



ENGAGING LGBT PEOPLE IN YOUR WORK

A Stonewall Scotland
Good Practice Programme Guide



Stonewall
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FOREWORD

Public sector organisations across Scotland know that in an era of tight budgets and austerity, there's no place for providing costly services which aren't used. But to provide the right services it is necessary to understand the requirements of service users, so that savings can be made and inclusive services designed. Organisations must first listen carefully to the people who use their services.

Sadly we know that many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people still experience poor and discriminatory services because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The best organisations have realised that asking LGBT people what they require from their public bodies can help them improve their services. Enabling LGBT people to shape planning can help ensure that services are relevant and non-discriminatory. The poster that read 'Smoking makes you unattractive to the opposite sex' may have had a broader impact, at no extra cost, if someone had asked a lesbian whether that message resonated with her. Gay men targeted with homophobic abuse and violence may have found it easier to tell the police, if police officers hadn't kept asking whether they wanted to phone their wives.

The Equality Act 2010 encourages public bodies to engage groups of people sharing protected characteristics and encourages those people to hold them to account about what they are doing to achieve equality. The Scottish Government, like all public bodies, is subject to the new equality duty and is committed to building on the good practice which developed from the previous statutory duties. They have put in place systems and structures that enable LGBT people to directly comment on and shape services that they use, recognising that this makes the services more effective, more efficient, and more economical.

Other public bodies are concerned that involving local LGBT people may be difficult. That is why we have produced this guide. It provides practical information about how to engage your local LGBT community. We're grateful to the organisations and people featured for sharing their valuable insights. They demonstrate that enabling LGBT people to be involved in the development of services is necessary if our public services are to be relevant and cost-effective.

Alan Wardle
Director, Stonewall Scotland

INTRODUCTION

Efficient public services are those which understand the requirements of their service users. Stonewall Scotland's research has clearly demonstrated that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have specific requirements from their local public services, but all too often fail to get the level of service they need. Many organisations have yet to effectively engage their LGBT service users or address their requirements in the services they deliver.

The Equality Act 2010 places a responsibility on public bodies to demonstrate how they have enabled LGBT people to engage with the development and delivery of services. LGBT people will be encouraged to have a greater role in holding public bodies to account on how they are reducing inequalities in public services.

This guide is the latest in a range of resources for public services in Scotland on how to start making services more inclusive for LGBT people. It provides practical advice for public services on how to engage LGBT people in their decision making processes. It demonstrates how organisations can set up advisory groups; small, cost-effective groups that can advise public bodies on the requirements of local LGBT people and help them decide when it is appropriate and feasible to engage with the wider group of LGBT service users.

The guide features insights from organisations that have already begun to engage with LGBT people in their work. It also includes the perspectives of a number of LGBT people, drawn from a survey of over 150 people, about how public bodies can engage most effectively with them.

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WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?

Engagement is the means by which public bodies capture and understand the interests and requirements of their service users. For councils, this is the population of the area they cover. For other public bodies, this is their particular set of service users, which in many cases form a very diverse group of people.

Engagement is also the means by which they can capture the many innovative and practical ideas people have about how to deliver more efficient, fair and innovative services. Engagement is known in some organisations as **public consultation**, **involvement** or **participation**.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Giving local citizens an active role in determining the shape, structure and priorities of local services makes them more:

- Accountable
- Transparent
- Democratic
- Relevant
- Cost-effective
- Trustworthy

Local people who are enabled to play a full part in making decisions about their local services will feel more involved in those services. By holding local services to account and ensuring those services address their requirements, people will receive better, more relevant services.

Public bodies that involve service users in making decisions about those services will improve their understanding of people's requirements. As a result they will be able to develop tailored services that respond to local requirements and interests, as well as identify which existing services are not meeting the needs of users.

Most importantly, public services that understand their local community can develop services that address the cause of local problems rather than simply the consequences. This makes them more cost-effective and improves outcomes for local people.

WHY IS ENGAGEMENT WITH LGBT PEOPLE IMPORTANT?

Hearing the community perspective and the issues that are really being experienced from members of the public has completely changed how we actually deliver our work. *Dee Caryl, Metropolitan Police*

Only by hearing the voice of real people will organisations understand the real issues within the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities. *Sarah*

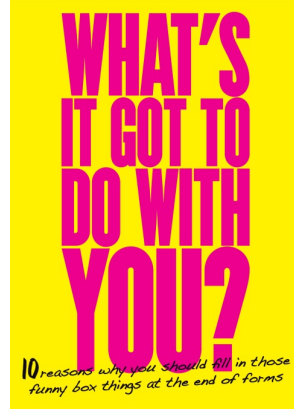
If there isn't a lesbian, gay or bisexual voice at the table or on the distribution list, then the voice is not heard. *Gary*

Public service workers are simply not LGBT aware... it seems that people are more tolerant of discriminatory attitudes towards LGBT people than other equality groups. *Service With A Smile, Stonewall Scotland, 2009*

LGBT people have a diverse range of interests and requirements. Engaging directly with local LGBT people is the most effective way for public services to understand what those interests and requirements are.

There are two main opportunities for public bodies to engage with local LGBT service users:

- 1 Through **general** engagement exercises with the whole local population or different groups within the local community. Organisations that **monitor** the sexual orientation and gender identity of respondents to general engagement exercises are able to examine how a particular initiative or service impacts on LGBT people. This is a cost-effective way of exploring how different services impact on different groups.



Stonewall's innovative 'What's it got to do with you? 10 reasons why you should fill in those funny box things at the end of forms' monitoring guide provides information about the value of asking for monitoring information.

- 2 Through **specific** engagement exercises with local LGBT people. Direct engagement helps organisations identify any different requirements LGBT people may have and think about how they engage the wider LGBT population through other services.

We are taxpayers and local residents. I am as interested in my child's school as I am in care home provision for elderly LGBT people. *Graham*

HOW DO LGBT PEOPLE'S REQUIREMENTS DIFFER?

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens may have the same views and experiences on their local public services as anyone else. However, Stonewall Scotland research has shown that LGBT people can have different experiences or be affected disproportionately by the way public services are delivered.

