

Evaluation: BASIS-funded community development, 2007-2010

This report summarises the results of the targeted consultations of the grassroots groups held in September 2010. We decided that as a matter of good practice the final evaluation of the whole three-year project should be focused on the views of the independent initiatives themselves: these are after all Intercom’s stakeholder-agencies, for whom we have been providing these services, and with whom we have been developing and extending our working partnership.

The regular monitoring reports, and the evaluation report written by Sam Magne of Red Door Associates at the end of the second year, provide a full overview of the services we have been providing, and this record need not be duplicated here.

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1. The consultation

This evaluation is based on a large-scale consultation event held at the annual conference of grassroots initiatives in September 2010. The size of the sample was 60 individuals, out of a total of 74 who attended the conference. They come from a very wide range of socio-economic, personal, and occupational backgrounds.

It should be borne in mind that the great majority of these grassroots initiatives are in the true sense of the word community-groups: that is, they have no paid staff but operate entirely on volunteer time, and this volunteer time is provided, largely, by people who have already got full-time occupations (e.g., at this conference: child social care, civil engineering, the IT industry, investment banking, dentistry, college and university, and many more).

Some groups have no volunteer who is able to make themselves free for a two-day conference of this kind. However, these 74 individuals represented 43 different grassroots initiatives, which is a good proportion (roughly 50%) of the initiatives who use our services.

These 43 initiatives may be roughly categorised in terms of the communities or issues by which they define their primary function or service-user group:

Arts	1
Cross-cutting: general	1
Cross-cutting: advocacy & support	1
Cross-cutting: social	2
Disability (Men)	1
Domestic Violence	2
Faith	3
Health	4
Men	2
Mental Health	1
Older People	2
Parents	1
Pride	4
Sports	1
Staff Network	3
Trans People	5
Women	3
Young People	6
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	43

The consultation participants, like the conference as a whole, showed a good gender-balance. The gender profile for all conference-attenders (as self-defined) was:

female	33
male	38
gender queer	1
gender variant	1
intersex	1
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	74

Sixty of these 74 participated in the consultation event; the remainder were either engaged in networking meetings or had been unable to stay for this final session of the conference.

The consultation event was in two parts. There was an anonymous written evaluation questionnaire, which focused on the performance of the Community Development team and on priorities for future development of their work over the last three years. (The results of this consultation are shown below in the form of pie-charts.)

There was also an activity-based consultation focusing on how far the attenders thought community needs had changed in the South West over the last three years. (For the sake of distinctiveness, these results are shown below in the form of bar charts. In some cases we have included the photographs of the activity, for information.)

We have followed the order of the questions in the written evaluation (pie-charts), and amplified the responses by adding relevant data from the activity-based consultation (bar-charts) as appropriate.

2. Overall satisfaction: evaluation of the past three years

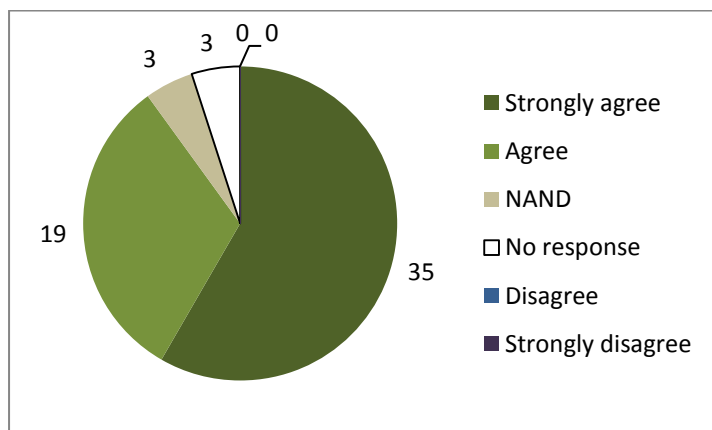
In the written evaluation exercise (60 respondents), which was carefully set up to be entirely anonymous and secure, there was a very strong positive evaluation of the work of Intercom's Community Development team over the last three years.

We focused on asking key questions that would be unambiguous, that would engage the interest of the respondents, and that would reflect those areas of primary concern that were shared both by funders and by the grassroots initiatives themselves. (These questions were therefore of double interest to Intercom.)

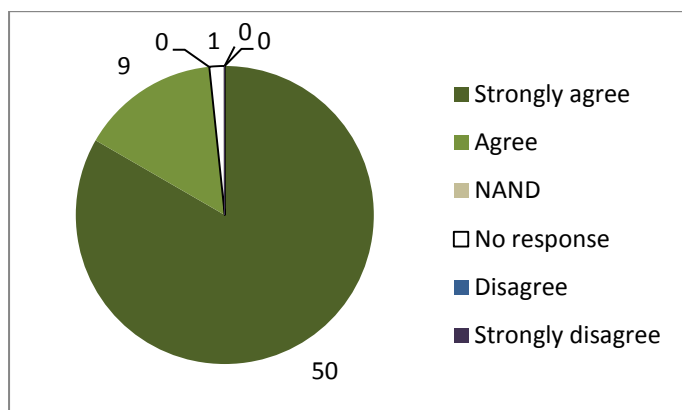
In the first section of the survey we asked respondents to evaluate the importance of the work the Intercom community development team has been doing, and the professionalism with which they have done so. Under this last topic, we focused on aspects of community development that are well-known to be sensitive in the LGBT community sector, which has in the past few decades, across the whole UK, shown itself on occasion to be vulnerable to charges of exclusion or perceived marginalisation of sub-groups.¹

In the pie-charts, n=60 throughout. "NAND" is short for "Neither Agree Nor Disagree".

