

Support for LGBT Groups – Say what you want



2009 Survey

Purpose of Survey

1. To provide evaluation of Intercom's community development services to funder (BASIS)
2. To present evidence for case for future funding bids/ commissioning arrangements
3. To provide LGBT groups with an opportunity to own the evaluation, shape its recommendations and share ownership of Intercom's development plan
4. To raise awareness of the support Intercom offers
5. To hear the opinions of groups less often heard from

Summative findings:

Intercom identified 10 key learning objectives (L.O.s) for the survey, and the findings are summarized under those 10 L.O. headings below:

L.O.1 How is the quality & manner of service delivery perceived? (Ref: Questions 3.1, 3.2, 5.3)

The reaction to Intercom's service is highly positive. 92% of respondents selected to describe the service as helpful and over 80% said that Intercom had achieved its aspirations across the board to be seen as responsive and user-friendly (with the exception of disability access). See the analysis of Question 3.2 for the full list of terms which respondents felt described their experience of the service.

40% of respondents who had used Intercom's community development service felt nothing was needed to improve it. 50% offered helpful ideas for enhancements to the service, most of which reflected either the need to find strategic means for

widening and deepening the impact of existing services further, or, lack of awareness of existing services. (See L.O.10) With the exception of very few comments (see Appendix Q 3.2), the feedback shows that groups have a very positive experience of service delivery from Intercom.

Collective meetings were seen as fairly or highly effective by the majority of respondents groups that had attended. However, 44% had never attended a meeting, and work is needed to increase participation. One suggestion indicated this could be addressed by making membership an active opt-in, as opposed to a default. Elsewhere this report also advocates making personal contact annually with groups. Such contact could be an opportunity to boost understanding and buy-in to the initiative.

The Devon Collective's analysis of the research findings was that the purpose of the Collective as a means for collective strategic campaigning was not yet clearly enough understood, and that 'sharper' branding was needed. They acknowledged that whilst this first year has been about formation, Lead Officers still need support to understand their role better and do more outreach and consultation.

L.O.2 How responsive has Intercom been to community needs? & L.O.3 How aware are groups of the Community Development services Intercom offers?

(Ref: Questions 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 5.1, 6.1)

In the light of the findings it is sensible to review these two learning objectives together, as it is clear that lack of awareness about the full compliment of services Intercom offers, currently limits its ability to be totally responsive to need. However, it is important to note that Intercom has reached the majority of groups and provided them with effective services (just not as many services as they could have benefitted from):-

Intercom has provided support from its community development services menu to 70% of respondent groups.

35% of respondent groups have been running for the last 5 years – co-incidental with the time over which Intercom has been developing its community development service – and 32.5% have been running for less than 12 months. Intercom has helped 30% of respondents to establish their groups.

Of those groups that have *not* yet used *any* support from Intercom, most were not fully aware of the services available and said they would be contacting Intercom to take up support as a result of what they had learnt from the survey (ref Q4.1). Several of the groups who *had* used Intercom's help were nonetheless unaware of other aspects of its service to groups.

The order of demand for services provided by Intercom, and degree to which they have been taken up is as follows:-

Type of service	Demand (% of total respondents)	Uptake (% of total respondents)	Awareness of service (% of total respondents)	Uptake as % of demand
Networking with other LGBT groups	65 %	55 %	90 %	85 %
Promoting your group	56 %	55 %	87 %	98 %
Setting up a new group	55 %	30 %	75 %	60 %
Help with fundraising	53 %	25 %	60 %	47 %
Advice on management committees	53 %	33 %	77 %	62 %
Help with organizing events	45 %	23 %	70 %	51 %
Training	40 %	10 %	62 %	25 %
Designing publicity	38 %	20 %	62 %	53 %
Help to establish relationships with public authorities	38 %	13 %	75 %	34 %

This table reveals that Intercom has been highly effective in matching demand with uptake for:

- promoting groups
- networking groups.