This can have a negative impact across different regions and services.
For example:

- LGBT people in rural Scotland often reported that there were "*No 'gay friendly' services*" in their area, or that "*LGBT services just didn't exist*". But, "*Glasgow was like heaven*" by comparison.
- 59% of rural LGBT people felt that there was a problematic lack of services in their area.
- 15% of lesbian or bisexual women under the age of 20 have tried to take their lives. This compares to a Childline estimate 0.12% for the under 18 population as a whole.
- Only 11% of women in same sex relationships felt that their partners were welcome at a healthcare consultation.
- 79% of LGBT people in Scotland have never had a fire safety check at home. A significant number of these respondents were concerned about inviting community firefighters into their home because of the threat of homophobia or transphobia.
- LGBT people often feel unable to report homophobic or transphobic abuse to the police.
 - Almost a third of LGBT people in Scotland have suffered a physical attack; **70% did not report this to anybody.**
 - Almost two thirds of LGBT people in Scotland have suffered verbal abuse; **88% did not report this to anybody.**

Engagement with local LGBT people can help identify these and any other distinct experiences and requirements. Engaging directly with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender service users will enable service providers to better understand the reason for any differences, and help them develop innovative and cost-effective solutions to respond to them.

LGBT people may never have been enabled to play a part in their local services or their local community. As a result research has shown that whilst three in four heterosexual people feel a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, just over two in four LGBT people do; this falls to less than one in three in rural areas of Scotland. Moreover LGBT people are less likely to enjoy living in their neighbourhood and less likely to feel their local area is cohesive compared to heterosexual people. Enabling local LGBT people to make their voices heard will improve community confidence and cohesion.

THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on public bodies to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The Act also places a responsibility on public bodies to clearly demonstrate how they have engaged with LGBT people in delivering their services.

The Equality Act also encourages LGBT citizens to hold local service providers to account about what they are doing to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity for LGBT people. Organisations will increasingly have to respond to questions from service users such as:

- What steps have you taken to prevent discrimination against LGBT people?
- What have you done to make sure services are relevant to LGBT people?
- What evidence can you provide to show you're making progress in these areas?

By engaging with LGBT people in delivering their services, public bodies will be able to demonstrate how they addressed these issues.

By doing this work we've been able to get a far richer picture of what people think, want and expect, and as a result we've started to prioritise where we put our money and resources to make sure people really feel satisfied in the kind of service they're getting. *Darren Oakey, Staffordshire Police*

Once you know what the community's priorities are, you also know what areas are not priorities. So you can target your resources better and put less focus on those areas that aren't having the desired impact. *Mary Evans, Brighton and Hove City Council*

BENEFITS FOR ORGANISATIONS

After consulting, all Brighton and Hove City Council's strategies were evidence-based and evidence-led rather than being based on just hunches and arguments. *Kath Browne, Brighton University*

We've been able to make some pretty crucial decisions around where we put our resources based on a very accurate reflection of the feedback we've received from the community. *Darren Oakey, Staffordshire Police*

Public bodies that effectively listen to members of the public should be able to:

- Demonstrate improved quality of service delivered to individuals measured through a better up take of services and earlier engagement with service providers
- Identify common requirements of different groups in a local community – for example, health information delivered in supermarkets – encouraging economies of scale

- Develop a clear evidence base to ensure the delivery of relevant outputs, better planning and delivery of services
- Improve efficiency and value-for-money by only delivering services they know local people need and will use
- Improve reputation and establish trust, satisfaction and confidence among local people in the services that they pay for
- Be more visible and approachable to local people leading to greater local involvement in the delivery of services
- Identify the barriers that prevent people from using their services and learn how to design inclusive and accessible services in future
- Avoid the risk of potentially expensive legal action by identifying potentially discriminatory policies or practices

BENEFITS FOR INDIVIDUALS

When public bodies carry out effective engagement, service users:

- Feel more engaged and have a greater stake in their local area
- Feel more confident and satisfied with their local services
- Feel that their local services are delivering value for money
- Feel that their taxes are better spent
- Receive better, more relevant services
- Have more trust in public service providers

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LGBT ADVISORY GROUPS

It's vital to get the right partners on board at the outset. Make links with the people out there on the ground talking to and working with the sorts of people you want to reach. They can help you with the messaging and find ways to really access those people. *Mary Evans, Brighton City Council*

LGBT service users, acting as an advisory group, are useful in helping organisations understand the requirements of LGBT people and how best to involve lesbian, gay and transgender people more generally in the planning and development of services.

WHAT IS AN LGBT ADVISORY GROUP?

An LGBT advisory group is a small diverse group of LGBT people who act as a 'sounding board' for the work local organisations do on LGBT issues. The groups are structured and semi-formalised, sometimes with members applying for positions within the group.

Advisory groups have often been established by single organisations working in a specific area, such as police forces. Groups are most effective, however, when they are used and shared by a number of local public services including health boards, local authorities, police forces, fire services and GP surgeries, especially as these groups often join up to discuss equality and diversity issues.

PURPOSE OF ADVISORY GROUPS

LGBT advisory groups have a similar role to the employee network groups established by some of Stonewall Scotland's Diversity Champions. These network groups can provide a crucial means to ensure that employment policies, practices and procedures reflect the requirements and experiences of LGBT staff.

An advisory group of service users can serve a similar function in relation to service delivery. The role of the advisory group is two-fold:

- 1 To act as a first port of call group for organisations to answer questions about issues relating to LGBT people. Advisory group members can directly offer their experiences and opinions on an organisation's work relating to LGBT people.
- 2 To offer advice and information on how, when or why organisations should consult local LGBT people more broadly. The advisory group play a role in deciding when and how the local LGBT community should be involved in an organisation's work.

THE BENEFITS OF AN ADVISORY GROUP

By acting as a source of advice, experience and information for organisations, LGBT advisory groups can act as a small, cost-effective and informed resource that organisations can directly engage with.

Engagement with the wider community may not always be necessary, appropriate, feasible or cost-effective. In some cases members of the advisory group may be able to point the organisation in the right direction or **answer questions themselves**, without needing to consult more widely with service users.

