

Good Practice for Mainstream Housing Services

Whilst we believe there is a clear need for the specialist services we provide, Stonewall Housing also believes that mainstream housing and homelessness services have a responsibility to cater for the diverse needs of LGBT people. This is our guide to best practice for mainstream housing and homelessness services.

Our groundbreaking research carried out in 2001 by [National Centre for Social Research](#) made a series of recommendations for mainstream housing providers:

- **Monitoring sexuality** as a matter of course for all clients
- **Understanding** the diverse **needs** of the LGBT communities and providing a tailored, holistic and multi-agency approach to meet those needs
- **Promoting equality** by implementing sexuality and transgender awareness training for all staff and creating a supportive organisational culture for both clients and staff who are LGBT

Monitoring Sexuality

Stonewall Housing strongly believes that local authorities, housing associations and other housing and homelessness providers should monitor the sexuality and transgender status of their clients. Monitoring is important because most LGBT people are invisible in most housing and homelessness services. This invisibility means we have no information about the particular housing needs of LGBT people. Monitoring is one of the only ways to determine the true scale of homelessness and housing difficulty amongst LGBT people.

Understanding Need

Only organisations that monitor sexuality and gender status are in a position to identify a true profile of their clients and be able to provide housing and advice that is relevant and appropriate. LGBT people can have specific needs in relation to housing which are essential and relevant for services. (Click here to find out more - link to Specialist LGBT Housing and Advice). Once monitoring has been implemented, equalities impact assessments should be carried out and policies and practices updated accordingly.

Promoting Equality

If organisations monitor sexuality and gender status, it is imperative that this is done in a sensitive and informed manner. Organisations need a comprehensive and holistic equalities policy, which must be implemented at all levels of the organisation. A supportive culture needs to be fostered so that LGBT people feel safe in disclosing.

This could be achieved by:

- Displaying leaflets and posters on LGBT support groups
- Ensuring equalities commitments and policies are visible
- Implementing LGBT tenants and users groups
- Ensuring workers have up-to-date information on local LGBT groups

Equalities Indicators

Once monitoring has been implemented, it is important to have a clear idea of the kinds of issues that may be highlighted through monitoring. Performance indicators that are useful to consider include how many people identifying as LGBT:

Were under 25 and had housing problems following family breakdown, and of these:

- How many were referred to mainstream hostels
- How many were referred to specialist LGBT organisations

Were tenants who reported homophobic or transphobic neighbour harassment, and of these:

- How many cases resulted in the perpetrator being moved
- How many cases resulted in the client being transferred
- How many cases resulted in no further action being taken

Reported housing problems as a result of same-sex domestic abuse, and of these:

- How many were homeless and in priority need
- How many were referred to a women's refuge
- How many were referred to mainstream hostels

Were evicted following rent arrears.

Applied for a transfer, and of these:

- How many were successful

Applied as a homeless person, and of these:

- In how many cases the local authority find a full duty
- In how many cases the temporary accommodation broke down

Applied for a transfer to sheltered accommodation.

Stonewall Housing worked with Shelter to provide training and advice on how to implement monitoring systems to a number of local authorities and housing associations. It is encouraging that some are taking up the challenge of monitoring sexuality as a first step towards providing services that are relevant and tailored to the diverse needs of the LGBT communities. But there is still a long way to go before institutionalised homophobia and transphobia in housing and homelessness services are eradicated, and all LGBT people in London and the UK are able to access services that are appropriate to them.

The Stonewall Housing and Shelter Sexuality and Housing project has now come to an end, but we are currently seeking funding to extend the project and provide further advice and training on monitoring and best practise on sexuality in housing and homelessness services.

Further information and resources:

Gold, D (2005), Sexual Exclusion: issues and best practice in lesbian, gay and bisexual housing and homelessness, Shelter

Stonewall Housing and National Centre for Social Research (2001), Meeting the needs of homeless lesbian and gay youth

**Stonewall Housing can provide training on sexuality and housing.
Call us on 020 7359 6242 for further information and rates.**