The three delivery areas for which uptake (and awareness) is less than 50% of demand are:

- Fundraising/ achieving sustainability
- Training
- Establishing links with local authorities

This report recommends that each time a group makes contact with Intercom, they are reminded of the wider menu of support available. The report suggests using more effective newsletter campaigns and case-studies to generate awareness of what is on offer, and also advises better use of case-by-case evaluation of delivery against client expectations to maximize performance.

The groups which *have* taken advantage of Intercom’s services, have on average used 4 different types of support - each - from Intercom’s menu of 9 community development services. Satisfaction with the services used was high, especially with respect to:

- establishing links with local authorities
- networking
- organizing events
- publicity design
- advice to management committees.

The two areas requiring most attention in order to ensure that beneficiaries' needs are satisfied totally (rather than partially) are:

- Fundraising
- Training

In addition, groups reported they were well aware of the functions of the Collective and the Gateway, although only 45% saw the Collective as a means for stimulating action on their concerns. A few were confused about the distinction between the Gateway and the Collective. The report recommends that the Collective needs to prioritize achieving and publicizing a few 'quick wins' in order to improve that perception. It also suggests pro-actively offering telephone based coaching on how to use the Gateway.

L.O.4 What is the impact of the Community Development services on real people's lives?

(Ref: Questions 3.3 & 3.4)

Groups highlighted the following key impacts which its work has had for them:

- Better public visibility for groups
- Strengthened governance
- LGBT community's cohesion
- Confidence among groups
- More secure funding
- Better relationships with external agencies

The groups also described the knock-on effects of Intercom's support to them for their beneficiaries. Examples of their quotes are listed under Q3.4 in this report, and the benefits they described fall under the following headings:

- Cohesion - Community solidarity and security
- Enabling services to be there for clients to use
- Extended reach to isolated users
- Improved client referral between groups – more holistic support
- Empowerment through better access to information
- Help to cope with press attention

L.O.5 What gaps exist in the community development service?

(Ref. Questions 3.1 & 4.3)

36% of the respondents who had had experience of using Intercom's support offered advice on areas where the service could be strengthened.

Whilst Intercom offers some help to groups in securing funding, comments were made by groups at various points in the survey to indicate that more strategic work was needed from Intercom to secure financial stability for groups.

Dorset is the area with the largest number of groups, and it was suggested that more Collective meetings could be held around the county.

Some groups also expressed the need for increased work with older LGBT people, and with the bi-sexual community.

It was also recommended that strategic work could be done to enable groups to offer peer support, and especially at times of change in groups' key personnel.

Suggestions were made for improving the recognition groups receive from local referral agencies, including the possibility that some forms of accreditation might help.

L.O.6 How do groups find out about the community development service?

(Ref: Questions: 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.2)

The majority of groups (67.5%) were established in the last 5 years (the same time for which Intercom's community development service has been active). There has been significant growth of groups in the last 12 months (during which time the Collective initiatives have been developed).

In the main, groups find out about Intercom's services from each other, and via Intercom's own communications and publicity outlets in the region. The internet appears to be directing a growing number of people to Intercom. By contrast, advertising in the LGBT press has had little effect.

As mentioned earlier, there is a need for Intercom to do more to make sure groups are better aware of the full breadth of services available; Many of the groups who have said they were unaware of all its services had nonetheless had a relationship with Intercom for quite some time. The research indicates that improving awareness of the full menu of services among those groups who *do* use Intercom's help, should also – by word of mouth - improve awareness among groups who have not yet taken up the service.

L.O.7 Barriers between the service and target groups.

(Ref: Questions 2.4, 3.1, 4.2, 5.3, 5.4)

In a few cases, the key barrier to uptake of services was lack of capacity among groups to reach out and ask for help or be proactive in making arrangements. This suggests that phone contact with groups to offer support may be helpful to discover and engage with those groups who need community development support the most.

As identified earlier, a barrier to service uptake that can be addressed relatively easily is lack of awareness of the full menu of support available to groups.

