘you need to get in there and educate employers and unions’ and another stated that there needs to be ‘some sort of education on employing gay people’. Several respondents commented that they had experienced homophobia at work. This involved a range of things from being dismissed for being too effeminate to being chased out of a bar for refusing to perform oral sex and one participant commented that she was reprimanded for using the word lesbian which was ‘not deemed appropriate’ in the fast-food branch she worked at:

**‘At work I said lesbian really loud and I got told off for saying it loud and was told that I shouldn’t say lesbian because there was a child there!...My boss was like, there’s a child right there. Do you think her mum wants her to know what a lesbian is?’**

Education in the workplace was identified as one way to reduce homophobia. The need to improve education for employers is also suggested by the comparatively small number of LGBT individuals who said they were out to workmates (58%) compared with to family and friends (as previously highlighted). This alone implies that the workspace is one of the least tolerant environments for LGBT individuals living in West Dunbartonshire. It was a space where being L, G, B or T was often hidden through avoiding conversation of the topic or efforts to behave in-line with gender stereotypes. Exactly how to deliver training to employers was not explored in detail, but one participant stated that it is important that any training programmes are acted upon and stated they must incorporate employees and not just the managers:



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**‘But it depends whether that filters down to other employees, or just the managers. Are the managers just going to have their dinner and forget about it?’**

It should be added that the need to challenge prejudice based on sexual orientation and gender identity would, most likely, increase the number of LGBT people actively employed in the area. It is important that this is a priority as West Dunbartonshire has one of the highest unemployment rates in the UK. This was alluded to by one focus group participant who talked about an employer's reluctance to employ a transgender woman:

**‘I’ll tell you one thing, the biggest problem around here is unemployment. And they all tell you the same thing, we would employ you but we’re a bit worried about what effect it would have on the business’.**

Data suggests that education in the workplace is important for various reasons:

- » It increases tolerance and reduces homophobia at work
- » It increases understanding of LGBT issues
- » It helps employers and employees deal with issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation when they arise
- » It will increase the number of LGBT people in employment



# Building a Stronger LGBT Community

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## (iii) Within the LGBT Community

Although many participants stated that increasing education across the general community is important, others stressed the importance of not overlooking the need for increased understanding of LGBT issues within the LGBT community itself. A lack of understanding on LGBT issues was seen as causing tensions, and, in some cases, fighting within the community:

**‘I’ll tell you another problem that we’ve come across – there’s a lot of animosity between L, G, B and T and that’s wrong as well. We’re all in the same boat. We should fight together to sort it’**

**‘The whole idea is that LGBT people are under one umbrella and they support each other. We’re talking about the LGBT community as a whole. Everyone should be supportive of each other’**

Several participants stated that within the West Dunbartonshire LGBT community understanding of certain gender identity and sexual orientation issues would be improved through more opportunities for discussion across the community, suggesting the need for more forums, conferences and social opportunities. One participant stated:

**‘They’ve all got to get together and realise they’ve got the same issues and they’ve got to deal with them together, because if they don’t they’ll never deal with them. United we stand, divided we fall. To change it we need to get together’**

Overall, education was seen as the basis for improving tolerance in West Dunbartonshire. It was stressed that before focusing on services, social groups and support groups for the LGBT community it was important to challenge prejudice through providing education within and outwith the LGBT community on issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation, such as understanding what constitutes homo/trans/biphobia, the issues that LGBT individuals face in their day-to-day lives and legislation to protect LGBT individuals. Education was seen as necessary to promote tolerant attitudes towards the LGBT community and to ensure that LGBT people feel safe in West Dunbartonshire. The importance of providing education before anything else was identified by one participant who commented ‘It makes everyone aware of everything ‘cos there’s no point having a social space if everybody’s going to target it and nobody’s going to know about it’.



# 82%

Of 27 respondents, 82% said that **increased visibility** would help build a **stronger LGBT community**.

### Visibility and Awareness Raising

‘Visibility matters – through the media, through poster campaigns, through schools...just getting the word out there that we exist’.

