



Lesbian, gay, bisexual & trans people in the South West

Dorset Police & The Intercom Trust

Developing Positive Relationships with LGBT People & Communities in Dorset

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Introduction

Dorset Police commissioned The Intercom Trust, under a Service Level Agreement to provide them with:

- opportunities for engagement with LGBT individuals and groups
- information for mapping of LGBT communities across Dorset
- opportunities to support positive action initiatives undertaken by Dorset Police
- advice and guidance on LGBT issues

This work was undertaken between April 2010 and March 2011 by Intercom's Community Development Team.

The bulk of this work consisted of working with the Community Engagement Team at Dorset Police to get the views of local LGBT people on their attitudes to the Police and giving them opportunities for finding out more about what the Police are doing for LGBT communities across Dorset. Based on our extensive experience of working with the Police and the CJS across the South West peninsula (and further afield) we were also able to provide the Police with a lot of baseline information.

It is hoped that this first year of work will be the start of a continuing relationship between Dorset Police and both The Intercom Trust and other LGBT groups & projects across the County. This work should be seen as the start of a new and improved journey for Dorset Police. Over the last few years there have already been positive advances and Intercom believes that there is a golden opportunity for this to be developed and for Dorset Police to lead the way in positive policing around LGBT issues.

Developing the Work

Existing Knowledge

Over Intercom's 14 years of operation, the Trust has gained a wide range of specialist knowledge around policing issues and their relevance to the LGBT communities across the South West peninsula. This information has been collated through reports (both internal and external), direct work (both client and infrastructure) and through commissioned work with various Police forces. In order to give the Community Engagement Team at Dorset Police a good baseline overview of the issues as we perceived them as an organisation, the Trust produced an initial report titled "*LGBT Communities in Dorset: police, crime, & confidence*". Further copies of this report can be obtained through Intercom.

Survey

Following an initial meeting, the Community Engagement Team at Dorset Police provided Intercom with a range of questions they wanted to explore through the Service Level Agreement. Intercom analysed these into appropriately set questions that could be used as the basis for a short survey, created through Survey Monkey. The survey focussed on the following key issues:

- Individual's experiences of dealing with Dorset Police
- Ease of reporting hate crimes to the Police
- Engagement with LGBT communities
- Identifying positive ways for relations between the Police and LGBT communities to improve

We chose to format the questions so there was a mixture of multiple choice answers alongside opportunities for people to provide free text answers. We hoped this would give us the greatest chance of getting information that was not only easily analysed, but also provided us with useful detailed community information.

The survey ran for 3 weeks during late January and early February and attracted 91 responses. The vast majority of these responses were received online through the Survey Monkey link. Thanks especially goes to Colin from the Dorset Knobs group who managed to get many of the group members to fill in their survey forms and post them to Intercom. We publicised the survey to all our contacts with local LGBT groups and projects, through media releases, through Intercom's regional monthly bulletin and posted on the www.lgbtcollective.org.uk website.

Focus drop-ins

Following the closure of the survey we set up a series of 4 focus drop-in events across the County, which took place in late February in the following locations:

- Bournemouth
- Poole
- Weymouth
- Shaftesbury

“Come and meet us! Groups are out there but are the Police aware of us?!”

The two in Bournemouth and Weymouth were reasonably well attended, but sadly the Poole and Shaftesbury ones poorly attended. Possible reasons for this can link back to simple things like location of the drop-ins right through to complex historical issues as discussed in the following section. Had we had more time and capacity to promote the follow on work, we would have targeted individuals directly and sought views on an individual basis.

The drop-ins were an opportunity to take the results of the survey and explore some of the key themes that arose from the answers gathered. We posed six key questions seeking to get further positive and constructive ideas for creating a better policing environment for LGBT people and communities.

To create an informal atmosphere to the drop-ins we arranged it so that the questions posed were on scribble sheets where people could share their ideas, whilst being able to see what everyone else had proposed. This was a format we had developed for previous focus group events and yielded good and positive results.

“If I knew about issues being decided then I could possibly have my say.”