Q.1 "Intercom's Lynx South West team have made a positive difference to the working of our group."

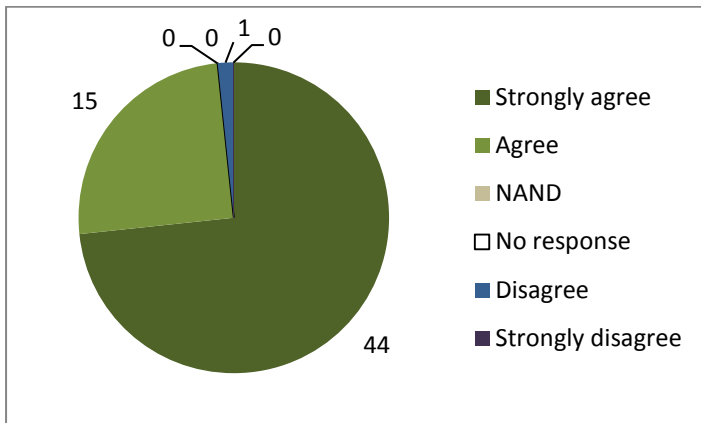


Q.2 "Intercom's Lynx South West team have made a positive difference to LGBT communities across the South West peninsula"

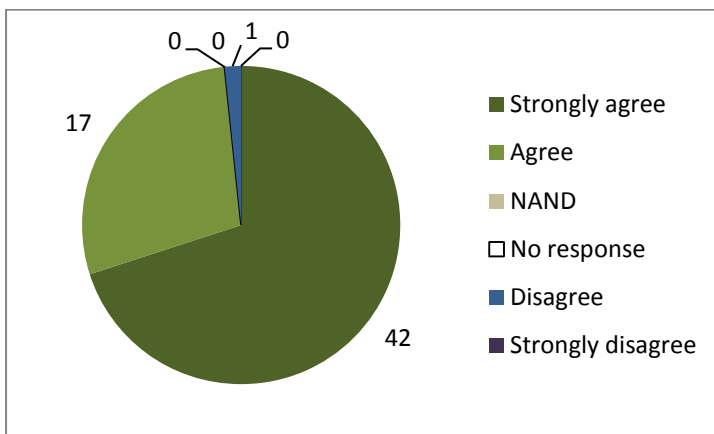


¹ There have in the past been comparable difficulties within other sectors, e.g. ASR, BME and disability.

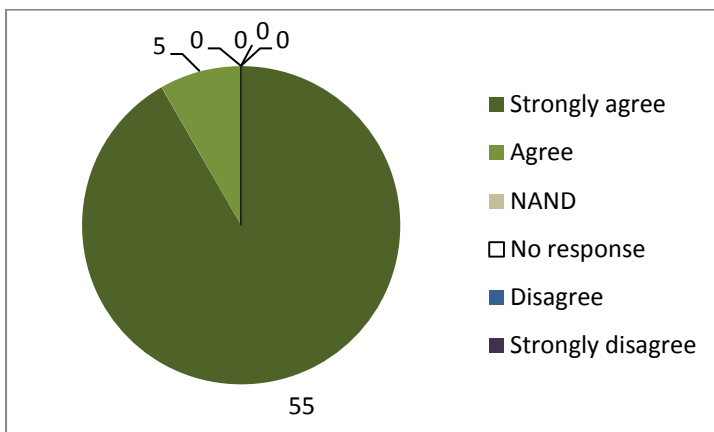
Q.3 “The Intercom team have shown good professional skills.”



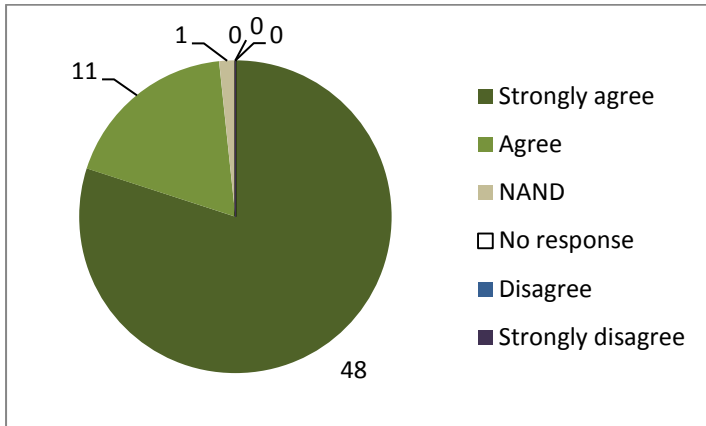
Q.4 “The Intercom team are efficient.”



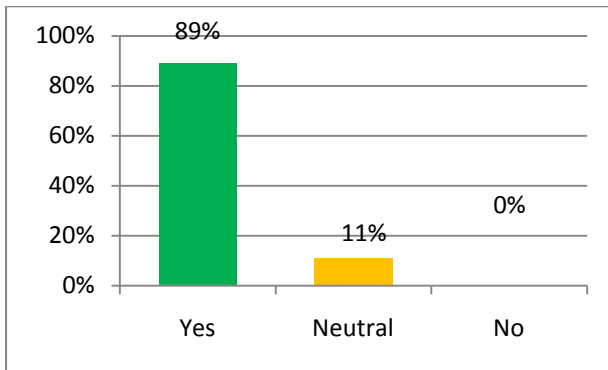
Q.5 “The Intercom team have been friendly.”



