

The **intercom** Trust

Supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual & trans communities in the South West peninsula

Registered Charity 1072772

Let's Get Back Together '08 Conference Evaluation



Supported by
The National Lottery[®]
through the Big Lottery Fund



Contents

Welcome	2
Introduction & Background	3
Workshops Feedback	4-8
Campaign Plenary	9
Future Conferences	10
Gateway, Rainbow Ring	11
Standing Council	12
Where Next?	13



Delegates at LGBT '08

Welcome!

I am delighted to be writing this report following another successful community conference, this year aptly named “Let’s Get Back Together ‘08”.

This conference was only possible thanks to the funding Intercom have received from the Big Lottery Fund BASIS grant scheme. We have funding over 3 years for this project which will enable us to hold conferences in 2009 and 2010. We are already working hard on searching for a new venue in 2009!

LGBT 08 could also not have happened without the fantastic support that our group of volunteers provided throughout the weekend. A big thanks goes out to Louis, Dawn, Noel, Celia & Yvonne. We would also like to thank all of our facilitators for the workshops they ran and our Sunday speakers. They managed to bring a diverse range of activities for everyone to enjoy.

We have tried to keep this report in plain English so it can become a meaningful document to refer back to over the next year. We will be using it as a working document to help shape the second year of our project but this is just a starting block. We are a community-responsive organisation so if you have new ideas that we could potentially look at, then you know what to do—get in touch!

Thanks to everyone who attended and here’s to LGBT 09.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Paul', written in a cursive style.

Paul
Community Development Manager

Introduction and Background

Let's Get Back Together '08 follows on from the highly successful Right Royal Get Together (RRGT) held in September 2005. This was the first occasion where all the LGBT groups and projects known to Intercom at the time were invited to gather for a weekend of networking, information & resource sharing and planning for the future. The outcomes from this first event helped shape the work of the Lynx South West Community Development Project to date. More information about this first event can be found in "*Right Royal Get Together LGBT Networking Event: Report and Evaluation, December 2005*", copies of which can be obtained from Intercom.

The aim was to ensure the conference had a similar feel to that of the RRGT and that it had a safe and positive atmosphere for all LGBT groups and projects present. The feedback we received from those attending seems to show that we managed to achieve this. A lot of time was tabled for networking and discussion, and although timing was quite tight, this was still a major part of the weekend.

The conference was residential, allowing those travelling from the farthest parts of the peninsula to enjoy the conference without having to travel long distances over just one day.

In terms of numbers, we had similar figures to the RRGT in 2005, with 70 attenders across the 2 days and virtually a 50 / 50 split of men and women. We recorded that around half the groups were represented at the conference.

There are improvements to be made for subsequent conferences and these will be taken into consideration when planning for 2009. More about this can be found at the end of the report.



One of the Sunday speaker sessions

Workshops Feedback

There were a wide variety of workshops on offer during the course of the weekend, ranging from hand massage to reporting phobic crime! The key was to find a balance between strategic workshops and more fun activity based ones and I hope that we managed to achieve this as far as was possible. Some of the more strategic and in depth workshops fed information back to us about their outcomes and we have highlighted these as follows. We will be looking at these outcomes and seeing how we can shape them into our workplan for the second year of our BASIS programme, and for other community projects and activities in the peninsula.

Youth Matters

There was concern amongst the 13 participants that there had been a lack of any discernable action since the Youth Lynx conference back in 2006, although they understood that the cut in funding made it impossible for Intercom to continue developing this area. The groups talked about how despite this, following the residential they had made better links with each other, although some LGBT youth groups in the peninsula appear reluctant to participate with other groups which is disappointing.

The following action points came from the workshop:

- There is a lack of youth provision for LGBT people in Cornwall and this should be looked at.
- We should look at the possibility of having another Youth Lynx residential for all the LGBT youth groups in the peninsula.
- Co-ordinate more joint activities and events
- To encourage young people to look at the possibility of standing as the Youth Lead Officer on the Standing Council.
- People asked that the Gateway should be used to highlight organisations and environments that might be potentially harmful to young people.
- Continue to help the set-up of new groups and keep supporting those that already exist.
- Bring together people from different groups to share their experiences of growing up LGBT, maybe looking at doing this as part of LGBT History Month. It was highlighted, this could be an opportunity to chart changes taking place across generations.
- Co-ordinating attendance of youth groups at events such as Prides so they can all march together.
- Through the Standing Council, having joint youth campaigns.