An advisory group can:

- Provide advice and local expertise and act as a critical friend to help improve efficiency and ensure services are relevant
- Highlight areas of particular concern which require immediate action
- Determine what is and what is not a suitable topic for wider engagement with the LGBT community
- Help organisation find local LGBT people to engage with
- Tell organisations how best to engage with local LGBT people
- Help organisations reach less visible and more vulnerable people in the LGBT community

THE COST

The main cost of an advisory group is the use of a room and some administrative support to share the work of the group with the local community and local services. Organisations may also decide to cover expenses for participation, in accordance with their existing policies. The cost of engaging service users should not therefore be prohibitive.

FORMING AN ADVISORY GROUP

To encourage LGBT people to join a group it is important to advertise and promote the advisory group as widely as possible. Members of the public may need persuading to give up their time to talk about public services, so organisations will need to be explicit about the benefits of engaging with and shaping the services that they pay for and benefit from.

Consider inviting LGBT people to apply to be a member of an advisory group for a fixed term. A simple application form will allow people to outline what they can contribute. Organisations need to have set criteria for applicants, depending on the type of work the advisory group will do. These can include:

- Having lived in the area
- Experience of working in a team to reach decisions and consensus
- Direct experience of using services
- An understanding of the diverse requirements of the LGBT community
- A commitment to helping services improve and finding solutions to problems

Local people may have different reasons for getting involved and may have different things they want out of engaging. Some may want to participate as an altruistic act whilst others may participate as part of their career development. It is important that the work of the advisory group meets both these requirements from the outset and that the benefits of being a member of the group, both to members and the wider community, are communicated clearly.

AIMS, OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

Organisations and advisory groups should be clear from the outset what the goals of the group are. The goals of the group could include:

- Helping organisations identify any barriers that stop LGBT people from accessing services
- Coming up with innovative new cost-effective ideas on how to support LGBT people more efficiently
- Developing services that include LGBT people
- Promoting the positive work of organisations to the local LGBT community
- Identifying services that aren't needed by the local LGBT community
- Assessing policies and practices to ensure they include LGBT people

DOS AND DON'TS

Do:

- Enlist the help of your communications team to promote the group through a range of media channels, such as local radio, newspapers and websites
- Use the expertise of local LGBT groups, or national groups with a local presence
- Go to where LGBT people are – LGBT centres and social spaces popular with local LGBT people exist in many areas of Scotland. Be visible and approachable to local people. This may include working outside office hours.
- Make people feel that they're part of something that's unique and important which will have a real influence on their local area
- Make them understand that organisations really can't deliver good services, and shouldn't try to do this, without their engagement

- Advertise on notice-boards in public buildings such as libraries, hospitals, GP's surgeries, community centres and council buildings
- Advertise in places that local LGBT people visit such as bars, clubs and community forums or centres

Don't:

- Imply people cannot feed back later if they don't engage right now. People should be able to feed in and ask questions at any time
- Imply that the advisory group is the only way by which their voices can be heard
- Suggest that if they don't participate, organisations won't consider their needs

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ENGAGING THE WIDER LGBT COMMUNITY

There will be occasions when wider engagement exercises may need to be conducted with local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens. Wider consultation should not be undertaken without reviewing whether the topics for consultation are appropriate or the methods of engagement are accessible and cost-effective.

WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT WITH THE WIDER LGBT COMMUNITY?

Engagement with the wider LGBT community is when organisations run an open public exercise specifically for members of the local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community to capture their views on topics relating to public services. This engagement can be conducted in a number of ways, outlined later in this chapter.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF ENGAGING THE WIDER LGBT COMMUNITY?

Organisations may need to capture a broad range of views from the local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. An advisory group should play a key role in deciding when and where it is feasible and important to consult the wider LGBT population. In many instances an advisory group may feel that it is not cost-effective, practical or relevant enough to engage the wider community. Issues and solutions can be explored by the advisory group without need for wider input.

However, there will be occasions when it is appropriate and important to consult the wider community. For example, when:

- There is a need to capture reliable quantifiable evidence of the views of the local LGBT people on a topic. For example, determining the numbers of local LGBT people who use or would use a local service.
- An issue is deemed to be of significant importance to, or has disproportionate impact on local LGBT people to merit wider consultation
- Organisations feel that there are perspectives currently not being captured via the advisory group or they wish to demonstrate the advisory group reflects a breadth of views within the local community
- There are changes planned to services aimed towards lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people, or services disproportionately used by LGBT people

WHEN IS IT RIGHT TO ENGAGE WITH THE WIDER LGBT COMMUNITY?

Local citizens are often asked to comment on the impact of policies or services on LGBT people which are irrelevant. Not all policies have a disproportionate impact or relevance for LGBT people. For example, LGBT people may not have specific concerns about which day the bins should be collected or which type of benches should be used in the local park. Their views on these matters can be fed in via generic engagement exercises and feedback (and as it is good practice to collect equal opportunities monitoring data on generic engagement exercises, the views of different groups can be collected if this is so desired).

For example, if an organisation is developing a new equality plan it should first work with the advisory group to identify the key policy areas that need to be covered by the scheme. Once this process is complete the organisation may decide to engage with the wider LGBT community about these key points. The group would advise how to ensure a diverse range of LGBT people locally are aware of and are encouraged to respond. A policy like a new equality action plan clearly has relevance for the LGBT community who use the organisation's services.

THE DIFFERENT METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT


There are many different ways that organisations can engage with the wider population and a LGBT advisory group should help organisations decide the best method, or combination of methods for any particular topic. Different methods of engagement include:

CITIZEN'S PANELS consist of a large, representative group of citizens who participate in regular surveys. These surveys can be online, by telephone or paper versions that are mailed out. They can be used to identify local issues, assess service needs and determine the effectiveness of new services. Asking participants questions about their gender and gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion and disability status can enable further detailed breakdown of data.