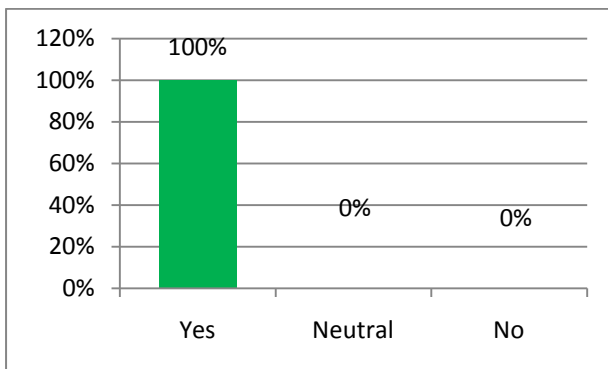
Q.6 “The Intercom team's work has been positively inclusive of the different LGBT communities.”



In the activity section of the consultation, we asked those participants who had been at the very first conference in 2005, “Have these conferences been useful to you?”...



... and we asked all present, “Is it important for [the frontline] groups to work together?”

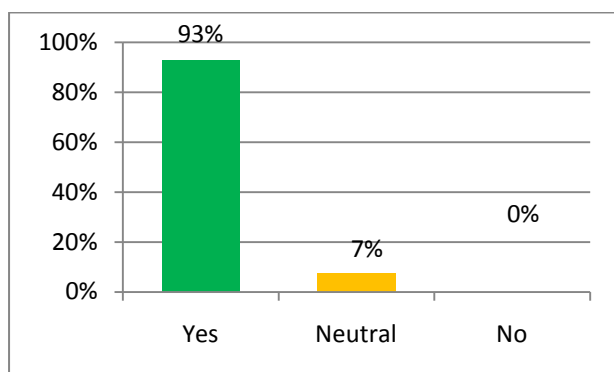


This last response was of particular interest. When Intercom first started trying to bring LGBT initiatives together (1998-2004), we found enormous resistance, right across the sector, even to the basic idea of sitting round a table at which other groups were represented. BASIS funding, building on smaller-scale work funded in 2004-6 by Change Up,

has helped Intercom to initiate a massive change of attitudes in the South West, breaking down some very powerful internal community barriers.

In a separate section of the activity-based consultation we asked the 7 people present who had also been at Intercom's very first community conference, in September 2005, "Do you think we're a closer community --- we work better together --- than we did in 2005?"> The answer was unanimously "Yes".

When we asked if these groups serve an important function in society, there was 100% agreement that they do. We also had a very strongly positive response to the question, "Has Intercom been directly useful to your own group?"



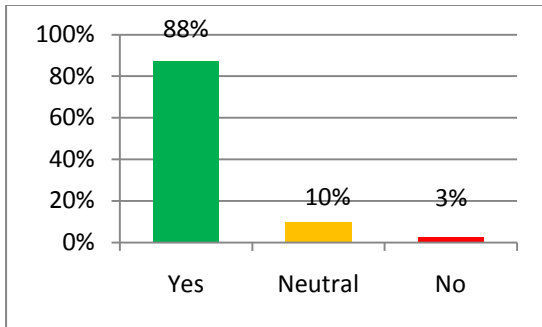
We asked nine questions in the activity section about whether there was less need nowadays for groups that support:

1. Young people
2. Older people
3. Women
4. Men
5. Trans women
6. Trans men
7. People with physical and sensory disabilities
8. People with learning difficulties
9. People with mental health needs

All these nine questions had the same profile of response: 1 respondent was neutral, and all others who chose to vote (between 26 and 36 for each question) felt the needs were at least as great as they had been. None of the 60 or so people present felt that any of these needs were any less nowadays than they had been.

This last series of questions highlights the fact that in this specialist sector, infrastructure services are there to support community groups whose members have not so much a common *interest* (e.g. bird-watching, orienteering, book-collecting) as common *needs* (e.g. social isolation, family hostility, access to gender reassignment, local prejudice, etc. etc.)

We were therefore particularly interested to know what the response would be to the question, “Has Intercom helped your own group or groups to help any isolated or vulnerable people?”. The response was impressively positive:



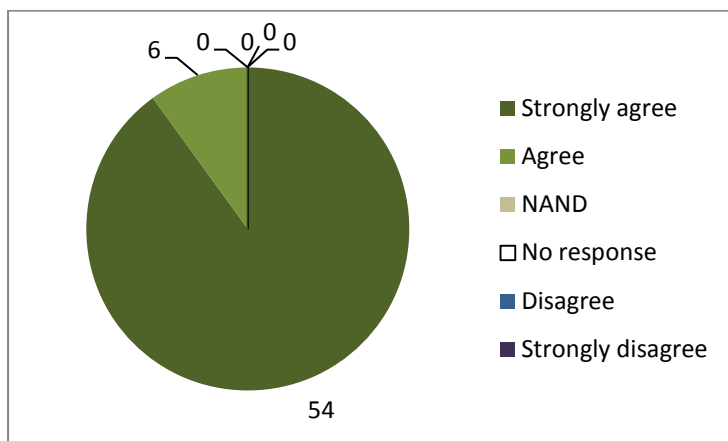
This was the first time we had asked the frontline initiatives this question in a formal consultation. In future consultations we shall investigate in more detail how the groups perceive our infrastructure services as directly helping them to support their members to improve their lives, and what kinds of benefit their members are looking for. It will be worthwhile to investigate in greater depth that we have done before the parallels and differences between the support needs of clients who directly approach Intercom’s own Help and Advocacy Service and the support activities of the independent initiatives.