The requests from respondents for strengthened involvement with bi-sexual and older people indicates that proactive work may be needed to stimulate wider creation of these groups. Intercom's research and case-work will provide insight into the reasons why they are less likely to form autonomously and should indicate whether further investigation is needed to ascertain the best form of proactive work to stimulate creation of local support.

E-communication issues (spamming, out of date contact details) and the fact that people running groups are very busy, present barriers to participation. The report suggests this could possibly be addressed by communications that are quicker to read, and that catch the eye immediately without having to open an attachment, and are addressed to individuals by name. Piloting new forms of communication and trialing use of phone calls to keep a personal contact would help reveal what works best for groups. One group's comments also indicated that groups are more likely to feel affinity with a communication and read it, if they feel they have decidedly opted in to being part of a communications network.

Some groups had not recognized that they were eligible for support or that it would be relevant to their group. This could be addressed to some degree by helping well-established groups focus on the idea that using community development services is a way to reinforce their strength and to deal more easily with the additional governance requirements that come upon them as they grow (and that they may not be aware of).

Comments revealed that some groups need input to start using the Gateway (either because of lack of IT confidence, or because of being too busy to explore it without a prompt). It was also noted that stimulating wider use of the Gateway (training) and providing daily responses to posted messages will make it more effective and more attractive to use.

The key barrier to participation in Collective meetings is time (and to some degree location). The report recommends holding Collective meetings at the same time as an incentive, such as training, peer support surgeries or the chance to meet funders. It also suggests investigating groups' capacity to use alternative forms of conferencing such as telephony or internet based methods. Prioritizing Collective action on areas identified by the respondents (see Q 5.2) – and publicizing the clear sense of impact and purpose achieved with a few 'quick wins' - will also improve participation.

L.O.8 How can isolated/ 'hard to hit' groups/individuals be reached better?

(Ref: Questions 2.2, 7.1, 7.2)

Many of the groups were unable to offer advice – finding this too big an issue to tackle. However 45% of the survey's respondents did offer advice, and although several of these responses simply consisted of encouragement to Intercom to carry on using the outreach mechanisms it already uses, a list of practical ideas also emerged from the feedback. A number of these ideas could be acted upon by Collective members. The majority however are ideas that Intercom should lead on as a regional body, not only to reach groups and potential group innovators in order to deliver community development support, but also to make sure that isolated individuals can better access the groups in their locality. See Q 7.1 for the list.

Groups also revealed who they would possibly have turned to for support if they had not known about Intercom (see Q 7.2). Their ideas suggest that some individuals who are unaware of Intercom might be approaching Local Authorities, Councils for Voluntary Service and a few other national and regional bodies for guidance. If this line of enquiry has not been exhausted, it may be prudent to explore how links (including web-based links) from such organization's help-lines and community development departments could yield better referral of groups to Intercom.

L.O.9 What is Intercom's mandate to continue delivering community development services and projects?

(Ref: Questions 5.2, 7.2, 7.3)

Intercom is clearly doing a lot to meet community development demand for this fast-growing part of the community sector. According to this survey, its particular impact has been in helping groups achieve a sense of confidence, visibility and a growing cohesion among the LGBT community.

The survey asked where else groups might find community development support, and 42% of groups could think of no other organization they would wish to approach. The remaining respondents offered no consensus about an alternative source of help, and whilst some suggested organizations such as local authorities and councils for voluntary service as possible alternatives, several respondents offered these suggestions reluctantly, commenting that Intercom's service is easier to access and more user friendly for LGBT groups. One respondent recommended that Intercom makes it better known what it offers to groups over and above a CVS.

It is evident that a lot of effort is needed to achieve the level of community development delivery that Intercom has already provided to groups, and that what has been done would not have been possible without Intercom's clearly strong, trusted and long-established relationships with groups in the region. This indicates that other community development organizations would be at a disadvantage in seeking to support LGBT groups. By contrast Intercom has trust and visibility

among the LGBT community, and its person to person relationship with LGBT individuals and groups is the vehicle for achieving uptake of community development services. It is in an unrivalled position to increase that uptake.

