

SUPPORTING LGBT+ COMMUNITY ACTION IN LEEDS



LEEDS LGBT+ MAPPING PROJECT | 2018
A FORUM CENTRAL PROJECT

1. Background

In April 2017 the Leeds LGBT+ Mapping Project produced piece of community research which provided a snapshot of the LGBT+ landscape in Leeds - mapping LGBT+ nightlife, social and activist groups, services and other assets.

The research found that around half of the LGBT+ activity happening in the city was community led and volunteer run, and without regular funding. This raised concerns around the sustainability of LGBT+ community action in the city, and what is needed to support it.

There have been a number of pieces of research that look at the capacity and activity of the LGBT+ voluntary and community sector - though none have focussed on Leeds.

Research from the LGBT Consortium (a national membership and infrastructure organisation focussed on the development of LGBT+ voluntary and community sector) shows that job opportunities among LGBT+ organisations have decreased and the number of the volunteers have increased across the UK in 2016/2017.

This suggests that while funding to this sector may have shrunk, the need to carry out work to support LGBT+ communities has not. In fact 69% of LGBT Consortium members reported an increased demand for their services, but only 37% reported increased income to meet these needs.¹ The Consortium also produced what it called a 'Snap Shot of the LGBT sector' in 2016, which looked at the resilience of the sector across a number of indicators, and highlighted that a sustainable approach to groups and organisations increasing or maintaining income was through revenue generated from paid services. Mixed sources of income is important for groups and organisations; there are a number of different models for this. It is therefore important that funders, commissioners *and* infrastructure organisations are engaging with LGBT+ community groups and organisations and their needs to help them develop diverse sources of income.

In 2017 the Leeds LGBT+ Mapping Project recorded 102 LGBT+ focussed projects and activities in the city - 16 of these were delivered by third sector organisations, and 50 of these were volunteer and community led. The majority of volunteer and community led activities in Leeds were focussed on providing support or social activities for LGBT+ people - while this can be seen as a strength and an asset of LGBT+ communities in Leeds, when the majority of this work is unfunded or without

¹ LGBT Consortium, Insights Report, 2016/2017

support from infrastructure organisations there are risks to the longevity of this work and the welfare of those involved in leading it. In the context of social exclusion and discrimination, safe and welcoming spaces and relationships are key to many LGBT+ people's health and wellbeing.

In our community survey we asked LGBT+ people in the city what their health and wellbeing priorities were and 'safe and welcoming spaces' came third, below 'mental health' and 'sexual health'. We know that LGBT+ social and support groups have positive health and wellbeing impact, and for many are essential life lines. With this in mind it is crucial that funders and infrastructure organisations have an understanding of LGBT+ challenges and assets in Leeds and seek to resource and aid the sustainability of existing and emerging community action.

We developed a survey for voluntary and community sector (VCS) infrastructure organizations and funders who operated in Leeds. This survey sought to build an understanding of how these organisations currently support LGBT+ communities and what they understood to be the needs and assets of LGBT+ communities in Leeds. In addition to being a tool to collect this information, the survey also aimed to provide prompt for VCS infrastructure organisations and funders to reflect on how they engage with LGBT+ communities in the city.

3. Key findings and recommendations

Key findings

- Supporting LGBT+ communities was not an identified priority for any of the organisations who participated in this survey.
- Few of the organisations who responded to the survey said they were proactively seeking knowledge on assets and challenges on LGBT+ communities in Leeds by building links with LGBT+ groups and projects.
- The majority the LGBT+ community action is undertaken by groups that are not formally constituted or registered with the Charities Commission. This means that they are often ineligible to apply for funding.
- Some of the organisations who participated in the survey said they were reactive funders, and it was through applications made to their organisations that they learned about community needs. The risk of operating reactively are that organisations are not able to determine who they are not reaching and where the community resource gaps may be. This may disadvantage LGBT+ communities, and other marginalised communities.

- LGBT+ communities are communities of identity, not geography. Therefore accessing support from organisations that have geographic priorities may be a barrier to LGBT+ community groups.
- Of the organisations who participated in the survey there was little consistency around both their equality monitoring or in collecting about LGBT+ work. Organisations either did not collect this data, or did not collect it in a systematic way.
- The sustainability of community work is related to having diverse streams of income. Revenue generated from paid services is more sustainable than from grant funding. It is important that funders, commissioners *and* infrastructure organisation are engaging with LGBT+ community groups and organisations and their needs to help them develop diverse income.