3. Priorities and future planning: the data

In the next section of the written consultation (question 7 onwards) we asked the grassroots groups to identify the most important parts of the work of the community development team, with a view to identifying the primary gaps, and thus determining priorities for future fundraising and activities.

There is evidently a strong general conviction that such work is still needed. It was extremely valuable to see the somewhat differing priorities that the respondents gave to different activities within the broad spectrum of Intercom’s community development.

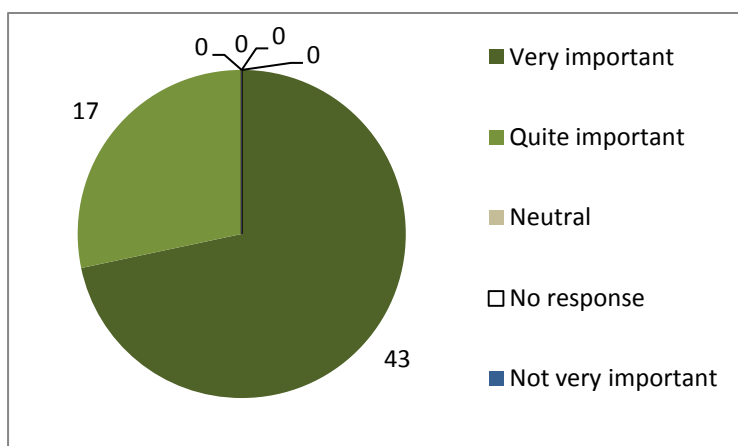
Q.7 “There is still a need for the kind of service the Intercom team has been providing.”



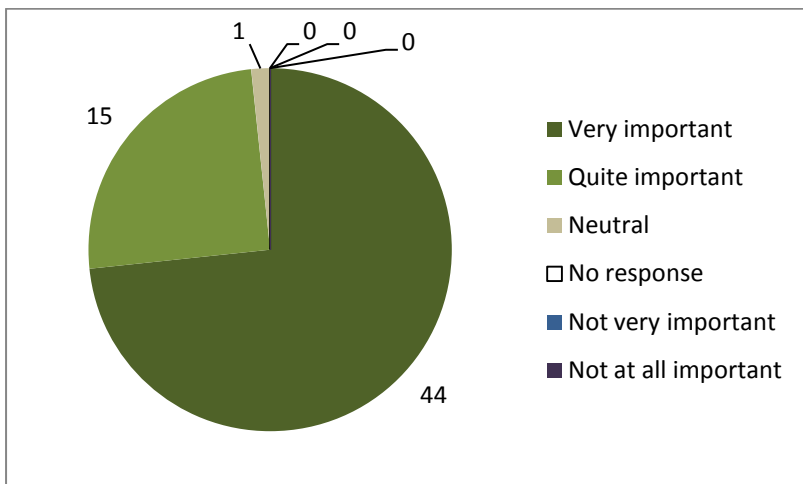
We went on to ask for feedback about the importance of different kinds of service that the team has been providing.

There was a very strong consensus that the LGBT Collective, and the annual conferences, should be maintained somehow.

Q.8 Keeping up the annual conferences

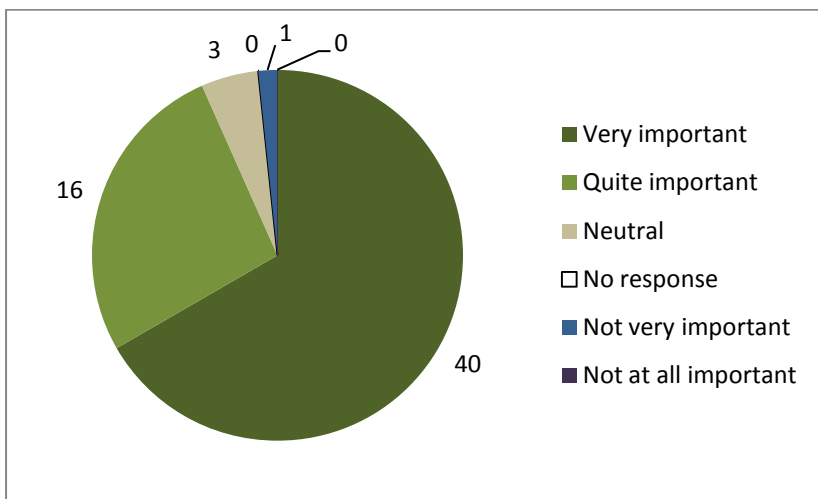


Q.9 Setting up and facilitating Collective meetings and activities

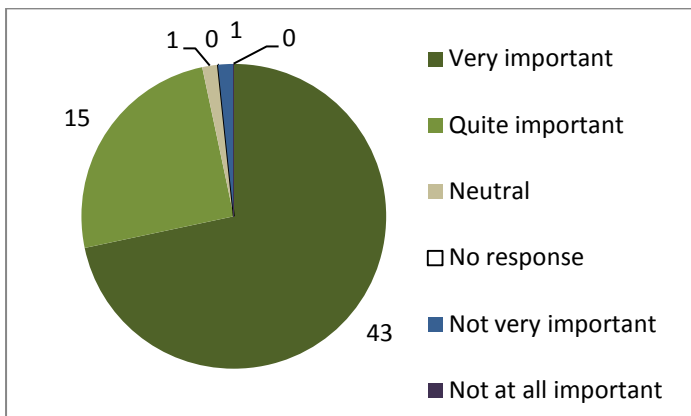


Other questions showed an interestingly broad scatter of answers.

