

## Supporting Older LGBT residents

Earlier this year, the H&F Health and Wellbeing Board and the POPS Forum heard from Opening Doors London (ODL) ([www.openingdoorslondon.org.uk](http://www.openingdoorslondon.org.uk)), an organisation which provides information and support to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT+) aged over 50.

ODL provide an outreach and befriending programme that ensures that support is available to a generation of older LGBT+ who had previously experienced abuse and rejection, during a time when had not been possible to be open about sexuality or gender within a hostile climate.

ODL outlined some of the real and all too recent experiences that the LGBT community have faced, including:

- The use of electro medical (electric shock) treatment had been intended to “cure” LGBT+ and had been developed by the Maudsley hospital. It was removed after twenty years, having been recognised as ineffective. This controversial, conversion treatment had been delivered without aesthetic and aimed to make people feel repulsed by other gay people. Homosexuality was a punishable offence, and those found guilty were given the option of imprisonment or medical treatment. Side effects included scarring and memory loss, and many people either self-harmed or were suicidal.
- many people from the older generation were subjected to abuse, and that this impacted on those in sheltered housing, care services and care homes as some individuals of that generation harboured homophobic attitudes. Sadly, many older LGBT people feel they have to conceal their sexuality for fear of abuse.
- Social isolation and loneliness were key issues for many older LGBT+ people, who did not have children, or had become estranged from their families. They might have moved from away from where they once had lived and were likely to live alone. They were also more likely to have experienced mental health problems, had higher rates of suicide, alcohol or drugs abuse, compared to heterosexuals.

The thought provoking presentations and discussions were a welcome opportunity for local organisations to think about how they can ensure that the LGBT community are supported and able to have equal access to local services and facilities. This might range from a simple show of solidarity through the wearing or showing of LGBT friendly information, or specific equalities work undertaken with our staff and service users.

It is all of our responsibility to ensure that ALL equalities strands are considered and addressed – and to model the behaviour that we would like to see in others.

If you would like support or assistance from Sobus in considering your equalities and diversity policies and practice, please contact us at [admin@sobus.org.uk](mailto:admin@sobus.org.uk)