The broad spectrum of concerns and interests among LGBT groups, as highlighted by the array of priorities for the Collective to address, indicates there is a real need for a respected facilitator to bring these diverse voices into a chorus; The voices of groups and their various needs - all of which are of key importance for the groups concerned - can easily be lost in a wider world of funding constraints and other priorities if they speak alone. A regional initiative such as the Collective provides a means for these diverse voices to offer each other support, put weight behind shared concerns, and raise awareness of their collective value to community cohesion. Intercom clearly has respect among LGBT groups, and so is well placed as a facilitating agency. To continue to maintain its mandate it will need to focus efforts on helping the members achieve some clear strategic results from the list put forward by the survey respondents.

At the end of the survey 33 respondents left messages for funders. The majority of these made it clear that Intercom's mandate is based on its position as an essential service, depended upon by LGBT groups. Some made it clear that they would not exist without Intercom's community development support and gave the stark warning that if they were without that support, beneficiaries lives would be at risk.

A few groups did not specifically refer to Intercom's work in their response to funders and expressed a more general concern that however it was arranged, support was needed to sustain groups at the local level. Funding security is a priority for them, and there is clearly demand for help with securing funding by both offering support to individual groups, and by developing a strategic plan for the sustainability of the LGBT groups across the region.

A couple of groups' comments indicated that Intercom's mandate could be visibly strengthened further if there was a mechanism for groups to clearly sign up to membership of the Collective and to affiliation with Intercom.

Respondents' comments to funders can be found in Appendix Q7.2. The following is an example:

Intercom is a fantastic support service for the LGBT community across the SW. They provide guidance & resources to smaller local groups & service providers that would otherwise be left to fend for ourselves with little / no support from local councils & authorities. In the time we've been engaged with them, they've helped us to network with other groups both locally & across the region, publicize events & initiatives to the regional network & also provided advice on everything from developing proposals to training Trustees. All-in-all an invaluable resource!!

L.O.10 How groups want the CD service developed

(Ref: All questions in survey)

The survey elicited many individual ideas for service improvements from the respondents. Each suggestion merits review, and together, the feedback as a whole indicates actions to help prioritize and direct the future development of the service.

Recommended actions are listed in grey boxes, and can be found within the analysis in the main body of the report.

The actions recommended by the respondents are listed within the analysis and summarized in the grey boxes. In addition, the grey boxes also contain some actions proposed by the consultant in the light of the survey analysis.

The key action themes that emerge from the report are:

- a. Establish wider awareness among groups and among potential group innovators of the full menu of community development support Intercom provides
- b. Improve qualitative performance monitoring of community development delivery to get quicker direct feedback
- c. Provide case studies to show other groups how community development services help
- d. Focus more effort on delivering help with securing funding to the LGBT sector (strategically across groups and to individual groups)
- e. Proactively support groups who are struggling with time/capacity to take advantage of help.
- f. Increase use of the Gateway – with training at group sessions or with one-to-one phone sessions
- g. Trial incentives for increasing participation at Collective meetings, and virtual meeting methods. Consider how additional funding could support this.
- h. Develop and refine e-communication mechanisms
- i. Keep contact annually by phone
- j. Develop catalyst work with older and bi-sexual group innovators
- k. Use Collective to strengthen peer resource sharing among groups in a systematic way
- l. Continue to build stronger links between groups and public bodies – for funding purposes and to enable better referrals
- m. Prioritize and publicize some ‘quick wins’ for Collective action - and build momentum

- n. Develop an action plan for the Collective encompassing diversity of concerns
- o. Create a simple mechanism by which groups affirm they wish to opt in to membership of the Collective, (and have the option to opt out of contact lists).
- p. Explore outreach suggestions provided by groups
- q. Strengthen collaboration with CVSs
- r. Carry on doing what you are already doing!

Who did we hear from?