‘People just need to be more aware that there are LGBT people in this area!’ exclaimed one participant when asked what he would change if he worked for the council. Although West Dunbartonshire Council and partners have begun positive work to put LGBT issues on the map locally, such as flying the rainbow flag over the council headquarters, and in distributing information leaflets and posters, most respondents were highly critical of the visibility of LGBT issues in the area. It is clear that more needs to be done to make people aware of LGBT issues in West Dunbartonshire. This was starkly highlighted when, despite there being an LGBT Equalities Network and the council moving to position itself as pro-LGBT rights in recent years, one participant assumed that West Dunbartonshire Council were apathetic towards the safety of LGBT individuals:

**Interviewer:** Do you think the council are aware of safety issues of LGBT people?

**Participant:** I don’t think so to be honest. I don’t even think they care!

After working with schools on LGBT issues, LGBT visibility raising was identified as the second most important area in which future services should focus in West Dunbartonshire. Of 23 participants, 73% identified visibility raising as a priority. It was seen as necessary to deal with the fact that many people in West Dunbartonshire are unaware



## Building a Stronger LGBT Community

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of LGBT issues, have a poor understanding of the challenges facing the LGBT community and often assumed that there are very few LGBT people in the area. In terms of the type of awareness/visibility raising campaign that is needed, several participants stated that the message should be clear to people living in West Dunbartonshire generally and not just the LGBT community. It appears that avoiding symbols that are only understood by the LGBT community is an important part of this. For example, one participant criticised the use of the rainbow flag as an effort to show that the council supports LGBT rights.

**Participant one:** Well I have to be honest and say who the hell, except for LGBT people, actually knows what it is? Does Joe Public know what the rainbow flag stands for? Do they know what the crane lighting means?

**Participant two:** Exactly

**Participant one:** Probably not...so how significant is it? Yes, for us it is really significant. It's a huge step forward. We're absolutely manic that the rainbow flag is flown, but they only fly it for a week. And, what about Joe Bloggs on the street, or the guy who's paying his rates and doesn't care about what the hell is flying up there?

The participant continued to explain that what is needed is a more explicit message, such as the recent Stonewall's advertising campaign that stated 'Some people are gay, get over it'. Although participants had various ideas about how best to increase visibility of the LGBT community, and of LGBT issues more generally, in West Dunbartonshire, there was consensus that this should not abandon traditional promotion methods in favour of the internet. Indeed, several participants stated that LGBT issues are more likely to get people's attention if they are advertised through the newspaper and posters. For example, when asked about reaching non-LGBT members of the public, one participant commented:

'Advertising...just getting stuff in the papers. Like we all saw this in the Clydebank Post and if we read about it, then other people read about it too. More advertising...just awareness...I mean we've got awareness about AIDS, we've got awareness about everything, but in Clydebank we don't have anything LGBT'



# Building a Stronger LGBT Community

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Younger participants were generally more in favour of using a combination of the internet with other methods, such as putting up posters. When asked which method would be best to increase visibility of the LGBT community one participant replied 'Probably the internet because with leaflets everybody takes it but nobody reads it. You just put it in the bin'. Another suggestion was to imitate the approach of the Y Sort It youth group campaign which would involve an LGBT support road-show, of sorts.

**'I think we should be like Y Sort It. They've branched out a lot. They've got mobile offices for young people to come and talk to them, wee shops...things like that'**

Awareness raising was also seen as something important for those within the LGBT community. LGBT individuals, including those at focus groups, were often described as unaware of the support available for LGBT people and making members of the LGBT community aware of such support was seen as vital for the wellbeing of LGBT people living in West Dunbartonshire. The need to increase visibility, even within the LGBT community, was suggested by several participants who stated that it is difficult to get information related to LGBT services and support in the area:

**'I think people are resigned to the fact...although you've come so far you're still kind of shut out from the rest of the world and people have to accept that. So, they don't realise that there are other things out there. It is quite difficult to get information, unless you ring the health boards and things'.**

## Other priorities

Although not mentioned as frequently as creating a social space, increasing visibility and increasing education and understanding, the need for an anti-homophobia campaign was raised by many participants. It was suggested that once a social group is formed they could take on this task. Secondly, consultation of the LGBT community was seen as important, but not as an immediate priority since this project has consulted L, G, B & T people in West Dunbartonshire in two related stages. It was seen as something that would need to be repeated in several years. It was also suggested that once a social group is formed they could be consulted by the West Dunbartonshire Council and other partner agencies as and when necessary. Throughout all