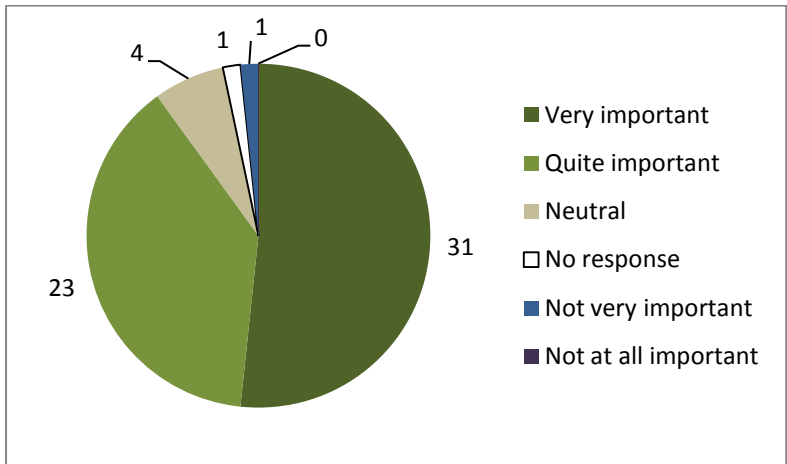
Q.10 Training for groups about LGBT legal rights



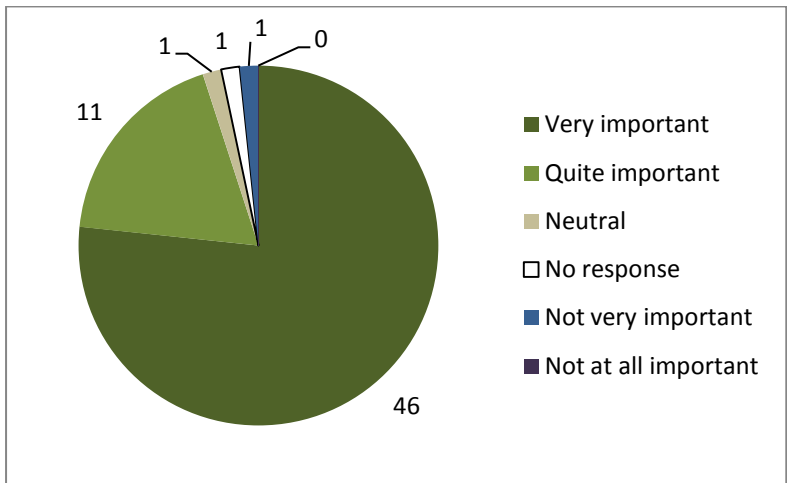
Q.11. Helping people to make our voices heard about public services (crime, education and schools, adult social care, children's services, benefits etc.)



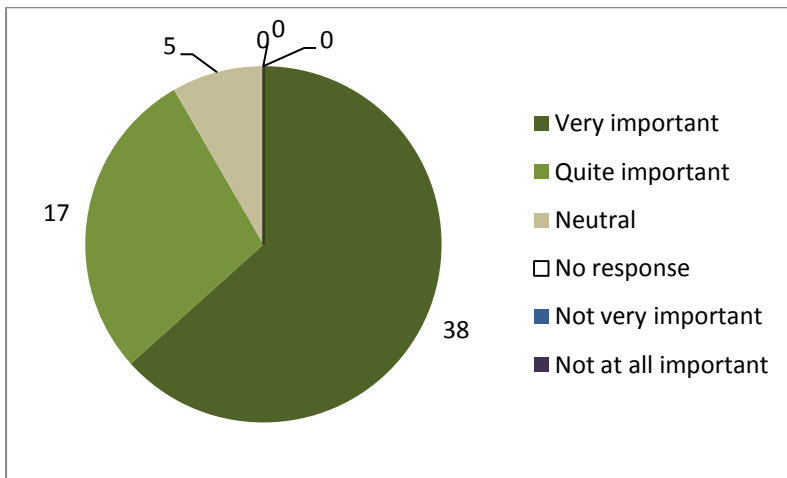
Q.12. Consultancy for groups around legal stuff like insurance, finances, trustees and constitutions etc.