This survey attracted 40 responses (33 complete – i.e. some non-compulsory questions were skipped). In addition some reflection on the initial findings was provided by the winter meeting of the Devon Collective.

The survey was conducted by Sam Magne, an independent consultant contracted by Intercom, working under a confidentiality agreement with them. The consultant was hired to develop and deliver the survey in order to ensure groups could speak freely and anonymously. The survey responses' raw data containing contact information has *not* been provided to Intercom and will be destroyed by the consultant once the contract is signed off with the client. Respondents' anonymous feedback can be seen in full in the Appendices.

The survey was developed first with Intercom's community development staff and then with the helpful assistance of 3 pilot groups, who honed the questions and the format.

The survey attempted to reach all of the groups on Intercom's contact list of 89 groups. It emerged that 74 of these had working email addresses (several of which had changed), and 58 could be reached by phone; 81 groups in all were contactable. The consultant made several rounds of email and phone reminders of the invitation to take part in the survey, and by the time the survey was closed, it had successfully attracted a 50% response rate. To minimize cost and maximize opportunity to respond, the survey was internet based, with the option to take the survey over the phone (which 5 of the groups did). Many thanks to all those who took the time to respond and share their insight.

Summary of Results by Survey Questions

Section 1: Respondents' operational background

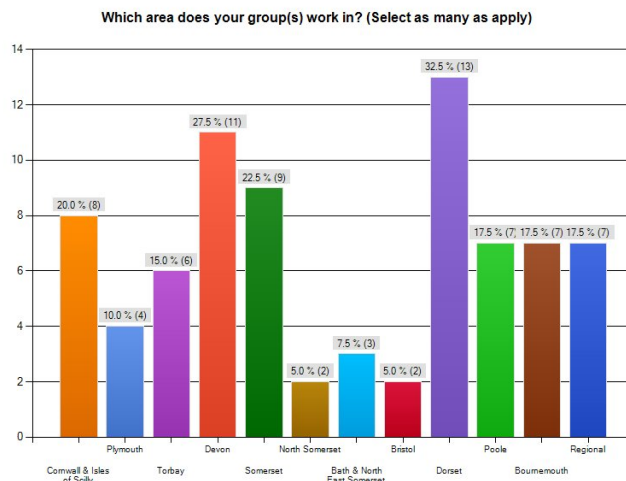
All respondents (40) replied to the questions within this section.



Q1.1 Which area does your group work in? The survey attracted responses from all the areas Intercom works in.

Clearly, many of the groups work in more than one area, across county boundaries. (Y axis is the no. of groups stating they work in a particular area).

According to the survey's 40 respondents, in 'old county' or 'sub-regional' terms, Dorset and its large urban neighbours has the highest activity score (27), followed by Devon (21), then Somerset and Bath (14), and finally Cornwall (8) and Bristol (2).



By contrast, the sub-regional distribution of activity according to Intercom's contact list of 89 groups, is as follows: Dorset (19), Devon (38), Somerset and Bath (10), Cornwall (12), Regional (7), National (3).

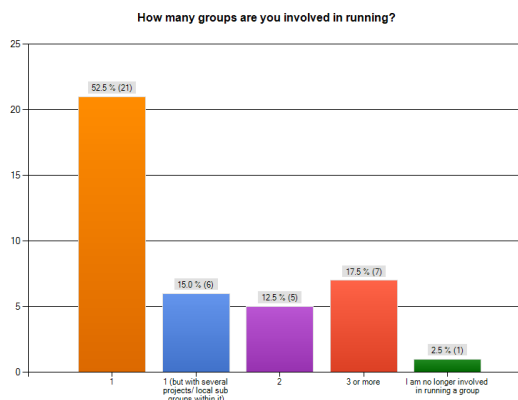
Action:

- With Collective, develop new contact list mapping where each group is working.
- Focus on development of groups in Cornwall and Somerset and relationships with Bristol groups.



Q1.2 How many groups are you involved in running?