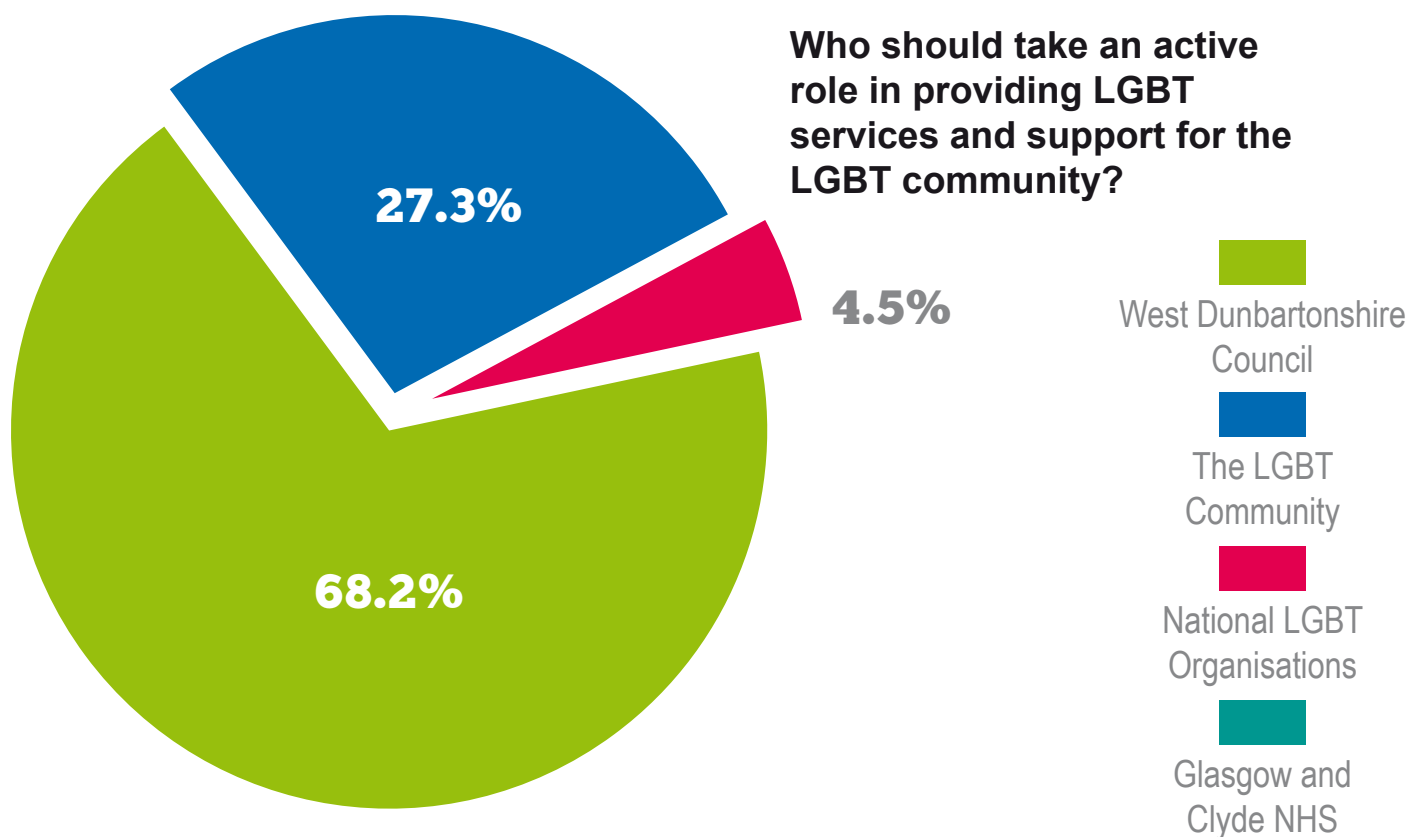


## Building a Stronger LGBT Community

focus groups it was clear that having a Pride event in West Dunbartonshire was neither viable nor necessary. It was seen as a ‘waste of money’, especially when Glasgow has a large Pride already and there were concerns that it would create animosity towards the LGBT community. It was felt that increasing visibility and providing support, for example, were more important priorities currently.

### Role of Service and Support Provider

Finally, the local council is seen as having an important role in providing LGBT services and support for the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire. They were selected by 68% of (22) participants as the most appropriate group to do so (see fig. 5). This sends a clear message to West Dunbartonshire Council and its partners that although the visibility of their current LGBT work needs to be stepped up, they are taking a positive step in the right direction and that this is supported by the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire.



**Fig. 5: Pie chart showing group/body and percentage of respondents**

## Recommendations

- » In order to create a stronger LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire attention should be concentrated on 1) increasing social opportunities, 2) education and 3) visibility.