Underlying Issues

As we detailed in our preliminary report to Dorset Police, there are several issues that must be taken into account when trying to develop more positive relationships with LGBT people and communities. Without consideration of these issues, further mistakes and damage will occur, ruining some of the good work that is taking place across the County. The following are just a recap of some of these issues. Please refer to the initial report for further detailed information.

“In the past I would avoid referencing LGBT issues and present it as a general concern.”

Some older LGBT people have inherited an attitude of suspicion towards the Police. Much of this is rooted in the old offences of gross indecency and importuning and the Police’s failure to respond to phobic crimes. For many women issues of suspicion can also arise from past experiences around custody of children or domestic abuse from an opposite-sex partner.

These historical issues have done widespread damage at breaking down trust and confidence levels amongst LGBT communities. Knowledge of one badly handled case can quickly spread and damage years of positive work. Sadly, good news stories from the Police can be harder to transmit across our communities.

Many LGBT people are reluctant to raise issues of homophobia or transphobia because they don’t know what reaction they might get from the first point of contact they have with the Police. For many people, there can be the assumption that this reaction will be negative so without proactive initiatives taking place, these attitudes remain deeply rooted.

“My residual anxiety based on being a bit older and remembering when policing the gay community included a big brother and judgemental approach—it is hard to forget.”

Survey Results

The survey ran for 3 weeks during late January and early February and attracted 91 responses. The vast majority of these responses were received online through the Survey Monkey link.

Respondents Breakdown

AGE

Under 18	1%
18 – 24	15%
25 – 40	34%
41 – 60	38%
60+	12%

GENDER

Male	62%
Female	31%
Trans	6%
Neutral	1%

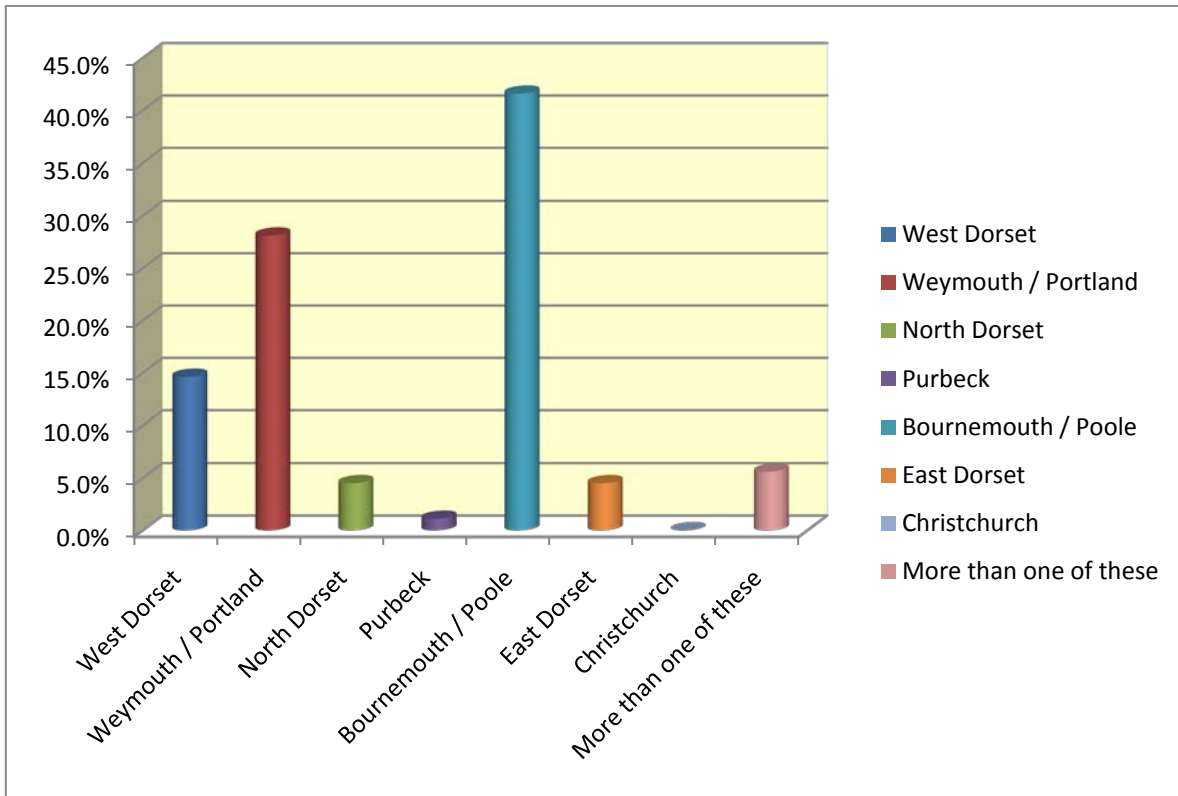
The reason for the weighting towards male is mainly due to the high level of responses from the Dorset Knobs group, a male-only social group.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Gay	62%
Lesbian / Gay Woman	14%
Straight	12%
Bisexual	12%