Update from Intercom as of November 08:

The lack of youth provision in Cornwall is hopefully being addressed as a group of interested individuals and organisations have come together to form a new inclusive LGBTQ youth group for Cornwall. As of the beginning of November, the first Trustees have just been appointed and the group has already secured £5K for its setup. The Trustees and its advisory board hope to have the group up and running by the end of February. The aim is to have one group that is split across two or three locations in order to maximise opportunities for young people to attend across the County.

LGBT History and Heritage

The 15 participants of this workshop discussed issues around what constitutes LGBT history and heritage, why there is a need for it and how do people get involved with it. There were several short action points to come out of the workshop, as follows:

- Looking into creating resources on
 - How to search guides
 - How to record oral histories
 - How to put on events and come up with ideas for events
- More information about LGBT History should be made available in more places such as newsletters and websites.

Update from Intercom as of November 08:

Intercom, as part of its Heritage Lottery Funded project, is currently putting together an LGBT History Month resources pack for schools, which includes simple lesson plans for the different Key Stages. We hope to be able to roll these packs out to all schools in the peninsula in the New Year. We have also produced a more generic LGBT History resources pack to give people ideas on how to incorporate History into their work.

There will also be the first LGBT History Pride taking place in Exeter, around Gandy Street, on February 28th.

Mental Health Support

The 9 participants of this workshop discussed issues around access to health services in relation to mental health, gaps in research and statistics for LGBT people with mental health issues and how cross-cutting issues are important when looking at mental health issues and possible causes. The group also raised an issue around ensuring that issues of mental health aren't confused with issues of well-being in relation to the need for community support.

Key action points from the workshop were:

- Support available to individuals so that they feel confident to seek help from mental health professionals.
- Look into training for health professionals to raise their level of understanding of LGBT mental health issues.
- More mental health support groups at local level.
- Higher level of out LGBT counsellors available.
- Look into conducting a formal need and experience assessment at a group level and feed this back into the Standing Council.
- The Standing Council to feedback to PCTs on the state of LGBT mental health issues.

Update from Intercom as of November 08:

We have seen an increase in the number of LGBT mental health support groups across the peninsula with there now being 4 (Cornwall, Exeter & 2 in Dorset—one specifically for young people). We are also supporting some people who are looking to set a new one up in Plymouth.

We have also seen an increase in the number of out LGBT counsellors in the past 12 months that we are able to signpost to.

Roles & Responsibilities of Trustees

This workshop was run twice over the weekend and the participants discussed a whole range of issues such as looking at why someone would become a Trustee and what their real responsibilities would be, how much liability in is question when you become a Trustee, conflicts of interests and how to run an effective Management Board. There were no specific outcomes from these workshops as they were more of a question and answer structure. The Community Development team, as part of its general support services for frontline groups, will continue to offer one to one support for groups that have queries and needs in this area. We will also be able to set up more general workshops on this topic should particular areas feel a need for training.



Let's do some drumming

Making an LGBT Group more T Inclusive

All 9 attenders of this workshop felt this was a really useful session to explore how they can ensure that being an LGBT group isn't just about adding that extra letter and does actually actively engage with their Trans group members. Various topics of discussion were raised, including those around employment and looking at your group's membership and structure.

The key outcomes from this workshop were:

- Getting out lots more information on Trans issues to frontline groups
- More training for the general public and also for employers
- Groups to have more information about useful resources if they have queries or questions about Trans issues.



Trans workshop

Reporting Phobic Crime

The participants of this workshop were looking into the barriers that prevented people from reporting both homophobic and transphobic crime and also at what routes & methods were available for reporting phobic crime such as direct to the Police, going through a third sector organisation such as frontline groups, internet, etc. There were various views from the participants around actual barriers, including: anxieties about mis-perception of sexual orientation or gender identity, fear of reprisal, it happening too often, police not taking it seriously, fear of being outed, not understanding the system, etc. A list of participants was collated to form a small task force for looking into these areas.

Key outcomes from the workshop were as follows:

- Further raising of awareness of phobic crime and the reporting of it through advertising and PR, focussing in on
 - Routes for reporting
 - Possible benefits of reporting
 - Explaining how the system works
- Educating more people about the system.
- Getting the right people into the right places and telling people they are there.
- Encouraging the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and local Government to make the system more transparent.
- Better multi-agency working between the CJS, local govt, third sector, health, etc.