## Social Opportunities

- » More social opportunities are needed. These should be family friendly, democratic and informal.
- » The creation of an LGBT social space is vital in order to reduce feelings of isolation within the LGBT community and to ensure that LGBT individuals are informed on a range of LGBT issues.
- » There is a need for separate youth social spaces where young LGBT people can meet each other and get information.

## Education

- » LGBT issues must be raised in schools in West Dunbartonshire. This should be less vague than current approaches which subsume LGBT issues into bullying.
- » Educating in schools on LGBT issues must be appropriately tailored to young people. It was suggested it should be participatory and encourage discussion, rather than taking a 'Do what I say' approach.
- » Education for employers in West Dunbartonshire on LGBT issues is needed to reduce homo/trans/biphobia. This must be conducted with all employees rather than just managers.
- » Information, particularly on issues of gender identity, must be available for the LGBT community to ensure that different groups work together and recognise each other's interests. This could be achieved through forum or discussion events.

## Building a Stronger LGBT Community

## Visibility

- » A visibility campaign is needed to increase awareness of the existence, and work, of the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire.
- » This must be more explicit than current approaches e.g. flying the rainbow flag and must use a variety of methods, including the internet, posters, flyers and, possibly, take a road-show approach.
- » A visibility campaign must be focused on the LGBT community too as awareness of sources of information and services is low amongst L, G, B and T people.

## Overall

- » West Dunbartonshire council and other public bodies in the area must take a leading role in the above, and in providing support and services for the LGBT community in general.



# General Information

After completing the questionnaire participants were asked to complete diversity monitoring forms. 28 respondents filled out at least one of the questions. Although forms were also handed out in focus group, these responses are not included here for two reasons. Firstly, most focus group participants also completed the survey, including the diversity monitoring form, and so it is likely that some duplicate responses would be included. Secondly, the vast majority of younger focus group participants did not complete the diversity monitoring form, thus data is likely to be significantly skewed, especially related to age. Thus, the data presented here is that of the 28 respondents who completed the survey and filled out the diversity monitoring section.

## Sexual Orientation

- » 11 participants self-identified as gay men, 7 as gay woman/lesbian and 6 as bisexual.
- » 2 participants self-identified as heterosexual-straight and one respondent wrote 'woman, who as a child was born with the wrong genitalia'.

## Gender Identity

- » 13 participants identified as male (including female-to-male trans man).
- » 14 participants identified as female (including male-to-female trans woman).
- » 1 participant answered 'woman, who as a child was born with the wrong genitalia'.
- » 3 participants have identified as a transgender person at some point, 26 have not.






## Age

- » Most of the respondents were between 16- 54 years old, with only 1 participant stating they were over 55.
- » 10 respondents were 16-24, 6 were 25-34, 4 were 35-44 and 7 were 45-54.

## Postcode

- » 1 respondent lives in a Paisley postcode area, whereas 25 live in West Dunbartonshire postcode areas.
  - » 12 respondents were from the G83 postcode area, which incorporates Alexandria.
  - » 6 respondents were from the G82 postcode area, which incorporates Dumbarton.
  - » 5 respondents were from the G81 postcode area, which incorporates Clydebank.
  - » 2 respondents were from the G60 postcode area, which incorporates Old Kilpatrick.
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## General Information

## Faith/Religion

- » The biggest proportion of respondents identified as having no religion. This accounted for 14 of 27 respondents who answered this question.
- » 9 respondents said they are Christian.
- » 3 said they are Humanist.
- » 1 respondent said they are Atheist.

## Disability

- » 23 participants stated they did not have a disability (according to the definition of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995). 5 participants stated that they did.
- » 4 participants said they had mental health problems, 1 had a physical impairment, 1 had a sensory impairment, 1 had a learning disability, 1 had a long-standing illness and 2 said they had an other type of disability.

## Ethnic Identity

- » 26 participants identified as white Scottish, 1 as white British and 1 person as Afro/Nicaraguan/Mestizo/Irish.



# Conclusion





# Conclusion

Studies such as Equality Network's Community Sector Report (2011) and Voices From Outside the Belt (2008) have shown that LGBT people would be more satisfied living in rural areas outside Edinburgh and Glasgow if local employers and service providers were better able to provide for their needs. These findings are also mirrored in West Dunbartonshire which is a mixed urban and rural area just outside the central belt. LGBT people were generally happy to live in West Dunbartonshire, but were dissatisfied with a lack of services and support and a relatively high level of intolerance or, at best, ambiguity towards the LGBT community. As a consequence, most participants travel to Glasgow to access the services and support that they require, which is both costly and time-consuming. This report suggests that changes must be made in four areas to improve the well-being of the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire: service provision; social opportunities; education and visibility. These will be considered, but firstly some key points related to the experience of being LGBT and living in West Dunbartonshire will be outlined.