We did receive 2 responses where the individuals identified themselves as normal. One of these left all the other answers blank, but the other response contained highly abusive and negative language, which was subsequently reported as a homophobic incident to Dorset Police. Due to this, we removed these answers from the results.

LOCATION

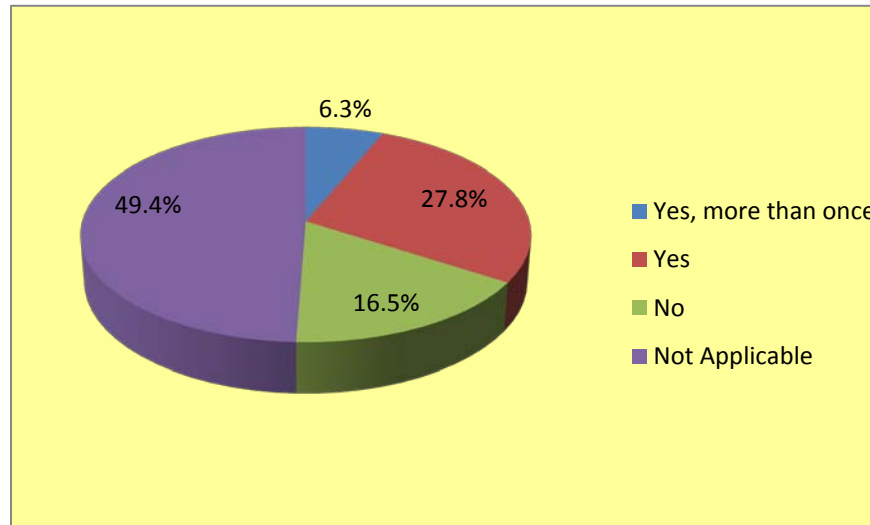


With Bournemouth and Poole being the main urban conurbations of the County, we expected there to be more results from these areas. We were however delighted to see that this formed less than 50% of the respondents and saw good results from all areas apart from Christchurch.

“My hope is that the Police are committed to this as a matter of course, and not just because they have been forced to in reaction to legislation.”

Experiences with the Police

We asked whether people had had a positive experience when dealing with Dorset Police around any LGBT issues?



Just over 34% of the respondents reported that they have had a positive experience. Of those that had responded they had more than one positive experience, all of these came from the Bournemouth / Poole area, whereas where people reported just one positive experience, there was an even spread across the County.