Recommendations

For VCS infrastructure organisations and funders

- to review their organisational priorities to ensure the the needs of LGBT+ communities are included.
- the growth and sustainability of LGBT+ community sector relies on access to both funding and infrastructure support. Therefore it is important for funders and infrastructure organisations to work together and share knowledge to identify funding and resource gaps in Leeds' LGBT+ community sector.
- for responsive funders to proactively engage with LGBT+ community groups to ensure that these groups are aware of different funding streams.
- to seek to build better understanding of the challenges and assets of LGBT+ organisations in Leeds. In particular to appreciate the relationship between strong community action and the health and wellbeing of LGBT+ people.
- For infrastructure organisations to proactively engage with unconstituted LGBT+ groups and support their development.
- to review their offer to community groups and charities to ensure it is accessible and appropriate to the resource needs of LGBT+ communities - i.e acting on the knowledge that there are many unconstituted LGBT+ groups in

Leeds delivering community support, by developing small grant opportunities that are accessible to them.

- to monitor equality and diversity, and to systematically collect information from who their clients or fundees are in relation to how they to benefit LGBT+ communities. Learn from LGBT+ organisations best practice for monitoring sexuality and trans status.
- to engage with LGBT+ community groups and organisations and to support them to develop sustainable and diverse income streams.

4. About the organisations that responded

Eight out of nine organisations were charitable organisations, and one was a executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

We asked organisations what their annual income was, and where their income came from.

Annual income of respondents *	
Less than £10,000	0
£10,000 to £100,000	0
£100,000 to £1 million	3
£1 million to £10 million	2
More than £10 million	1
More than £100 million	2

*One organisation did not give answer

Income source	
Trusts	3
Grants	4
Individual giving	2
Corporate giving	3

Endowments	4
Statutory funding - local or central	5
Earned income	3
Other	3

We asked organisations to also tell us the geographical scope of their work, and to choose all areas that apply.

What areas do you operate in?	
Leeds	9
West Yorkshire	8
Yorkshire	7
North England	4
England	3
U.K	3
International	1

Across the the 9 organisations that completed the survey there was a diverse range of stated aims, purposes, and priorities. Five organisations outlined that they were principally grant makers, funders or commissioners (Esmee Fairbairn, Leeds Community Foundation, Tudor Trust, Big Lottery Fund, Sir George Martin's Trust). One organisation delivers social investments to social enterprises (Key Fund), as well as providing infrastructure support to local people running and owning services. Four organisations provide infrastructure support, skills and training, sector representation, and financial services to Voluntary Community Sector in Leeds (LOPF, PSI Volition, Tenfold 'Forum Central', West Yorkshire Community Accounting Service, Voluntary Action Leeds).

Across the organisations the priorities ranged from:

- thematic (i.e mental health, education)
- communities of interest (children and young people, older people)
- strategic (i.e early action, capacity building)
- geographical (ie. Leeds, area of deprivation).

Geographical priorities may be a barrier for LGBT+ groups applying for funding, as LGBT+ communities are communities of identity and are not geography.

While some organisations have a focus on reaching particular populations and groups (i.e older people, people with physical and sensory impairments, families, children and young people) there was no funder or infrastructure organisations who said they prioritised the needs of LGBT+ communities.

5. Monitoring sexual orientation and gender identity

Equalities monitoring is essential for institutions to understand how and if marginalised communities engage with them, to gather evidence about their needs and experiences and ensure that they are reaching all communities and are accountable to them. LGBT+ communities in particular suffer from the lack of systematic monitoring data. With no nationwide collection of data on sexuality or trans status there is a lack of statistical evidence on the size of LGBT+ populations in the UK, therefore organisational monitoring on sexuality and gender identity are crucial in providing data for LGBT+ communities to advocate for their needs.

VCS infrastructure organisations and funders have a particular role to play in promoting and developing LGBT+ community action. The collection of data related to LGBT community groups and organisations is necessary to ensure that they are reaching LGBT+ communities and that their offer is accessible and appropriate to the needs of these communities.

Of the organisations that responded, two said that their organisation monitored or collected data on its engagement with LGBT+ communities. One organisation said it 'monitors informally' and four organisations said they did not.

6. Current engagement with LGBT+ community

Of the organisations that participated in this survey the current levels of support given to LGBT+ community action was fairly mixed. It is difficult to determine what proportion of LGBT+ projects are being supported by funders and infrastructure organisations and how many are not. Moreover many of the groups in Leeds are not formally constituted they are often ineligible to apply for some funding.