FOCUS GROUPS are in-depth, interactive small group conversations where participants talk to each other as well as to the facilitator. They can capture detailed data on people's attitudes, perceptions and opinions, particularly from less confident people who otherwise might not make their voice heard at larger consultation events.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS are often used for local engagement with a broad range of diverse citizens. These can provide a big picture but organisations should be aware that LGBT people may not feel prepared to out themselves in a public forum by raising issues relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people.

MONITORING SEXUAL ORIENTATION (and gender identity) on existing anonymous questionnaires that people are invited to complete at the point where they receive a service. Many services wish to evaluate the service user experience, providing comment and complaint forms. Equal opportunities monitoring on these evaluations can provide an inexpensive 'snapshot' of how LGBT people feel about the service. Organisations should take steps to ensure LGBT people feel comfortable to indicate their sexual orientation or identity in surveys, by ensuring that the collected data remains confidential and that staff involved in data collection are appropriately trained.



ELECTRONIC SURVEYS provide a cheap and simple method of quickly capturing people's views and opinions online. They are distributed as a link that can be emailed or posted on a webpage. Including monitoring information provides additional insights, as described previously.

ONLINE FORUMS can allow people who are concerned about outing themselves or are too busy to attend meetings to contribute. People engage in dialogue online, through posting comments on a particular topic.

USER PANELS are regular meetings of a particular service users group that take the format of a workshop. They can help identify the concerns and priorities of a particular group and can lead to the early identification of problems and barriers or ideas for improvements. User panels tend to meet every few months in an ongoing capacity with members being replaced as time passes. These may be sub-groups of the LGBT advisory group.

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GOOD PRACTICE IN ENGAGEMENT

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

In 2001, Aberdeen City Council developed a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Action Plan. This plan was developed for two main reasons. Firstly, through production and publication of a formal written document, Aberdeen City Council aimed to increase confidence within the LGBT community that the local authority is committed to eliminating discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. Secondly, the plan was to provide focus for the local authority in developing provision of better and more relevant services for LGBT people.

This activity is part of a wider programme to develop community engagement in the city, which involves supporting a range of consultative forums for communities of interest that face inequality and discrimination.

INVOLVING LGBT PEOPLE

Aberdeen City Council believed that it was imperative to ensure that the Action Plan was driven by LGBT communities in Aberdeen. A working group was established which involved representatives from LGBT organisations and groups, elected members and council officers. In order to ensure that the working group was informed by the views of the wider LGBT community, the Convenor of the Grampian LesBiGay Switchboard agreed to work with Council officers to host and facilitate meetings of LGBT community representatives to discuss key issues of importance, and ways in which these should be presented to the working group.

The local authority also wished to ensure that following on from involvement in developing the action plan, LGBT people saw real change in the services provided. Assistance was therefore given to establish the 'Pride in Aberdeen' LGBT Forum.

This Forum is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee and aims to:



- Provide opportunities for LGBT individuals and communities in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire to get together
- Provide advice and education for LGBT communities and the wider public on health and well being
- Educate and raise awareness of the issues that affect LGBT communities

The Forum agreed to assist and advise service providers and act as a monitoring body for progress on the LGBT action plan. The Forum receives regular feedback on the progress of departments within Aberdeen City Council in implementing the action plan. Written reports are provided from each department, and officers from different departments have attended to report on progress and build relationships between LGBT communities and service providers.

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

West Dunbartonshire Council values the increasing diversity of its communities and workforce and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and equitable outcomes for all of its citizens and service users and employees.

For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History Month in 2011, West Dunbartonshire Council raised the rainbow flag above Council Offices to highlight their commitment to creating an inclusive and equal environment for people living and working in the area. The flag was raised at Council Headquarters by the Provost as part of a short ceremony, and also flew at a second office location. This was the 4th year that the flag had been raised to commemorate LGBT History Month and was linked with the launch of an awareness-raising poster campaign that was displayed across West Dunbartonshire, as well as the development of the West Dunbartonshire LGBT Equalities Network.



The Network includes members from Community Planning Partners including Strathclyde Police, West Dunbartonshire Violence Against Women Partnership, local voluntary sector representatives, Clydebank College and West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership Community Support Team. The Network raises awareness of LGBT issues, challenges negative attitudes and homophobia and ensures that the LGBT community is consulted in service design and delivery. Awareness raising work and consultation processes have been supported financially by the Community Planning Partnership over the past four years, demonstrating a commitment to LGBT equalities which is a cross-cutting issue within the Single Outcome Agreement themes.

The West Dunbartonshire LGBT Equality Network worked in partnership with the Equalities Network to carry out a consultation exercise with the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire, building on a previous smaller consultation carried out the previous year by a student with the West Dunbartonshire Council policy unit. Young people and adults from the LGBT community were consulted, and the resulting report recommendations focused on issues identified as a priority by the participants – social opportunities, education and training, and visibility of LGBT people and issues locally, with an emphasis on greater local service provision.

From 2011 an LGBT community group has been established in West Dunbartonshire, supported by the Network and meeting regularly in the area. This group has established a formal leadership structure to facilitate planning and direction of the group, and plans to participate as an advisory group to West Dunbartonshire Council, as well as being an opportunity to socialise with other LGBT people living in West Dunbartonshire. An LGBT youth group is being established locally, supported and facilitated by local youth advice and advocacy project Y-Sort-It.

As part of its commitment to inclusive consultation and involvement, the West Dunbartonshire Council Community Planning Team has extended equality monitoring to include sexual orientation and religion and belief to the key consultation structure that is represented by West Dunbartonshire Citizens' Panel.

EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

In 2008 East Lothian Council focused on LGBT History Month, a well known awareness raising vehicle, as a way of engaging with LGBT communities and staff members. 2 workshops were held; the first was a celebratory lunch workshop which 5 staff attended, giving feedback on the Council's work to date and services for LGBT people.