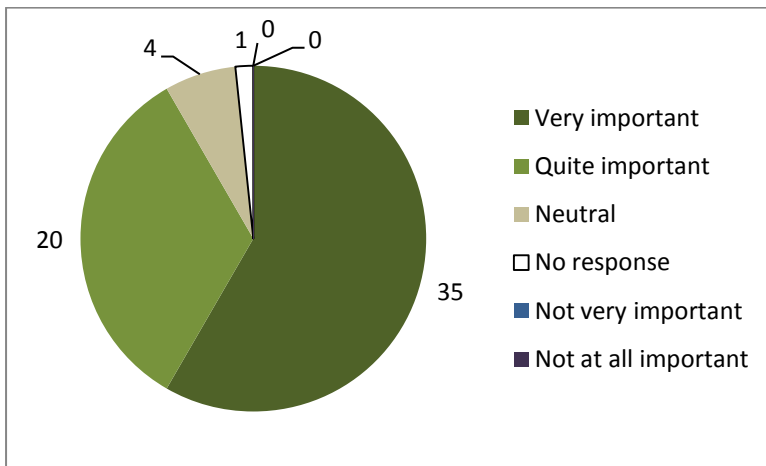
Q.13. Fundraising



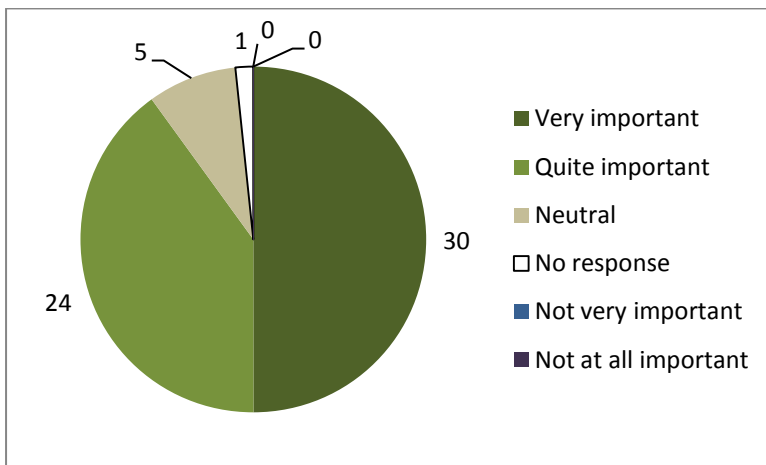
Q.14 Providing small grants to groups in need



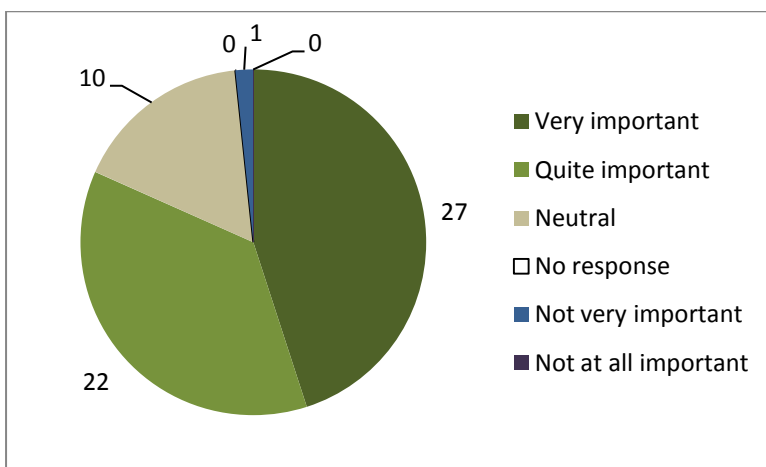
Q.15 Helping groups get more members



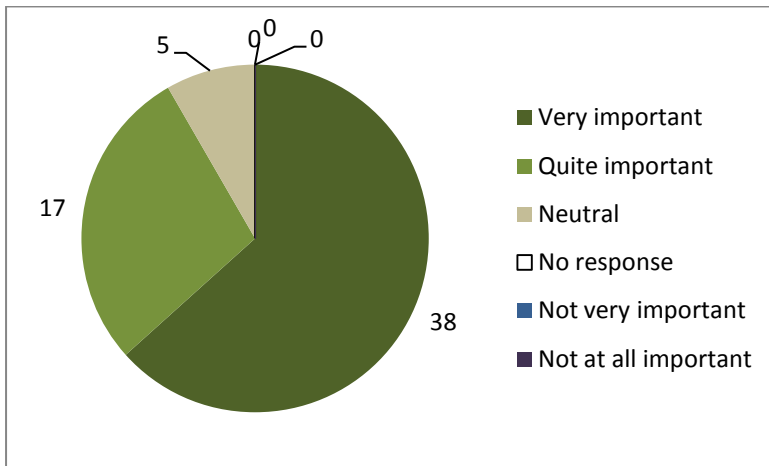
Q. 16 Campaigns



Q.17 Checking out public services and commercial firms to see how equal they really are



Q.18 Diversity-proofing service-providers and employers (e.g. shops, hotels, fitness-centres, child-care, you name it!) to make sure they welcome LGBT people and treat us equally



There is clearly strong support for all these functions, but we may say that the four key priorities appear to be:

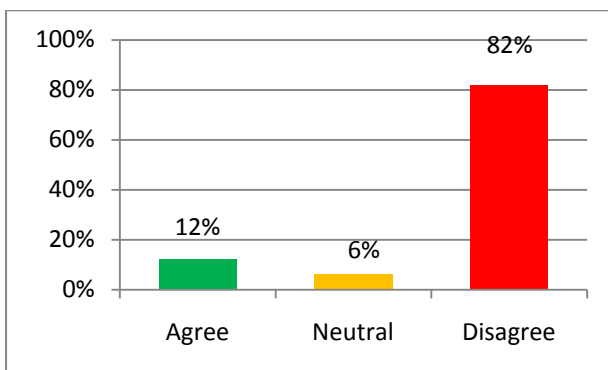
1. keeping the annual conferences going
2. keeping the Collectives going
3. helping LGBT people make their voices heard about public services, and
4. fundraising.

All these four got 97% support or better. The others received between 92% and 82% support.