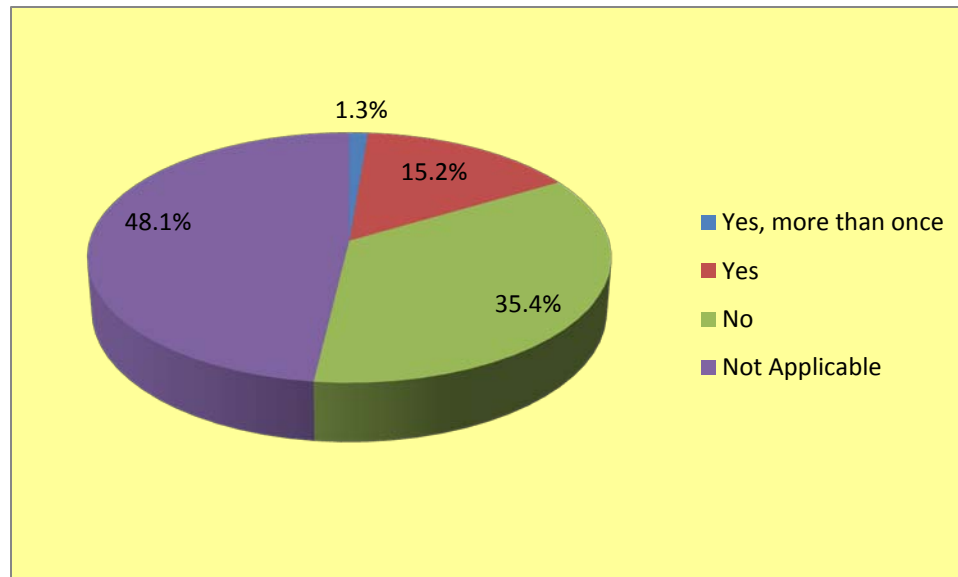
Looking at ages, those reporting a positive experience with the Police were all over 25, with an even spread of these responses aged between 25 - 60+.

From these results, it appears that nearly half of the respondents have had no contact with the Police around LGBT issues.

When asking for more details about these positive experiences, the following themes were identified:

- People in the Bournemouth and Poole appear to have much better links with local LAGLOs and have reported issues to these with positive results.
- Where there have been issues of homophobic crimes (rather than incidents such as verbal abuse) the Police have dealt with these issues in a positive manner.
- Despite having positive experiences, approximately half of those who added more details about these felt they only got a positive response once they had found the right person to speak to, or had chased the issue up several times.
- Of those that responded with not applicable, many wrote that they have been fortunate not to have had any cause to need police intervention.

We then asked if they had had a negative experience when dealing with Dorset Police around any LGBT issue?



Only 16.5% of people that responded have had a negative experience with the Police, with only 1 person saying this had happened more than once.

Of those that have had negative experiences, they are all located in the more urban areas of the County of Bournemouth / Poole and Weymouth / Portland. There was a higher level of older people (41+) who recorded negative experiences. Only one younger person indicated one negative experience.

In line with people recording positive experiences, nearly 50% indicated that they haven't had any contact with Dorset Police over LGBT issues.

When asking for more details about their negative experiences, the following themes were identified:

- Many of these experiences relate to a lack of knowledge or understanding on the part of the Police around LGBT issues
- There appears to be quite a lot of resentment around police officers not challenging homophobic or transphobic abuse when intervening in an incident.
- Several people mentioned that part of the problem was contact details and information being out of date so they couldn't access appropriate support.
- Historical issues, as identified at the beginning of the report, around convictions that no longer apply, have been the cause of many of these negative experiences. They continue to cause anger and distrust amongst older respondents.

Reporting Incidents / Crimes

The survey aimed to get an idea of how easy people find it to report a homophobic / transphobic hate crime and how much they know about methods for reporting.

Respondents were given the following options to give their opinion on:

- Via the internet
- Over the phone
- At a Police station
- Through a 3rd party
- Via LAGLO

Of the options available almost 40% of respondents felt unsure about the ways that they could report a hate crime.

Of the other 60% of respondents, there was a roughly even split between those who thought all the methods were easy to use as a reporting tool and those who didn't know that you could use a particular method.

Very few respondents felt that it was difficult or very difficult to use any particular reporting method, where they had knowledge of it.

The results identified that more people found it easier to report via a Police station, followed closely by LAGLO than any other reporting method. There were far fewer people that felt reporting via a 3rd party was easy.