Update from Intercom as of November 08:

Intercom has used the information gathered from this workshop to help form part of our strategic plan for providing LGBT advocacy services across the peninsula. We are using this document to take to Local Area Agreements, CJS, etc to work on increasing the reporting of Phobic Crime and improve support for victims of crime.

Womens Aid: Domestic Violence

As with several of the other workshops, this one ran twice during the weekend and was well attended. This workshop was a complement to the Broken Rainbow Domestic Violence awareness training workshop that also took place. This one focussed on the barriers to LGBT people seeking support for domestic violence, what improvements can be made and how the LGBT communities can be better involved in shaping services. Ultimately, the participants highlighted that they want people to be treated as equals alongside heterosexual people but with an awareness that there are differences between communities and that these need to be mutually respected.

Some of the barriers raised by the participants included:

- Lack of promotion of issues and support available for our communities.
- Not being able to identify that a relationship is abusive.
- Fear of not being believed or being outed.
- Fear of receiving homophobia from professionals.
- Loss of child contact or custody.
- Little knowledge of whether refuges are accessible to LGBT communities, especially to transgender people.
- Lack of LGBT specific workers in the domestic violence field.

Some outcomes for the workshop were as follows:

- Need to invest in more LGBT specific domestic violence workers.
- Need better promotion of DV issues to our own communities.
- Breaking down the idea that DV is a taboo subject. By talking about it more openly, it will hopefully highlight it is more common than people believe.
- More education, especially at a school level on LGBT issues.
- Looking at the double barrier of having to disclose DV and also out yourself.
- Producing advertising and publicity that is suitable to now—more openness to advertise LGBT issues nowadays.
- Need a lot more training and information to take the fear out about being ‘different’.
- Look at creating a Domestic Violence Lead Officer on the Standing Council.
- Information about services publicised more in newsletters and distributed as widely as possible.
- Develop a kite mark for LGBT friendliness within statutory and third sector organisations.

Update from Intercom as of November 08:

As the Community Development Team we will take the idea of having a Domestic Violence lead to the Standing Council County Meetings and subsequently to the main Standing Council. We will also highlight DV issues in one of our monthly e-bulletins.

Campaigns Plenary

During the course of Sunday the conference held a group plenary exploring campaigns. The Community Development team regularly get asked whether we could look at coordinating campaigns across the peninsula. This is something we want to start facilitating as part of our general work and combine it with that of the Standing Council. The discussions revolved around identifying what a campaign is and how we can coordinate together. The important outcome of this plenary session was to create a list of hot topics that we can look at and prioritise for the next year. Importantly, it was highlighted that any campaigns we decide to undertake must be properly managed and then should compliment campaigns of other similar organisations, not duplicate.

These campaign ideas were:

- Older Housing Needs / Care Issues
 - Asking older people what they actually want
 - Looking at issues of not having to go back into the closet if going into a home
 - Focussing a campaign on care home, care groups, etc
- LGBT people with disabilities
 - Working with the NHS and the Health Care systems to promote better access to services
 - Promoting better provision of support for LGBT people with disabilities
- Media
 - Trying to get more positive coverage of LGBT issues across all media formats to prevent negative images prevailing
- Getting T on the agenda
 - Highlighting trans issues as its own subject
- Schools to recognise the DCFS guidelines on homophobic bullying
 - Getting all schools to at the very least take the Rainbow Ring posters / cards
 - Working with Connexions and Youth Services to disseminate information and encourage best practice
- Access to fertility services
- Challenging single sex restrictions at holiday venues
- Free dental dams at Family Planning
- Lesbian health needs
- Challenging discrimination in funding and inequality of funding decisions
 - Putting in Freedom of Information requests
- Fostering agencies and ensuring their equality policy is fair and equal for all
- Challenging homophobia in Schools

The Community Development team will be setting up a section of Gateway, within the message boards, where we can all begin discussing these ideas for campaigns and which ones we can look at getting started on. We will also be taking these plans to the next Standing Council meetings.