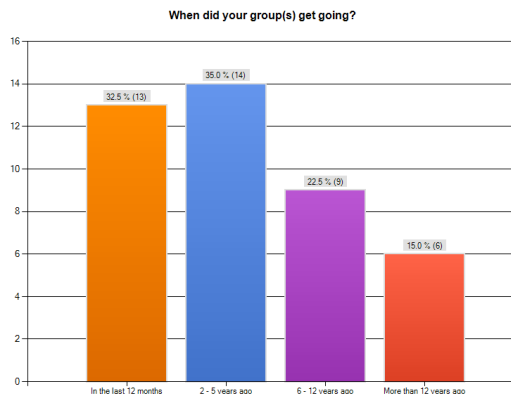
As indicated above, 45% of respondents are active in leading more than one group. This means that whilst we have heard from 40 respondents, they represent 58 or more groups. (No one respondent made multiple responses to the survey.)





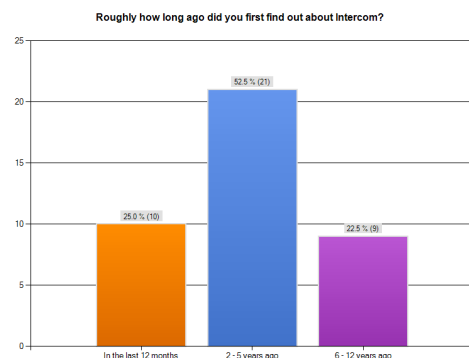
Q1.3 When did your group get going?

The majority of groups (67.5%) were established in the last 5 years with significant new activity in the last 12 months.



Q1.4 When did you first find out about Intercom?

The majority of respondent groups were established in the last 5 years – i.e. in the period that Intercom’s community development work has been funded.



According to the survey, and as shown in the table below:

- 47.5% of groups have known about Intercom for as long as they have been going
- 22.5% of groups already knew about Intercom well before they got going
- 30% of groups did not find out about Intercom until well after they had started. However, all but one of these latter groups had been established over 6 years ago i.e. before 2005 (Intercom’s Community Development work began in 1998, but funding for the Team began only in 2005 enabling a step change in activity).

How long ago a group got going (years)	Correlated to how long ago the group first found out about Intercom (years)	Respondents
2 – 5	Same period	9 (22.5%)
>12	Same period	7 (17.5%)
6 – 12	Same period	3 (7.5%)
2 – 5	6 – 12 i.e.Heard of Intercom before set up	4 (10%)
<1	2 – 5 i.e.Heard of Intercom before set up	4 (10%)
<1	6 – 12 i.e.Heard of Intercom before set up	1 (2.5%)
6 – 12	2 – 5 i.e Heard of Intercom later	5 (12.5%)
>12	2 – 5 i.e Heard of Intercom later	3 (7.5%)
>12	6 – 12 i.e Heard of Intercom later	1 (2.5%)
2 – 5	<1 i.e Heard of Intercom later	1 (2.5%)
6 – 12	<1 i.e Heard of Intercom later	1 (2.5%)
>12	<1 i.e Heard of Intercom later	1 (2.5%)



Q1.5 Has Intercom provided you with support for your group?

Intercom *has* provided support for 70 % of the respondents (28 groups).

Of the 30% of groups which had *not* received support from Intercom:

- 42% Had been set up long before discovering Intercom
- 33% Have known about Intercom for around as long as they have been running
- 25% Had known about Intercom since before they got going.

To find out more about these groups who had not used support from Intercom, and why, look at the responses to Section 4.

Section 2: Groups who *have* used Intercom support

28 of the respondent groups (70%) confirmed in Question 1.5 that they had received support from Intercom, and were eligible to respond to the following questions in section 2. Of these groups, 25 respondents gave feedback (- the 3 others reported technical difficulties with saving the on-line form.)