In 2009 East Lothian Council decided to renew focus on LGBT History Month but worked more in partnership with other groups to hold events. Three events were held, with varying degrees of success. They were advertised via East Lothian Council's Diversity Network database of LGBT organisations as well as other council methods of advertising and promotion. A 'verbal histories' session was held with East Lothian Council's museums service and Our Story Scotland. This was a more intimate event with 15 attendees who shared very personal stories about their experience being LGBT in East Lothian. Following this, an awareness raising concert was held with Edinburgh Gay Men's Chorus at the Brunton Theatre in Musselburgh. 110 people attended, including a local councillor. This was not a specific consultation event, but proactive and planned contact gathering and data capturing meant that a network of potential contacts with LGBT interests could be developed.

Next, a film screening was arranged with Stonewall Scotland's support. This was not a great success due to planning and weather; the event was held at Council Offices and on a mid-week night, in contrast with the awareness-raising concert which was held in a community venue at the weekend.

In 2010 East Lothian Council decided to replicate the successes of 2009 while trying something new. Two events were held: another choir event which had 120 attendees, and a follow-up evaluation via email, and a "secret valentine" event in conjunction with Our Story Scotland, with fewer attendees.

In 2011 East Lothian Council decided to pursue a different strategy and held an 'LGBT Futures' meeting. This comprised a talk by Simon Scadden, the first openly gay UK diplomat, and a brief consultation on the development of an LGBT History Trail for East Lothian.

The meeting was attended by 60 people and was a great success – the consultation helped develop ideas for the History Trail but also raised awareness of the need for an LGBT youth group in North Berwick, one of the bigger population areas. This was started in May 2011 and is funded by East Lothian Council.

MIDLOTHIAN AND EAST LOTHIAN COUNCILS

Midlothian Council and East Lothian Council have developed a joint equality & diversity forum, including local police, fire & rescue, community equalities group representatives, national organisations like Stonewall Scotland, and council representatives. This mix of people and organisations means the group is able to discuss local issues within a national context, look at different strategies and engage with local LGBT citizens via groups such as Stonewall Scotland.

FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND

Forestry Commission Scotland acknowledged that there are no statistics or specific engagement with groups or individuals based on their sexual orientation. They are committed in their Central Scotland Engagement Strategy to explore potential barriers, conduct research into the experiences of LGBT people using woodlands and forests, and promote themselves and their services at LGBT events such as Pride Scotia & specifically targeting the benefits of woodland and forest access to LGBT people.

WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL

West Lothian Council has an annual diversity week, where equality and diversity are celebrated and promoted in the community through a range of events across the area. Information is distributed in Council newsletters to all households in the area, as well as in local media and on their website. LGBT events have included film screenings, talks on equality and diversity issues from community partners such as Lothian and Borders fire and rescue, and specific events for young people.

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EFFECTIVELY ENGAGING WITH LGBT PEOPLE

There are a number of practical steps organisations can take to effectively engage with their local lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender service users. Many are also relevant for effectively engaging with a whole range of local communities. Whether organisations are establishing a local LGBT advisory group or undertaking an engagement exercise with the wider LGBT community, they should:

- Initiate trust building exercises with the local community first, to quell assumptions that engagement is just a 'box-ticking' exercise
- Enable people to shape the form of engagement from the outset and give people time to offer their views
- Work in partnership with other local public bodies, to ensure wide participation
- Manage the expectations of participants
- Ensure a range of views is captured
- Enable participants to challenge and criticise
- Offer feedback to participants

BUILDING TRUST FIRST

First off, organisations need to establish that they're lesbian, gay and bisexual positive and supportive and make this clear by being non-judgemental and gay-affirmative in their practice. *Karl*

Organisations need to be more visible within communities. At present they only consult with the community when they want something. *Alice*

If I tell a public service employee that I am gay, I worry how the data will be used... could it come up in the future for some reason? *Service With A Smile, Stonewall Scotland, 2009*

For engagement with local LGBT people to be effective, it needs to be part of a broader strategy for equality. Local LGBT people may feel there is limited value in engaging with a local organisation which has not demonstrated their commitment to LGBT equality before.

Engagement with the LGBT population must run in parallel to a range of other work to demonstrate an organisation's commitment to equality. For example, organisations might utilise the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index – a free auditing tool that enables organisations to measure their progress to make their workplaces inclusive for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff (www.stonewall.org.uk/wei). The advisory group would also provide important information about how the organisation is perceived by the local LGBT population and what other actions an organisation may take to build trust amongst the local LGBT community.

SETTING TIMESCALES

Poor quality engagement is often due to poor scheduling. Many organisations start to engage with service users far too late in the process and use it simply to 'rubber stamp' a policy that's already been developed and approved. People will be sensitive about being used to 'tick a box' in this way and will feel that this does not help public bodies to improve services. This type of poor quality engagement makes people less likely to offer their voices in the future. As LGBT service user groups and populations are often relatively small, there is a real risk of developing 'consultation fatigue' unless engagement processes are thoughtful, well-planned and managed, and deliver results.

When an organisation begins wider engagement they must ensure that they:

- Plan engagement activities in advance and schedule enough time to involve LGBT people in developing the engagement exercise, promote the exercise, seek responses and provide feedback to participants and the wider community on any action to be taken
- Involve people, such as the advisory group, right from the outset in planning the method, timescales and practicalities associated with the engagement

If the policy document is already written then it's too late. *Kath Browne, Brighton University*

It felt like they needed to tick a diversity box and therefore asked for us to be involved. *Mike*

I felt it was lip service to the community and afterwards they just did what they were going to do anyway. *Nicola*

The key question is why should people talk to you? Services need to answer that question themselves rather than simply presuming that people should talk to them. *Kath Browne, Brighton University*

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHERS

The most efficient form of engagement exercises are those used by all the local public service organisations. This removes duplication and enables better collaboration, and also enables organisations to share the small costs associated with engagement exercises.