## Experience of LGBT people in West Dunbartonshire

Overall the experience of being LGBT and living in West Dunbartonshire was **relatively negative**. The majority of participants had experienced **homo/bi/transphobia** in some form, although discrimination resulting in **physical abuse was rare**. Most survey respondents are 'out' to their family and friends, but only a minority are out to their neighbours. Participants frequently complained about a lack of LGBT social opportunities, services and support in West Dunbartonshire. It was suggested that measures to reduce social isolation, increase visibility and reduce homophobia are needed in the area. However most LGBT people felt **safe and comfortable in their neighbourhoods**, suggesting a relative level of tolerance at a more local scale, and a minority of respondents spoke positively of WDC's work to tackle homophobia and increase LGBT visibility in the area.



## Service Provision

Survey and focus group data show a general dissatisfaction with the **lack of LGBT services** in West Dunbartonshire. Many LGBT people had to travel to Glasgow to access the services they require, particularly those related to counselling, sexual health and gender reassignment. Although this was not a problem for everyone, **cost and time were seen as significant barriers for many with travelling outside West Dunbartonshire to access services**. Consequently, it was suggested that current services are **adapted to adequately serve the LGBT community** in the area. This was seen as preferable to forming new LGBT-specific services because of the costs involved. This would also **require LGBT training** for those working in service provision to reduce levels of discrimination. This was mirrored by a **mixed and variable experience of treatment** within current public services in West Dunbartonshire. **Some participants experienced shocking levels of discrimination** related to gender identity and sexual orientation in using local services and just **25% said that services in West Dunbartonshire are LGBT friendly**. However, **others had positive experiences**, particularly those who used NHS services or the Police.

## Social opportunities

A strong message from participants was that more **social opportunities** are needed for the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire. **9 out of 10 respondents** said that **more social groups would help the LGBT community become stronger**. It was clear that there are very few opportunities to meet other LGBT people and this leaves many feeling **isolated** and unable to turn to others for advice and support. Many participants suggested that a social group would ensure **greater cohesion** within then LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire and would allow people to **share their experiences and information** with others. This was seen as creating a stronger and more unified LGBT community in various ways, such as **reducing mental ill health**, ensuring the community is **better informed** and providing a **base for future campaigning**. Regardless of age, many participants identified a **need for a youth group** where young LGBT individuals can meet each other in a safe environment. It was mentioned that

## Conclusion

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any social space should be **family friendly, informal, secure, democratic** (without one leader) and be **open to all members of the LGBT community**.

## Education

Education was identified as **vital in increasing tolerance** towards LGBT people and understanding of LGBT issues in West Dunbartonshire. In particular, it was stated that there is **a pressing need for a schools LGBT programme** which tackles issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Currently, participants feel that these issues are not talked about in schools and many spoke about their experiences of discrimination there. It is recommended that schools provide educational opportunities and **information on services available, on sexual health, and on homo/trans/biphobic bullying**. This must be **more explicit than current approaches** which were seen as only paying lip-service to gender identity and sexual orientation discrimination as part of a wider programme to tackle bullying in schools. **8 out of 10 respondents stated that future services should concentrate on working with schools. Education for employers and employees** was also seen as important as many individuals had experienced discrimination in the workplace. It was stressed that this must not focus solely on those in managerial positions. In addition, many participants stated that **education within the LGBT community on LGBT issues** is also necessary to ensure cohesion necessary to influence local government and formulate campaigns.

## Visibility

**8 out of 10 respondents agreed that increased visibility would result in a stronger LGBT community.** Related to this, there was consensus in focus groups that **visibility of the LGBT community must be increased** in West Dunbartonshire. This was seen as important as it **shows the general public that LGBT people exist and makes them aware of some of the issues LGBT people face**. Many respondents were unaware of West Dunbartonshire Council's efforts to increase visibility through flying the rainbow flag and many stated that **future campaigns must be more explicit**. Campaigns should not use symbols only understood by the LGBT community. It was stated that using **both traditional advertisement** methods, such as posters, newspaper advertisements and flyers, **and internet promotion** represent the best approach to increasing visibility.







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**This research was conducted and published by  
the Equality Network, September 2011.**

Registered Charity in Scotland SC037852

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