Q2.1. Here's a list of Intercom's community development services. Tell us which you were aware of, those you have used, and what you think of them (see Appendix Q2.1 for full results)

Of the types of support that groups were *well* aware of, the most popular uptake of support was for:

- **Promoting your group**
- **Networking with other LGBT groups**

By contrast, whilst 75% of respondents wanted help with **fundraising** – an issue raised several times by respondents as being an issue they really needed help with - only 60% knew Intercom could assist with this (even though they had been working with the community development team on other aspects of their needs).

In general, the majority of groups *were* aware of the array of community development support available. However, as the table below shows, there were nevertheless a significant number of groups who needed assistance but were not aware it was available and so had not yet asked Intercom for such help. The results show lack of service uptake is predominantly due to groups being unaware of the help available (also ref Q2.4):

Form of support	No. of groups who have needed it but not used it	No. of groups who did not know it was available
Setting up new group	0	3
Designing Publicity (leaflets /website)	3	9
Help organizing events	0	6
Advice on management committees	1	6
Help with fundraising	7	10
Training	6	7
Helping group establish relationships with public authorities	5	13

Action:
 Increase effort to ensure that when groups approach Intercom (or vice versa), they are alerted to the *full* menu of assistance available, and in particular for:

- fundraising
- establishing working relationships with public bodies

Even with those cases where groups had not known about the full menu of services available, cumulatively groups *did* access Intercom Community Development services on 115 counts (an average of 4 types of support from the menu per group).

Satisfaction with the services that they had used was high, as shown by the table below, and also in terms of the manner in which services are provided by the community development workers (see Q 3.2).

Respondents were asked whether the help they had received either totally or partially met their needs, or not at all:

Type of support	No. groups who said they asked for this help	Groups whose need was met totally	Groups whose need was met partially	Groups whose need was not met at all	Did not say
Setting up a new group	12	8 (66%)	4 (44%)	0	
Promoting your group	22	15 (68%)	7 (32%)	0	
Designing publicity	8	7 (88%)	1 (12%)	0	
Help with organizing events	11	9 (82%)	2 (18%)	0	
Advice on management committees	13	10 (77%)	3 (23%)	0	
Help with fundraising	10	5 (50%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	
Training	4	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	0	

Networking with other LGBT groups	22	16 (73%)	5 (23%)	0	1 (4%)
Helping your group establish relationships with public authorities	5	4 (80%)	0	0	1 (20%)

Note: Curiously, 4 groups sometimes gave comment on services which they had earlier indicated they had not used. These groups' responses have been eliminated in this table's analysis.

Action:

Review with Collective those services where impact has only partially met need on several occasions, and especially:

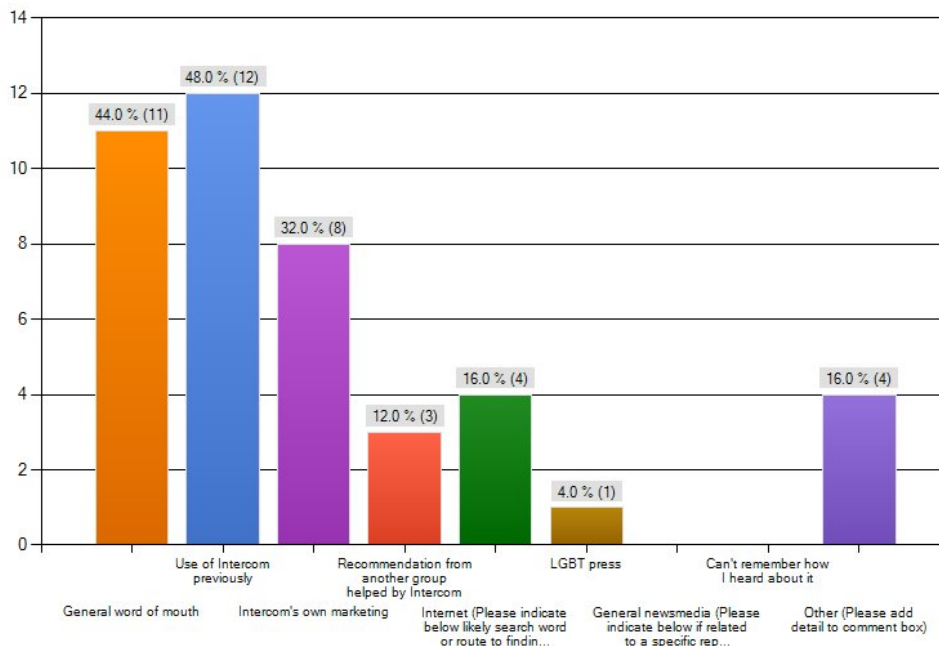
- group promotion
- fundraising
- networking.