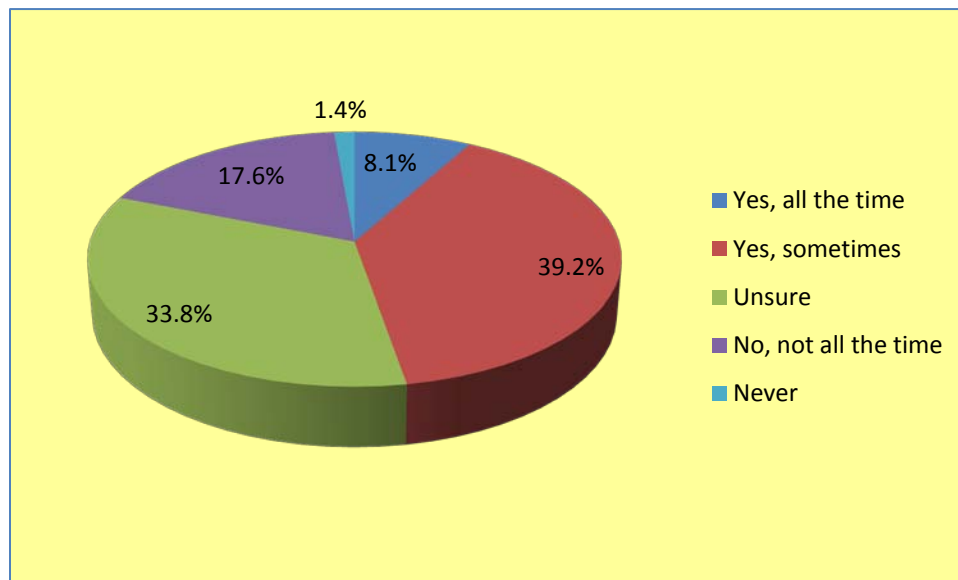
Looking at age in relation to reporting, we found that younger people (under 24) are much more confident in knowing the whole range of methods for reporting hate crime. Those in the upper age brackets (41+) appeared to have much less knowledge about the reporting mechanisms available.

In relation to location, the results found that those living in Bournemouth / Poole found it much easier to report hate crimes to a LAGLO than those in the more rural area of the whole County. There was a higher unsure response rate to the question from those in the rural areas of Dorset.

“I have reported homophobic incidents in the past and whilst they have been kind, I felt that they could have done more. But, it hasn't put me off reporting any incidents.”

Working Positively

We asked whether people felt that Dorset Police engages positively with LGBT people and communities and the results found that just over 47% of respondents felt that the Police did engage positively at least some of the time. Only 17.6% of respondents felt that the Police didn't always engage positively, with only 1.4% feeling that this never happened. It is positive to see that so few people feel entirely negative towards the Police and believe this shows some progress has been made over the last few years.



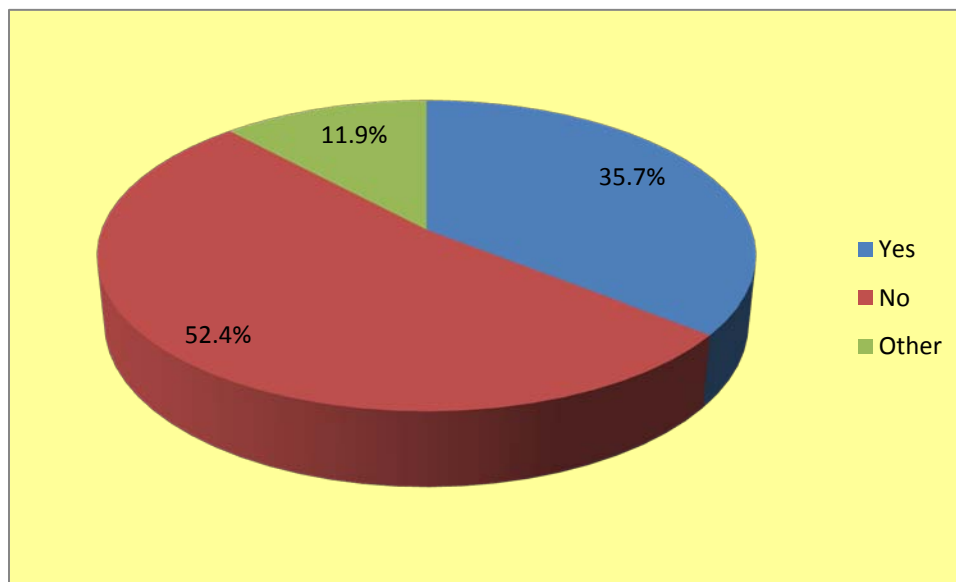
From the further responses gained through this question, there is a general sense that police presence has reduced over the last few years and that engagement is more likely if you live in a highly populated area such as Bournemouth or Poole. Much of the unsure response rate appears to be caused by people questioning general policing attitudes based on hearsay, rather than being based on actual experiences, which links back to the historical issues we noted at the beginning of this report.