The benefits of jointly hosting an advisory group or running joint engagement exercises include:

- Organisations will better be able to identify any duplication of work they are doing, making their work more cost-effective
- Organisations will be better able to identify how they can work together on specific pieces of work
- Organisations can learn from each other
- Organisations can share the minimal costs associated with setting up, hosting, maintaining and supporting an advisory group
- Organisations can share the minimal costs associated with running wider engagement exercises such as online surveys
- Organisations get to work with LGBT people they may not otherwise have engaged with
- Organisations improve their reputation by demonstrating they are willing to work collaboratively on LGBT needs
- Participants of engagement exercises get a variety of issues to discuss and input into, giving them broader skills and increasing the likelihood of further engagement

ACKNOWLEDGING BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

We had to understand that these barriers and fears were very real and change our language to reassure them, articulating that we were aware of those issues. *Dee Caryl, Metropolitan Police*

People are quite scared about consultation events. They say, 'I won't know what they're talking about; it seems very serious; it's only me; are my opinions valid enough?' *Dax Ashworth, Southwark Council*

Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people are not confident and need help and encouragement to approach large bodies like the Police or the NHS. *Jerome*

LGBT people, especially those who have been excluded from services in the past, may have had little contact with the organisation and may have concerns about talking to a public body. Organisations should acknowledge the barriers that prevented people engaging in the past and make it clear that they are now welcome. Acknowledging the legislative requirement to engage with specific groups is fine, but the organisation's commitment to inclusiveness outwith its legislative responsibility will go a long way to welcoming previously marginalised groups.

Local and national organisations that have direct contact with LGBT people, such as LGBT charities, may also be able to help with this. Their experience and reputation can help organisations to access less visible groups and they may be able to act as a trusted voice to reach people on your behalf who are reticent to speak directly to a public body.

There is also not one method by which organisations should consult the wider local LGBT population. Effective engagement allows individuals to offer their views in different ways. It is important to remember that different methods of engagement will encourage, or discourage, different groups from taking part. Organisations should consider the following when deciding on the best way to engage:

- Not everyone is comfortable talking in open forums and gay people may have concerns about outing themselves in front of local people from their area
- Some people may prefer engagement that avoids face-to-face contact such as an anonymous paper questionnaires

- Some people will have had less contact with public services and may be less confident expressing themselves in public in front of others
- Understanding the barriers that some people face should be a priority because they are likely to be excluded from services

I'd need to be reassured that I will be treated with dignity and respect when I give feedback and that my sexuality will not be outed. *Rhina*

There is insufficient use made of alternatives such as e-mail, Facebook, social media and internet surveys like Survey Monkey. *Erin*

You need more than one string to your bow, in terms of alternative participation methods, to really get to the information that you need. *Mary Evans, Brighton Council*

GETTING A GOOD MIX AROUND THE TABLE

It might be harder to get women or black and minority ethnic people or people with disabilities involved. It's important to recognise the differences within the community and find different ways to engage different people. *Mary Evans, Brighton City Council*

They access the same cohort over and over and miss out a large chunk of the community who don't access particular services. *Sunita*

Wherever the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities are, then that's where you should start. It needs to be more than just an open invitation to a meeting; it's about going out and talking to people in their own setting. *Kath Browne, Brighton University*

Many organisations who have engaged with LGBT service users feel that they hear the same voices from the local LGBT community and miss out on hearing from other people who are less involved in community life, less aware of the benefits of or opportunities to engage, or from other specific groups such as, disabled gay people, parents, or older gay people. Engagement is most effective, and trusted, when a wide-range of people, with new insights and ideas, are able to feed in. Without a diversity of experiences the information coming from engagement exercises risks being of poor quality and limited use.

Organisations therefore need to find and reach out to LGBT people who are women, from ethnic minority backgrounds, religious, older and younger people, parents and carers, and those who have a disability. To do this, organisations will need to promote engagement opportunities, such as the advisory group or online surveys, in places where a diverse range of people will hear about it. For example:

- Community groups or forums for LGBT parents, older people, people with a disability, black and minority ethnic people
- Newspapers or radio stations aimed at black and minority ethnic people, young or older people
- Youth groups, places of worship or ethnic community centres
- Community health initiatives or drop in centres for specific groups
- Citizen's Advice Bureaux, Job Centres, town halls, hospitals, GP surgeries, schools, FE colleges and leisure centres

All too often it is local high profile lesbian, gay and bisexual people who get cherry picked to be representative – but often they are not representative.

Dave

It seems that one group is relied on and it's easy for the council to rely on this one group rather than actively seeking out other views. *Charlotte*

It is also important to ensure fair representation between individuals, staff and representatives from local LGBT community groups. Local community groups and LGBT charities play an important role in helping organisations access LGBT people, often those who are vulnerable, and will be able to help identify potential participants. Community group staff may want to participate themselves in the advisory group and they should be encouraged to apply.

Just engaging with representatives from a community group or LGBT charity, however, is not a substitute for wider engagement and involvement. This also applies to LGBT staff who work for the service provider. LGBT staff play a crucial role in helping organisations understand the requirements of local LGBT people. Like local groups, their input should be considered alongside wider engagement, not instead of it.

MARKETING ENGAGEMENT EXERCISES TO SERVICE USERS

You can't be afraid to try things. It's not going to be perfect the first time but you've got to be comfortable making mistakes and learning. It's about opening a way for that dialogue to begin. You have to start somewhere and then evolve and develop your ways of working.

Nicky Griffiths, Manchester City Council

Organisations need a simple yet inspiring message that will convince LGBT service users to engage with them. Organisations should avoid jargon and should not assume that LGBT people automatically understand whether a topic is relevant to them. People are more likely to engage if organisations are clear in all communications about:

- The importance of the work the organisation is planning
- Why the involvement of LGBT people is essential to this work
- What kind of positive changes the group will be likely to see
- How they might benefit from participation

Market and promote the engagement exercises and the advisory group as widely as possible. Use local media and the internet and promote it in venues where LGBT people are likely to see it.

Developing specific messages on why LGBT people in the wider community should make their voices heard should be decided in conjunction with advisory groups. There are many issues in which LGBT people should be invited to participate – not just on issues relating to homophobia and transphobia – but they may need to understand why they are being asked about these issues. The advisory group can help refine the messages about why the wider LGBT population should engage as well as provide information about how best to monitor the sexual orientation and gender identity of participants in general engagement activities.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

You have to be very clear from the outset as to why you've invited the views of LGBT people. You need to lay out what you'll do with their advice and be clear that their input will be a key part of that work and how you'll keep them informed of progress... It's also vital to be very honest in where we've got it wrong, showing how we've learned from that and how we've shaped policies and programs that prevent us from making similar mistakes. *Dee Caryl, Metropolitan Police*

Managing the expectations of what citizens can contribute and what will come out of an engagement exercise is vital. People tell Stonewall Scotland that effective engagement can be undermined by the perception of a lack of purpose or direction. Many are suspicious of anything seen as simply a 'talking shop' rather than a genuine opportunity to improve local services. Service users will quickly disengage from engagement efforts that are not seen to get results and effect real change.