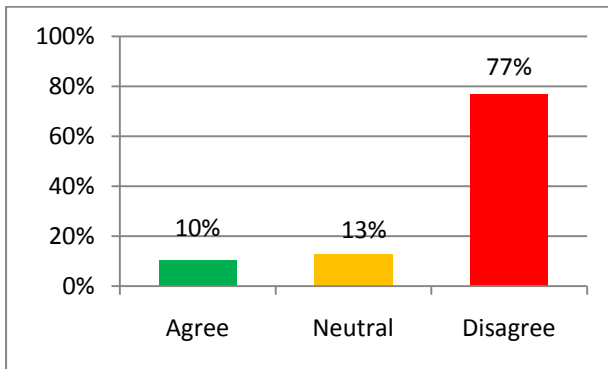
In the activities session we tried to get a sense of the current community gaps and needs, as these are perceived amongst these grassroots initiatives, who are between them in touch with a very considerable breadth of diverse LGBT individuals across the South West. Because we know there can be a very wide difference of views, particularly around issues that relate to community trust and confidence in public (and other) services, we were interested to see what degree of consensus any of the following questions might show.

The first questions are on the current level of isolation of LGBT people in the South West.

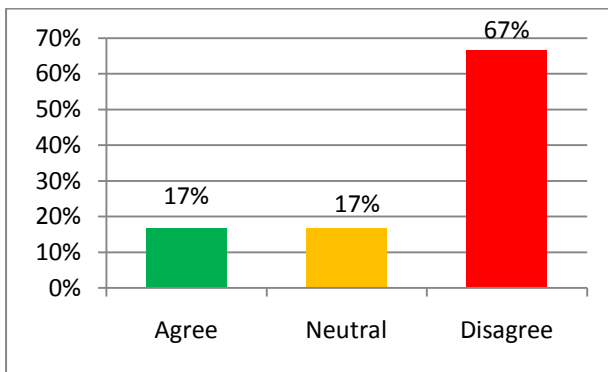
“I think social isolation is a thing of the past for LGBT people nowadays”



“I think there are very few LGBT people who still live mainly in the closet”



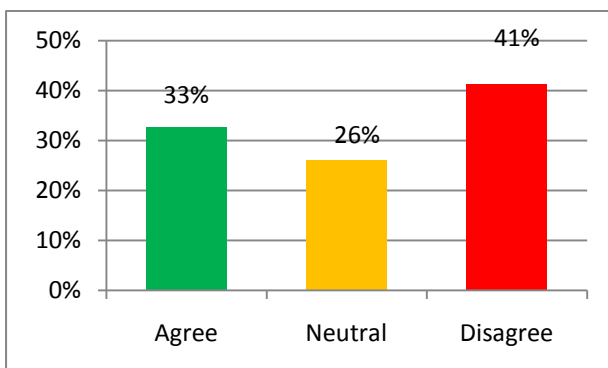
“I think there are very few of us nowadays who are living within an opposite-sex marriage”



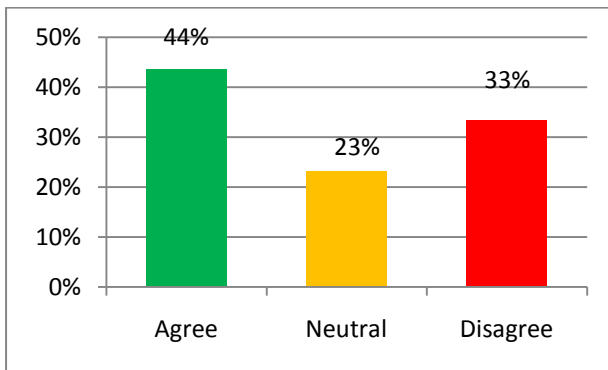
These answers suggest that there has been little change in the LGBT community profile on these issues since our 2006 survey, *A Firmer Foundation*.

The next group of questions were about trust and confidence in the national and local framework of protection from discrimination and prejudice.

“I think nowadays most of us trust the law to protect us against discrimination”

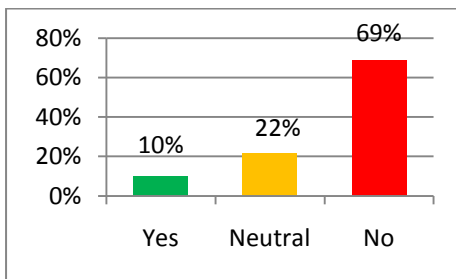


“I think nowadays most of us trust the law to protect us against phobic crime”

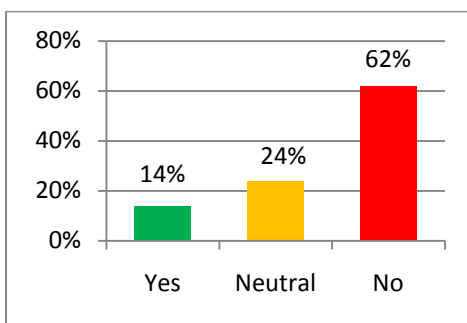


Compared with five years ago...

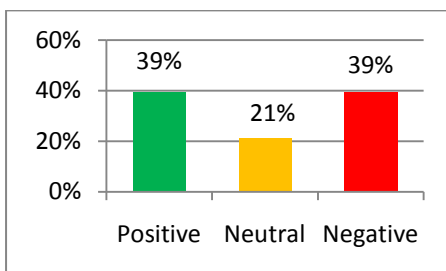
... do you feel more positive about central government's commitment to LGBT equality?