“There is a long journey to travel yet but hopefully they will get there.”

Policing in Dorset

Next, we asked respondents whether they felt they could have their say on the way policing is carried out in Dorset.

Just over 50% of respondents felt that they could not have their say in this area. Just under 36% however felt that they could have their say.



Those 11.9% who responded other to the question generally felt that the police would not listen if they chose to engage with them. There was also a sense that due to budget cuts and changing times that issues such as hate crime and LGBT issues in general would be ones that would get cut in the first instance.

This is clearly an area that Dorset Police might like to focus on and identify new ways for LGBT people and communities to feel empowered to have their say on policing issues

“Police should be encouraging us to join local neighbourhood watch teams and getting to know our local Safer Neighbourhood Teams.”

Community Ideas and Suggestions

The next set of questions were all related to getting ideas from respondents as to how Dorset Police could better engage with our communities, how we can have a better say on policing issues and trying to understand what stops people from contacting the Police.

Through the 4 focus group drop-ins we were also able to obtain even further information from those attending around these key issues, and we have fed the information gained at those into the following section.

When look at engagement and having a say, there were some key themes and comments that came through the responses:

- The Police need to work hard to encourage local LGBT people to engage with their local Safer Neighbourhood Teams.
- That people are happy to be consulted over issues and asked their opinions provided they see something constructive coming out of the results. There has to be outcomes and actions attached to the findings of things like the online survey. Without these, community trust and confidence will start to diminish.
- There is still a real sense that people feel they won't be listened to when talking about issues. Added to this, is a fear that the response to any issues they raise either won't be taken seriously, or won't be dealt with appropriately.
- People feel that the Police should be making greater efforts to have a presence at events, clubs & pubs where they know our communities are likely to frequent.
- There should be a greater range of events set up between the Police and LGBT people & communities.
- Greater use of the internet should be looked at and well publicised.
- Quite a few people wanted to be able to have a facility for being able to report incidents via text as they felt this was an easy and accessible method for reporting. Especially as it meant they could report incidents almost immediately after they have happened.
- People like the idea of LAGLOs in general, but they are unsure of who many of them are.
- Several people wanted to know whether what was being done with our own communities was happening across other communities. There was a sense that LAGLOs shouldn't just be available to LGBT people, but to all minority groups and this is something that Dorset Police should look into.
- Police officers and SNTs should be contacting local LGBT groups and projects and seeking to go along to these on a semi-regular basis.
- There should be better use of publicity of issues in places like LGBT pubs and clubs
- The Police should be making much better use of social networking tools such as Facebook.
- Promoting a public list of who ALL the LAGLO officers are along with contact details

- Small practical ideas could be put into places, such as use of the rainbow symbol of pride to create more welcoming and inclusive environments.
- Dorset Police should be publicising internally good local resources such as the LGBT Collective (www.lgbtcollective.org.uk) website to its entire staff. This will give staff greater knowledge of the range of resources available to LGBT people and with whom they can connect.

When asking for reasons behind stopping contacting the Police, the following themes came up:

- People do not want to waste their time contacting the Police because they feel there is a sense that there will be no outcome at the end of the process.
- There is a lack of feedback when you report something to the Police so there is no point.
- Confidence that anything will be done is low amongst some LGBT people.
- Ingrained fears of the Police stop some people from contacting the Police, and having analysed these responses, they tend to be from those aged 40+.
- Fear of repercussions people might face for contacting the Police around an LGBT issue.
- Lack of knowledge around what a homophobic / transphobic incident is and what a phobic crime is.