Organisations should be clear from the outset about what participants can expect, and what the organisation expects from the engagement.

- Ask participants what they want to get from their involvement and what barriers might stop them from contributing fully
- Acknowledge where services might not have been inclusive in the past and demonstrate how the organisation has changed its approach as a result
- Explain what you intend to do – there will be a degree of cynicism that this is just a 'box-ticking exercise' rather than a genuine attempt to improve services – and it is important to dissipate this concern
- Be realistic about timescales. You will need to explain that change won't happen overnight and may be subject to a range of processes such as board approval.

LETTING LGBT SERVICE USERS SET THE AGENDA

The information will always be better and more valued and appreciated if it's trusted and really owned by the community. *Kath Browne, Brighton University*

It didn't strike me as something that would be taken very seriously.
Amelia

Consultations often seem a bit woolly as to their purpose. *Jamie*

LGBT people tell Stonewall Scotland that engaging and involving local citizens will only be effective if that work is being led by the citizens themselves. People need to feel they have the opportunity to raise problems and provide solutions that will be considered and addressed by organisations.

Organisations should involve the LGBT advisory group in determining how often the views of local people should be sought. Participants in advisory groups and public meetings should also have a role in setting the agenda and what topics will be discussed as this will help them gain a deeper understanding of which issues are a priority for the community.

Organisations should therefore provide a structure that's firm enough to reassure participants that their views are taken seriously but which is not so rigid that it makes members feel their input is being controlled or limited.

HOLDING PUBLIC MEETINGS, PANELS AND FORUMS

If you ask a closed question, you're going to get a closed answer. But if you ask an open question, you're likely to get better information. *Lucy Malarkey, Gentoo*

The way that face-to-face engagement events are facilitated has a significant impact on the quality and value of the information they capture. Many organisations find that using an independent facilitator enables individuals to be more open about their experiences or opinions, which is particularly important for LGBT people, many of whom may be concerned about 'outing' themselves to their local service providers.

If the organisation is facilitating the event itself:

- Try to keep the tone constructive and stress that participants are part of the solution and there to help the organisation to improve things
- Avoid loaded or closed questions and always allow people the time and space to properly express their views
- Remind participants how important their involvement is. Stress the expertise that they bring and how this will help tailor services to suit the users
- Try to manage participation to avoid particular individuals or issues dominating proceedings. Work constructively to use people's suggestions, criticisms and opinions to open debate within the group

HANDLING CRITICISM AND COMPLAINTS FROM LOCAL CITIZENS

Sometimes there's a fear of letting in critical comments and opinions but our approach is that complaints are a good source of consultation. It's about being open and not defensive. *Nicky Griffiths, Manchester City Council*

You have to be prepared to hear negativity, but you also have to be in a position to show how you're going to change that into positive outcomes. *Dee Caryl, Metropolitan Police*

Organisations should be prepared for criticism from local LGBT people, particularly in the early stages of engagement. People who've been excluded and feel their voices have not previously been listened to may initially respond to engagement opportunities with frustration. It's important to recognise that although challenging, this behaviour represents progress because this group is communicating with the organisation for the first time.

If participants are critical:

- Acknowledge people's criticisms and listen to their concerns
- Demonstrate how the organisation is changing for the better
- Explain how being involved in the process can solve the problem
- Try to manage expectations about what can and can't be achieved by consultation and how long this may take

MANAGING RESISTANCE

Organisations may sometimes need to justify work to engage with LGBT service users. The broader local population may not always understand the value and importance of engaging with and responding to the requirements of local LGBT people, and in some cases people may misread it as 'special treatment' for LGBT people. It's important for organisations to respond robustly to this type of resistance.

When responding to these concerns organisations should be clear that:

- All service users are encouraged to engage with services and contribute views about how they can improve
- Engagement is about developing more efficient services that give value-for-money for all tax payers, which includes many different groups
- LGBT people can genuinely face discrimination and barriers to accessing public services. If organisations do not address this they will be failing in their responsibilities to their service users and may be acting unlawfully
- Engaging with local LGBT people and responding to their requirements is not about special treatment. This is a way of acknowledging a gap and proactively ensuring that gay people can feed in too

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SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

Consultation can't be seen as a finite thing. It's not something you do and then it's done for a while. It's about creating an opportunity for dialogue that's then embedded so there's always some kind of forum and opportunity for discussion and communication. It's about linking the consultation to that joint responsibility to work together. *Nicky Griffiths, Manchester City Council*

It's absolutely crucial when the community highlight particular areas of concern that you go back a month later and tell them what you've done about it. If you haven't been able to resolve it, you must tell them what the difficulties were. *Darren Oakey, Staffordshire Police*

Rather than trying to convince the whole community at once, it's more about creating a snowball effect. You need to convince a few key members and then let them convince the next person and the next person. *Kath Browne, Brighton University*

Effective consultation is a process that builds momentum and becomes more useful as the engagement deepens; as organisations learn to refine their methods and to use the information they capture better. Organisations should manage their own expectations about the levels of response they will get when initially engaging with the wider local LGBT population.

Local LGBT people may not feel comfortable in offering their views until they are confident that you will take them seriously. This confidence may only develop after organisations are seen to undertake actions in response to previous engagement exercises.