Future Conferences

In order to continue the success of the Community Conferences over the next two years we are keen to ensure they remain community-led and deliver what the groups and projects will find most useful. Several key considerations were highlighted during the course of the weekend, and in subsequent feedback, which we will use to help forward plan for next year's event. These included:

- Some people stated that it would be useful if the event could be longer, starting earlier on the Saturday. In order to achieve this, it would mean providing further accommodation on the Friday evening for those having to travel from the furthest parts of the peninsula. This would also mean having to raise further funds to help pay for the conference
- There should be a specific part of the weekend where we invite external organisations / people into the event. This will give people an opportunity to find out more about the different services on offer in the peninsula.
- We should consider having a Question Time style format to question people in a position of public authority.
- Any time on offer for external organisations to participate in the weekend should be limited to a specific allotted time and not the whole event.
- We should also consider having stands from external organisations to help cross promote services of interest to LGBT communities.
- Workshops should be conducted by both LGBT and non-LGBT organisations to create a broader range of topics and activities.
- Some workshops should be longer so people can explore further into the topic of discussion.
- More workshops should run more than once to give everyone the opportunity to attend both serious and fun ones.
- There should be coordinated entertainment on the Saturday night in order to keep the group as one, rather than splintering off after the main dinner event.



The conference dinner

Gateway

The brand new community website The Gateway was brought to the attention of the delegates at the conference. Intercom had hoped that the site could have been launched at the conference but due to delays from the IT Company building the site, this has had to be pushed back to the end of November. It is hoped that the new Gateway will enable groups and projects to continue to network, share ideas and good practice outside of events such as these conferences. They will have opportunities to participate on message boards, hold live chat meetings with other groups, download useful documents and resources and find out about what is happening in terms of LGBT activity across the peninsula.

The Gateway will be housed at Intercom on a dedicated server in order to preserve the confidentiality and privacy of information kept within the site. It is also going to be undergoing security testing to ensure unauthorised access cannot be gained.

Rainbow Ring

LGBT 08 also saw the opportunity for the launch of a new initiative called the Rainbow Ring. All the LGBT helplines from across the peninsula have come together to produce coordinated promotional material to be distributed as widely as possible. The posters and postcards produced highlight the various contact details for each of the helplines, which helps to highlight the differing levels of support available wherever you are in the peninsula.

Intercom is currently undertaking to distribute these to various places across the four counties, including libraries, youth centres, some schools, voluntary organisations and public authorities. The initial response to these has been extremely positive and we are receiving numerous calls requesting further copies.



Rainbow Ring Launch

Standing Council

We took advantage of having a good proportion of the groups and projects to hold the inaugural meeting of the new LGBT Standing Council. This is a body consisting of all the LGBT groups and projects from across the peninsula whose aim is to enable better networking, strengthen our communities and provide a safe space for LGBT people to identify, discuss and act upon issues affecting them.

Prior to the first complete meeting of the Standing Council, each county group had already held its first meeting, which was open to all groups in that County. Each County had then elected up to 8 lead officers to attend the full meeting.

The Council took the opportunity to familiarise itself with the terms of reference that had been produced and made a few adjustments before agreeing to send these back to the County groups for approval. The meeting also discussed lack of representation from various key groups within our communities and made this a discussion point for a potential campaign, to help broaden the variety of groups on offer to people.

Full minutes from this inaugural meeting are held by Intercom and can be requested for anyone that is interested. The next County meetings are planned for late November and the next full meeting in January, in preparation for LGBT History Month.



Standing Council meeting

What Comes Next?

As we enter the second year of the Lynx South West project, as funded by the Big Lottery Fund, the Community Development have planned various activities and developments to take place across the peninsula. We hope that many of these events and activities will help further the action points identified in this report and strengthen the LGBT community sector in the South West peninsula.

Some of the activities and events will be as follows:

- Training sessions for LGBT groups and projects on
 - Creating basic accounts
 - And ensuring Management Committee Members can understand them!
 - Trans awareness
 - Reporting Phobic Crime
 - Using the Gateway
- Coordinating campaigns
 - This will be done in conjunction with the Standing Council, taking the discussions from the Campaigns discussion at the conference as its starting point.
- Strengthening the Standing Council
 - Both the main Standing Council and the County groups
- Launching the Gateway website
 - Enabling groups to communicate across the internet in an interactive way.
- Coordinating development events across the peninsula
 - Allowing groups to promote themselves to the wider community
 - Trustee recruitment evenings
 - Other small events groups would be interested in!
 - Womens and mens consultation events across the peninsula
 - Setting up a new group

