

Trans Equality scrutiny panel

Emerging Themes

Trans equality themes emerging from initial community consultation are listed below. They are presented as a series of bullet-points arising from the constructive discussions the cross-party Trans Equality Scrutiny Panel has had with trans individuals and support group users during July: at a public meeting held at the Friend's Meeting House, and visits to the Clare Project, FTM Brighton, Transformers and MindOut

The themes are a preliminary 'snapshot' and have been presented here to provide rapid feedback to those who took part. They are not in any particular order and will form the basis for further engagement

The listed themes below focus on the more negative experiences reported by trans people about Council and other services. There was praise for some services and a lot of positive feedback on the community engagement being undertaken. The Panel will identify the positives, to build on areas of good practice as well as looking at the problems and difficulties.

If you would like to comment on the themes or have further information to add, or questions for the Panel, you can do this in different ways; anonymously if you wish. Preferably before 7 September please.

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Go to the on-line survey at www.lgbt-hip.org

Or contact the Council's Scrutiny Panel via twitter: #bhtransscrutiny

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Trans Equality Scrutiny Panel
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Scrutiny Panel meetings are being arranged in Hove Town Hall on 20 and 27 September to follow up on the main issues and to hear from Council officers and other service providers. A report with recommendations will then be referred on to the decision-makers.

Emerging Key themes

1. Health - the issues

- Education needed in the general health sector
- No local gender surgery/Gender Clinic
- Mixed standards with GPs
- Lack of training for GPs
- Referrals to Gender Identity Clinics too slow and difficult
- Lack of support/monitoring for those taking hormones
- Self medication (i.e. buying hormones from internet due to lack of access to NHS services)
- Primary healthcare services – M or F buttons. No option for non-binary people
- Sense of deprioritising specialist gender identity services within the NHS
- Lack of cohesion within NHS so someone starting treatment in one part of the country has to start again
- Seen as a mental health issue or a disability
- Lack of medical provision and awareness for anatomical features not associated with acquired gender eg trans men and cervical smears or trans women and prostate checks
- Hospital/prison clinics only binary gendered or separated
- No recognition of specific needs

Mental Health

- No broad pathway for gender transition
- Psychiatrists as lead clinicians in problematic
- Lack of mental health support for trans people and those going through the gender transition pathway

Health – what needs to change?

- Trans awareness training across all levels
- Local Gender Clinic/services
- Better referral process
- GPs better understanding of trans bodies/needs
- Change away from binary gender thinking and systems
- Broader transition pathway needed
- Not a psychiatrist as lead clinician
- Positive campaigning
- Ability to have medical testing and treatment for things not associated with acquired gender – no assumptions that every health problem due to being trans
- Policy of informed consent instead of Real Life Experience requirements
- Mixed/unisex wards in hospitals
- Being able to use your chosen name
- Better reception processes/administration

- Better awareness of your rights and who can help
- Codes of conduct enforced

2. Education in Schools – the issues

- Staff lacking guidance and policy
- Schools perceive they are not allowed to address LGBT issues
- No education for children
- Lack of awareness
- No support options
- Transphobia
- People are disrespectful and discriminate
- Inappropriate use of names/pronouns

Schools – what needs to change?

- Include trans awareness alongside LGB awareness
- Inclusion of trans issues in PHSE and anti-bullying awareness
- More training
- Benchmarks and standards, codes of conduct
- Changes to curriculum to include trans issues
- Removal of inappropriate content from curriculum

3. Housing – the issues

- Finding suitable accommodation is problematic
- Council allocation policies mean being forced to move to ‘bad’ areas that are unsafe for trans people
- Landlords using (prior) legal names and not respecting chosen names
- Need to have housing post-transition – may need to move
- Doesn’t recognise the needs of trans people
- Housing benefit changes force people into sharing – safety fears
- No protection for trans people in sheltered housing if anything goes wrong
- Housing staff – inappropriate attitudes/actions in people’s homes

Housing – what needs to change?

- The housing process is too inflexible
- Council should issue guidance on addressing needs of trans people
- Education needed – council and private landlords
- Acknowledge the vulnerability of some trans people – build this into housing allocation policies
- Provide help in sheltered housing
- Training for Council and Housing staff
- Support services – provide help and advocacy

Homelessness – the issues

- Trans people often come to Brighton because they perceive it to be a safe haven but can't access homelessness services

Homelessness – what needs to be done?

- Stop the local connection policy for trans people

4. Leisure services – the issues

- Lack of trans supportive infrastructure/facilities
- Trans people feel excluded
- Showers and cubicles not designed to be accessible and appropriate for trans people
- Trans phobia
- Discomfort in approaching venues
- Unwelcoming and hostile atmosphere
- Gender specific sports e.g. no netball clubs for trans women or football for trans men
- No locks on toilet doors or broken locks which makes trans people feel vulnerable

Leisure – what needs to change?

- Gender neutral facilities needed
- Trans friendly sessions in gyms and pools
- Awareness of illegality of transphobia
- Better enforcement of access for all
- Training

5. Diversity and awareness of trans diversity – the issues

- Lack of awareness of non-binary IDs
- Need for more community engagement
- Lumped in with LGB – not always appropriate
- Unaware that not everyone fits easily into traditional gender roles
- Understandings needed around the range of trans identities
- Even groups who try to be sympathetic neglect other gender identities e.g. intersex, gender queer
- Assumption that if trans people experience discrimination 'we bring it on ourselves'
- Transphobia seen as 'acceptable' prejudice
- Subtle discrimination
- Discriminatory 'jokes'

Diversity awareness – what needs to change?