You need to be able to point to things you've done. Not just making changes but getting the fact those changes had been made back out to the community as well. Showing that small change and saying you want to make more will help engage more people. *Kath Browne, Brighton University*

The more people see positive benefits from getting involved, the more likely they are to continue and the more likely new people are to get involved. *Hassan*

To maintain momentum and continue engagement it's important that once key requirements are identified, either by the advisory group or through wider engagement, steps are quickly taken to address the issues. These follow-up initiatives might include:

- Updating policies to remove any discriminatory or exclusive procedures that were identified through engagement
- Developing targeted marketing and advertising or outreach activities to promote services to local LGBT people
- Developing specific services that respond to the requirements of LGBT people
- Improving training for frontline staff
- Further, more detailed engagement, such as a focus groups, on specific issues to get further information on areas identified by the initial engagement
- Developing key public commitments to address specific issues raised in engagement
- Identifying other public services locally or nationally that may have begun to address the issues raised by engagement
- Seeking specific tailored advice from local organisations and organisations like Stonewall Scotland on how to address issues raised in engagement

EVALUATING THE ENGAGEMENT

In order to learn from and improve future engagement it is important to evaluate, monitor and review your engagement activities. Alongside more formal mechanisms this can also be achieved through ongoing dialogue with the advisory group and other service users. An important role of an LGBT advisory group is to act as a 'critical friend' offering ongoing evaluation of an organisations work.

It is also important for the advisory group to continually evaluate their own role. An organisation hosting advisory group meetings may want to ask the group at the end of each meeting whether they felt it was successful and whether they would have changed anything about they way the group works.

REPORTING BACK

People get very frustrated if you ask them question and then you don't tell them what you did as a result of it. *Mary Evans, Brighton City Council*

Consultation needs to be meaningful and not disappear into a void. It needs to be a two way street. If we give our opinions we need to know they're taken seriously and receive feedback. *Ali*

The event was really good but no idea what has come from it! *Rupa*

It is vital to provide feedback to people involved in any engagement exercise about what action was taken as a result. People need to feel their contribution was valued, and keeping them abreast of subsequent developments is a vital part of making them feel they have an important role in the engagement.

Maintaining a steady flow of publicity about the good work that has resulted from the consultation is a good way to manage the relationship and keep the community onside. Organisations should:

- Continue regular communication with participants and other service users to maintain momentum, keep them involved and attract new participants
- Publicise any actions that result from the organisation engaging with LGBT service users
- Use every opportunity to communicate this via local media and the internet

If the organisation was unable to resolve an issue raised through engagement with local citizens, it is important to acknowledge this and to explain why the situation hasn't been resolved or addressed.

Organisations should also thank people who've given up their time. Some organisations have developed a system of awards to recognise particularly significant contributions from local citizens.

I give people feedback saying if I haven't delivered it, these are the reasons why. I try to keep people as informed as possible, and show that I'm incorporating as many ideas that people have as possible. That's how I try and set the tone. *Dax Ashworth, Southwark Council*

Updates on news and activities via Facebook and Twitter would encourage me to contribute. *Aysha*

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TOP TEN TIPS

- 1** Establish a **robust business case** to persuade managers, colleagues and the broader population of the importance of service users shaping the services they pay for and receive, on top of the legislative driver of the single public duty. Clearly defined aims, benefits and outcomes are essential. How do you know what services are really needed by different people if you don't ask?
- 2** **Research and plan** in advance. Engaging service users should come right at the start of a project to help establish when and how you should engage more widely. Ensure that the issues you're consulting on are relevant to LGBT people: asking questions that are not relevant to their everyday lives disengages people, erodes trust and damages the credibility of future efforts.
- 3** Explain the purpose to staff and service-users: **be very clear about the scope** and purpose of the exercise and communicate not only what you wish to find out but also what can and can't be changed as a result.
- 4** **Work In partnership** with other local or relevant service providers to set up an advisory group of LGBT service users. A small representative body can help to guide your work by acting as a critical friend, offering advice and expertise and pointing organisations in the right direction in their efforts to engage local LGBT people more broadly.
- 5** Ensure you **communicate clearly** and simply with participants. Any documents to be considered should be in plain English and for clarity you should focus any engagement activity on just two or three simple themes or key questions.
- 6** Consider using a number of **different approaches** that enable local citizens to engage. Different methods of engagement will be appropriate to different groups within the local population. Some LGBT people may not want to 'out' themselves by attending a public meeting. Avoid loaded or closed questions and facilitate all engagement activities to ensure the tone remains constructive and positive throughout.

- 7 After any engagement activity **thank the participants** and feed back any resultant changes. Try to tackle the issues raised by the exercise but if this is really not possible it is vital that you explain the reasons.
- 8 Remember that the LGBT population is diverse. It includes people from a wide range of backgrounds. Include a properly **representative selection of citizens** in any exercise that you conduct and be prepared to make an investment of time and money in order to reach people from under-represented groups.
- 9 Work in partnership with other local service providers to **save resources** and **avoid duplication**. The local population will be more willing to engage on a number of issues at the same time rather than a continuous stream of consultations from various bodies. Local councils, health boards, police forces and other local services that work together to develop inclusive consultation find the process less expensive and time consuming and get better data as a result.
- 10 Don't forget the **practicalities** such as venues, timing and refreshments. Ensuring engagement exercises are well resourced and facilitated will demonstrate an organisation's true commitment to engagement.

THE GOOD PRACTICE PROGRAMME

Stonewall Scotland's Good Practice Programme provides the Scottish public sector with tailored advice and guidance, realistic and achievable outcomes, and networking opportunities with other public bodies in order to share learning and good practice around making a difference for LGBT staff and service users.

Supported by the Scottish Government, the Good Practice Programme will equip you with the tools to make lasting improvements to your workplace and your services. In an era of tight budgets and austerity, there's no place for providing costly services which aren't at their most effective, or aren't reaching some groups of people. To provide the right services, it is necessary to understand the requirements of service users, so that inclusive and efficient services can be designed. Working with Stonewall Scotland can help your organisation to achieve equality for LGBT service users.

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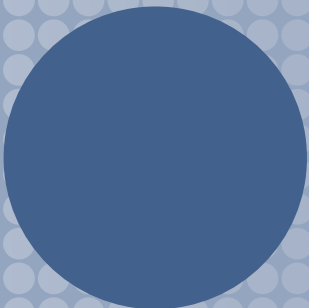
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