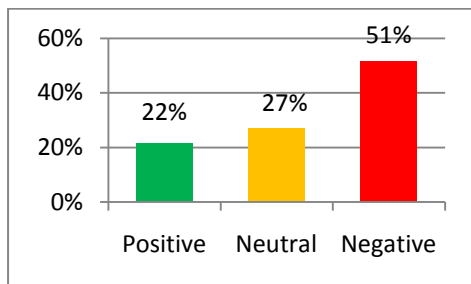
... Do you feel more confident about local government?



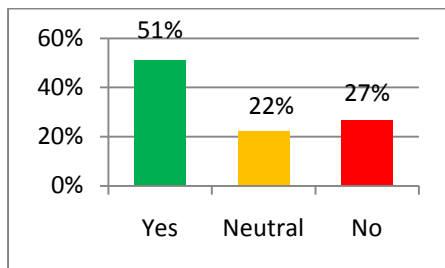
... Do you feel local schools in your area have made progress on LGBT issues?



... Do you feel more confident about services for older people?



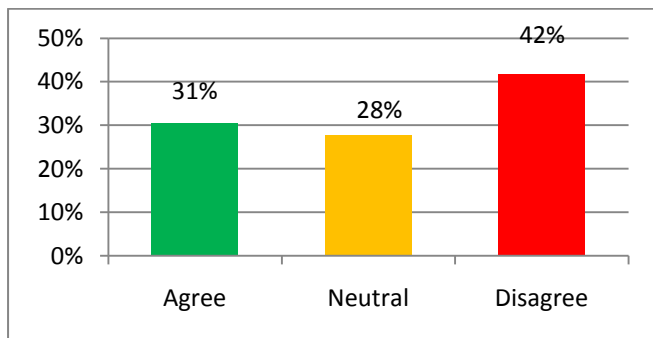
... Do you feel more confident about the police and Criminal Justice System?



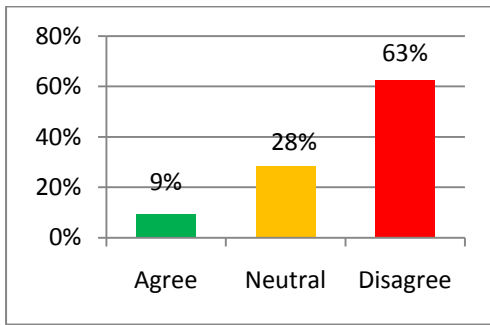
There is a remarkable contrast here between the change in people’s feelings about the police and CJS, and their attitudes to central and local government. Compared with the very similar questions we asked in *A Firmer Foundation* in 2005-6, there is no significant change in the rather dispiriting perceptions of government, but perceptions of the police have definitely changed for the better.

This improved confidence does not, however, carry over into whether people have confidence in reporting phobic crime to the police, or to a generic agency such as Citizens Advice (and this in spite of the fact that Citizens Advice have worked hard and often courageously over the last fifteen years to promote their services as being LGBT-friendly). It is clear that when it comes to asking for help and support, LGBT community resources continue to occupy the primary position in people’s minds.

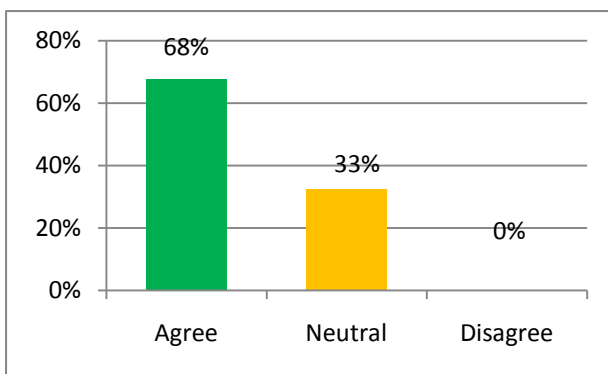
“I think nowadays most of us would report phobic crime direct to the police”



“I think when we need help against prejudice or discrimination most LGBT people nowadays would go to a generic resource like Citizens Advice”



“I think when we need help against prejudice or discrimination most LGBT people nowadays would go to a community-led resource like a Helpline”



4. Conclusions

There is a great deal of information in this consultation report that invites long-term analysis and consideration, particularly around strategic planning for the future.

However, it is immediately clear that the grassroots groups took the opportunity of this consultation to place on record an extremely high overall assessment of the actual work done by the Intercom community development team, and of the professional skills which they brought to this work.

Their work has also laid the foundation for future progress, by enabling the grassroots groups to work together with Intercom to identify the gaps and social needs of the LGBT communities in the South West.

Additionally, the evidence of these annual conferences, confirmed in this consultation and indeed across the entire conference, shows that the grassroots groups in the South West peninsula are strongly and positively engaged with each other, showing mutual respect and positive-mindedness across such divisions as gender, age, gender-identity, politics and lifestyle. These are the key divisions that have been in the past, and still are in other parts of the UK, sometimes a source of regrettable community tensions, exclusion or discord.

Finally, the fact that nearly 100 grassroots groups are now working together and looking to Intercom as a secure source of infrastructure support for independent LGBT community action across the whole peninsula, and increasingly further afield, is evidence of the success of the community development team in being community-responsive, and developing widespread trust and confidence in Intercom's positive, inclusive approach, professional skills, and commitment to communal progress and positive relations.

These facts need to be singled out and recognised as two other major achievements by the community development team, Paul Roberts and Vicky Worthington, over the last three years.

We now have strong evidence of success, and detailed evidence to back the quest for new funding to enable Intercom to continue and expand these services, responding to the grassroots groups' own identification of the local gaps and the community priorities for the future.