- Mandatory trans awareness training for council staff and partners
- Council to offer awareness/training package to others
- Positive media and promotion campaigns
- Raise awareness
- Specific trans awareness training
- Redesign forms, personnel data collection (see point below)

6. Forms – the issues

- Contradictory – gender has ‘other’ category but not for honorifics (e.g. Mr, Ms)
- Particular problem with online forms, which can prevent completion
- No options for non-binary/genderqueer people

Forms – what needs to change?

- No honorifics
- Ask gender only if needed
- Think outside the box
- Option for ‘other’ gender

7. Hate Crime – the issues

- Lack of awareness of abuse, violence against trans people
- Reluctance to report
- Ignorance, threats
- Seen as culturally acceptable to harass trans people
- Lack of faith/trust for some within trans community in police handling of hate crime
- ‘No go’ areas of the city where trans people don’t feel safe.

Hate Crime – what needs to change?

- More police support, awareness
- More school education
- More support from CPS
- Zero tolerance within Council and Police
- Councillors standing up and saying zero tolerance
- Encourage reporting
- Make it easier to report e.g. dedicated telephone number
- Build on faith and trust in police
- Public awareness of Brighton’s diverse gender community – education, advertising, public image
- Raise awareness that it’s wrong, illegal

- Deal with bullying

8. Employment – the issues

- Coming out at work can be a problem
- Finding employment difficult and lack of jobs accessible to trans people
- Lack of awareness of issues trans people can face at work e.g. appropriate toilets, time off for surgery
- Prejudice and transphobia
- Insensitive and insulting language

Employment – what needs to change?

- Guides for employers
- Training
- Education and awareness of trans issues
- Information in one place
- Enforcement of public sector Equality duty
- Access to specialist advice and support for getting and staying in work.
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9. Domestic Violence – the issues

- No trans refuge places in the city

Domestic violence – what needs to change?

- Safe space for trans people and priority for trans people who experience DV

10. Confidentiality – the issues

- Confidentiality not taken seriously
- Assumption that trans status will be public
- No provision for multiple identities (e.g. people with shifting or non-binary identities).

Confidentiality – what needs to be done?

- Education in Human Resources departments and Council offices
- Discretion re gender disclosure
- Raise awareness that this can be illegal if the person has Gender Recognition Certificate

11. Information and misinformation – the issues

- Equality monitoring is problematic, either not done or done badly
- Trans men can be forgotten
- Misinformation and outdated information used
- Information is difficult to track down
- Recognition that records need to be kept properly updated
- Confusion about the law regarding changing names and documentation
- Visitors to the city can be less accepting than residents
- Media representation – e.g, the press can be sensationalist/derogatory

Information and misinformation – what needs to be done?

- Specific targeted information about and for trans people
- More visible information that normalises being trans
- Information for visitors
- More gender options on monitoring forms
- Honesty among staff/service providers about not knowing and have easy access to answers
- Regular positive media campaigns

12. Toilets –the issues

- Toilet facilities not considered fully in planning
- No sanitary bins for trans men
- Toilets don't need 'policing' for mis-use- this can be very intimidating for trans people

Toilets – what needs to be done?

- More unisex/gender neutral toilets
- Better education for security/toilet assistants
- Consult trans people in planning around toilets
- Raising awareness, similar to breast-feeding issues

13. Bullying – the issues

- Bullying at school, work, public transport, socially

Bullying – what needs to change

- More education and training – specific trans-related anti bullying initiatives

14. Gender Fluidity – the issues

- Need to recognise all kinds of trans identities
- Trans people resent being forced into inappropriate categories

Gender fluidity – what needs to change?

- Awareness of different identities
- Need trans educators, mentors, advocates
- More accessible specialist gender identity services for gender fluid people
- Right to self-determination protected and promoted

15. Counselling and support – the issues

- Not all counsellors understand trans specific issues
- Lack of psychological and practical support
- No support groups for partners/family of trans people

Counselling – what needs to happen?

- Trans specific counselling
- Fund local organisations

16. Grants program – the issues

- Is the grants system LGBT friendly? Are grants/organisations properly monitored?

Grants program – what needs to be done?

- Grants programme evaluated
- Grants withdrawn for breaches

17. Complaints – the issues

- No confidence in the complaints system

Complaints – what needs to be done?

- Trans people informed how to complain
- Complaints properly resolved
- Name badges of Council and other staff visible so that people know who to complain about.

18. Benefits – the issues

- Employability pre- and post-transition can be difficult
- Needing time out of work for surgery
- Housing benefit changes for under 25s means sharing accommodation – can be especially problematic for trans people, especially during transition
- Delay in accessing benefits

Benefits – what needs to be done?

- Recognition of the issues
- New flexible systems
- Specialist teams, similar to those set up to deal with CRB checks

Other issues raised: Intersectionality and trans intersections, i.e. holding more than one identity such as trans and from minority ethnic background or trans and disabled and how this might affect equality issues.