The very last question asked if people wanted to make any other comments about Dorset Police and LGBT issues and it is important to note that there were quite a few comments made congratulating the Police on what they had achieved so far. People recognise that there is a long journey to be travelled but that they appreciate that work is being done. There is a real hope that our communities will see real change and real action, rather than unfulfilled promises.

“Please keep supporting us and remember to stand up for the police policy -on our behalf -if rogue officers behave in an inappropriate way even if it seems like harmless banter.”

Conclusions

When conducting this work, there was a general sense from our communities that this level of work, and the use of a voluntary sector agency to do it, had the potential to start the beginning of a real shift change in community attitudes towards the Police. There is still a lot of residual nervousness, fear and suspicion that nothing will come from the input people have, and this now leaves responsibility solely with Dorset Police. Every effort should be made to maintain the levels of contact and communication with our communities from this point onwards. We have made a couple of recommendations in relation to this area below and want to reiterate that without appropriate levels of communication, trust and confidence will diminish and a perfect opportunity lost.

Dorset Police as a whole force, not just the Community Engagement Team, must become more proactive at trying to engage with our communities, especially the Safer Neighbourhood Teams. There are resources available in the public domain that provide ideal opportunities for Dorset Police to fully engage, without adding to the already stretched capacity of staff within the force.

By engaging on a continuous basis, and reporting back to our communities work that is being carried out, levels of confidence will hopefully continue to rise. This will help to negate the feeling by many people that although they appreciate the current commitments being shown by the Police, they are waiting for something to go wrong.

Another over-arching view from the communities was that they felt LAGLOs were far more visible in Bournemouth and Poole and that although they understood the reasons for this, they wanted to be able to connect with local LAGLOs in their area, no matter where in the County they live. The more rural areas feel more neglected so more effort should be put into reaching out to these isolated areas.

Despite the challenges that still remain, and the high levels of constructive comments made by people engaging with this work, there was still a keenness to praise the Police on some of the work that they have done. There was recognition that they have been visible at events like Bourne Free and the Love Parade and that this was very welcome. People want to continue to see the Police joining in with community events and to expand upon this.

This is just the beginning of the journey but of course there is a long way yet to travel. We hope that Dorset Police take this opportunity to shape the future at a time when community trust and confidence in most areas is growing. There are more groups, projects and events for LGBT people in Dorset than ever before so there are an increasing number of opportunities for the Police to engage. Clue Safer Neighbourhood Teams up, give them the resources with which they can reach out and let's see if we can truly embed LGBT issues into neighbourhood decision making on a level of equality, fairness and mutual respect.

Report Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Safer Neighbourhood Teams should be tasked with identifying local LGBT resources and proactively making local contact with groups, projects, etc.

By visiting local groups and projects they will be able to gain wider local views and help to build a more inclusive and respected local neighbourhood.

Recommendation 2:

In order to raise awareness of what a homophobic / transphobic incident or crime is, a poster campaign should be launched across the County focussing as a pilot on areas where LGBT communities are known to exist. The campaign should be directly related to incidents and crimes that are more common to the area (e.g. verbal harassment in the street).

Too many LGBT people are confused around what exactly constitutes incidents or crimes. Without this baseline knowledge how can they report? A simple poster campaign will help to break down this particular barrier.

Recommendation 3:

As a follow up to the above recommendation, the Police should run a more general campaign around methods for reporting. The focus for this should be on older people (41+) to ensure they have better access to information around reporting, having shown that there is greater level of uncertainty in this age bracket.

Recommendation 4:

Dorset Police should look at the concept of LAGLO and how this might be able to be developed to make it more inclusive across all diversity strands, rather than isolated just to the LGBT communities.

The feeling is that our communities are very lucky to have access to such specialist support, but this can sometimes segregate the communities even further. Extending this across minority communities could improve the Force's general approach to diversity and in turn increase levels of engagement for our own communities.