Funders

We asked funders how many LGBT+ organisations, groups or projects in Leeds they had granted funding to in the last 18 months. Most of the funders who responded (5/7) had given grants or commissioned services from LGBT+ organisations, groups or projects.

The total number of LGBT+ organisations, groups, projects funded or commissioned in Leeds in the last 18 months was 8.

One funder had awarded four grants to the total of £926,262, one funder had given awarded two grants to LGBT+ related projects in the last 18 months - though they noted that there were more applications from LGBT+ groups that had not yet gone to panel for a decision on their applications. Another funder supported an LGBT+ organisation in Bradford. Two funders said they had not made any grants to LGBT+ organisations in the last 18 months, groups or project, with one noting that they had not received any applications and that they only funded registered charities. One funder noted that they supported an LGBT+ project but that decision was made over 18 months ago.

We asked funders how many LGBT+ related applications had been unsuccessful. The responses do not give a clear picture. A number of organisations said they were unable to access this information or give a clear account due to the way that applications had been coded in their systems.

Infrastructure organisations

The survey also asked how VCS infrastructure organisations how many LGBT+ organisations and groups they have given infrastructure support to in the last 18 months.

For a number of organisations this could not be accurately determined due to the way information about clients had been coded and stored in their systems, or if they recorded information regarding LGBT+ work at all. Voluntary Action Leeds said they have supported 16 groups over the last 18 months who had stated that the primary client group they support were the LGBT+ community. Leeds Community Foundation also said it gave one LGBT+ organisation infrastructure support in the last 18 months.

7. VCS infrastructure organisations' and funders' knowledge and understanding of LGBT+ communities in Leeds

In the survey we asked 'how well do you think your organisation understands LGBT+ community action and capacity in Leeds?'. The majority of organisations said they had either some understanding of LGBT+ community action and capacity in Leeds, with three organisations saying they had little to very little understanding.

How well does your organisation understand LGBT+ community action and capacity in Leeds?	
We have a very good understanding	0
We have a good understanding	1
We have some understanding	5
We have little understanding	2
We have very little to no understanding	1

We also asked organisations how they gathered their knowledge and understanding about LGBT+ community action. Two stated that they had made links with LGBT+ networks or organisations to increase their organisation's knowledge on LGBT+ community action in Leeds. One organisation said, whilst it wasn't connected to LGBT+ organisations in Leeds it learned from national LGBT+ organisations. One organisation said they gathered information via consultation mechanisms. However the majority of organisations did not actively seek out information related to LGBT+ community action, and what they learned was through funding applications that were made to them.

Some organisations indicated that there was a need to increase their knowledge in this area, and that this may begin to address the lack of applications from LGBT+ community groups and organisations.

When asked about understanding of LGBT+ challenges and assets in Leeds the responses from organisations was varied, with a few showing knowledge of barriers and local assets, other had a broader appreciation of national challenges for LGBT+ community, and a few little understanding.

8. What do VCS organisations need to help them engage with LGBT+ community action in Leeds?

The survey asked organisations to tell us about anything they thought could help them to better understand and respond to the needs of LGBT+ communities in Leeds. There was a varied response to this question. Some funders implied that their funding may remain inaccessible to LGBT+ organisations because they are often not large enough or have too local an impact.

A few organisations said they would be aided in being equipped with more knowledge about LGBT+ communities in Leeds - including challenges, and up-to-date data on LGBT+ networks and groups in the city.

Leeds Community Foundation said they may benefit from having a specific funding round for LGBT+ groups, and from networking at events and other opportunities. Voluntary Action Leeds told us that one issue that they experience is not knowing if groups who they provide services to actually work LGBT+ communities or if they are included in their 'generic accessible provision'.

It was also expressed that LGBT+ groups may benefit from being given more funding advice from a worker or an organisation - Voluntary Action Leeds was cited here as organisation that should be able to respond to this challenge.

WYCAS told us that they would like to know what the barriers were for LGBT+ groups accessing their service. The LGBT+ community action landscape in Leeds suggests WYCAS may not be seeing LGBT+ organisations and groups in their client base because the majority of active LGBT+ groups in Leeds not formalised or funded, and therefore are not in a position to benefit from WYCAS's services. Leeds Older People's Forum supports one group by providing peer support and training.

There was the sense that being proactive in engaging with LGBT+ community's needs was precluded, as so many of the organisations are reactive and respond only to those who make applications to them. The possible implications of this for LGBT+ communities is that they fall through the cracks and do not receive the support, either skills based or in funding, to develop.

9. Acknowledgements

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