Recommendation 5:

Whilst the current system for LAGLOs is in place, the Force should publicise an up to date list of who their local LAGLO officers are.

Community members want to be able to connect with LAGLO but find it difficult to find information about them, despite having been told that they exist.

Recommendation 6:

Small rainbow window sticker should be placed somewhere within the reception area of each police station across the force area.

This would help as an instant visual aid for an LGBT person who wants some sign that the environment is going to be positive. Officers in each station should be made aware of what this means and why they are being put up. Other members of the public would be unlikely to even notice them but would be an instantly recognisable symbol to many members of our communities.

Recommendation 7:

The Community Engagement Team should send out internal correspondence to all staff in relation to resources for engaging with LGBT people and communities. Principally, this could be promotion of the general LGBT website www.lgbtcollective.org.uk, but also highlighting the key groups and contacts within the force area.

This will help all police staff to get a greater sense of the extent of resources for LGBT communities and offer real opportunities for engagement.

Recommendation 8:

Dorset Police should produce and distribute a communiqué with the LGBT communities each quarter (or at the very least each 6 months) in the format of a “you said, we did” document.

This will go some way to showing to our communities that there is progress following their input to this current work. Even if nothing is achieved in a quarter, we think it is still important to report back to our communities on a regular basis.

Without it, levels of trust and confidence have the potential to be damaged and this must be prevented at all costs.

Recommendation 9:

Where positive convictions are secured against a homophobic or transphobic crime, these have to be publicised to our communities, making use of local contacts and resources.

Positive news is always far more difficult to promote, but there are opportunities for doing this. Convictions against an LGBT hate crime are ideal opportunities to highlight the good work of Dorset Police and the CJS.

Appendix 1: Survey

Dorset Police Engaging with LGBT Communities

The Intercom Trust is working with the Dorset Police Community Engagement Team to look at the relationship Dorset Police have with LGBT people and communities across the whole County.

Those filling out this questionnaire do so anonymously and all answers will be treated confidentially.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire then please contact Paul Roberts on 01392 201012 or

paul@intercomtrust.org.uk.

1. What is your age?

Under 18

18 – 24

25 – 40

41 – 60

60+

2. How would you describe your gender identity?

3. How would you describe your sexual orientation?

4. Which area of Dorset do you live or work in?

West Dorset

Weymouth / Portland

North Dorset

Purbeck

Bournemouth / Poole

East Dorset

Christchurch

More than one of these

5. Have you had a positive experience when dealing with Dorset Police around any LGBT issue?

- Yes, more than once
- Yes
- No
- Not Applicable

6. We would like to know more. Please could you provide us with details.

7. Have you had a negative experience when dealing with Dorset Police around any LGBT issue?

- Yes, more than once
- Yes
- No
- Not Applicable

8. Would you be prepared to tell us more about these?

9. How easy do you think it is to report an LGBT hate crime to Dorset Police?

	Very easy	Easy	Unsure	Difficult	Very difficult	Didn't know you could
Via the internet						
Over the phone						
At a police station						
Through a 3rd party						
Via LAGLO (Lesbian & Gay Liaison Officer)						

10. Do you think that Dorset Police engages positively with LGBT people and communities?
Yes, all the time
Yes, sometimes
Unsure
No, not all the time
Never
Other (please give your reason):
11. Do you feel that you can have you day on the way policing is carried out in Dorset?
Yes
No
Other (please specify):
12. Please give us your ideas as to where Dorset Police could make contact with LGBT people and communities in the County
13. Do you have any suggestions as to ways that Dorset Police can help you to have your say on policing issues?
14. Are there any ways you would like to be able to contact Dorset Police about an LGBT issue that is currently not available, or that you are unaware of?
15. What stops you from contacting Dorset Police about an issue you might have?
16. Are there any other comments you would like to make about Dorset Police and LGBT issues?
17. If you would like to participate in an interactive focus group towards the end of February (there will be 4 across Dorset) or would be prepared to discuss your responses further, please give your email address.

That's it....you're done! Thank you for completing the survey, it really is helpful!