Q2.2 How groups find out about Intercom's community development services.

Most groups find out about items from Intercom's menu of assistance because Intercom has made them aware of it whilst providing other assistance to them, or because of general word of mouth, or due to Intercom's own marketing. Whilst the internet appears to have had much less impact, inspection of respondents' additional comments shows that the surfing on the internet is having a similar result to Intercom's own marketing and, that publicity stalls at networking and pride events also helps a little. Advertising in the LGBT press appears to have had very limited effect.

How did you first find out about these Intercom community development services?
(Select as many as apply)



Action:

- Continue to attract groups to use services by reputation and by publicity in newsletters and at venues.
- When using LGBT press consider cost effectiveness
- Add to Intercom’s internet profile by placing case studies about its community development services up-front on the Intercom, Collective and Gateway websites.
- Enable the Collective website to come to users on a regular basis (rather than they to it) by inserting a subscribe button, inviting visitors to receive a regular e-newsletter (- Intercom’s, or, one ‘owned’ by the Collective). Use such e-news to flag up community development assistance and offer support to individuals who could establish new groups.



Q 2.3 What were groups looking for when they first approached Intercom? The issues that prompt most groups to approach Intercom are those that groups encounter when they are getting established (see table below).

Reasons for approach	No. of groups
General (support advice, understanding)	6 (24%)
Help setting up group	5 (20%)
Info about other groups or help with networking	3 (12%)
Promoting group	3 (12%)
Intercom made the first approach offering help	3 (12%)
Help securing funding	3 (12%)
Help dealing with the press	2 (8%)
Arranging charity status	1 (4%)
Advice on setting up generic and LGBT friendly group	1 (4%)
Can't remember	1 (4%)

Action:

Remind groups that development support is there not only for new groups, but also for groups that are well established.



Q 2.4 Why some groups who needed support didn't use it even though they knew it was available

4 groups reported there were some forms of support that they knew about - and needed - but had not taken up. Reasons given were:

- Decision to use skills of their user group or volunteer base
- Only just getting to the point of needing that help
- Not enough capacity (funding) to reach out for help

- Neither Intercom nor group has pushed on finalizing arrangements

Action:

Consider ringing all groups annually to talk about likely development needs in the year ahead, and to plan in relevant support.

Section 3: Impact of community development, & ways to enhance impact



Q3.1 & 3.5 Suggestions for enhancing the community development service.

40% of groups who had used Intercom's service said no improvements/developments were needed.

50% offered suggestions for strengthening the service, summarized as follows:

- Secure sustainable funding for groups (mentioned many times by respondents through the survey)
- Improve awareness of menu of community development support
- Strengthen community development work remit on strategic support for the LGBT voluntary sector
- Continue to develop publicity for all groups and to widen publicity about Intercom services such as its helplines
- More Collective meetings around Dorset (Q1.1 indicates group activity is highest there)
- Increase work with older LGBT people
- Increase work to support bi-sexual community
- Increase work with schools
- Facilitate cross-groups support, especially if a group leader leaves the area
- Establish data base of LGBT regional resources
- More interaction with groups – including visits
- Regular newsletter

The last response indicates that the newsletter that is regularly published by Intercom may be being treated as spam. It was notable that some groups had not received the emails from Intercom with notice of the survey. Some respondents also described having inundated inboxes, indicating that some don't have time to read lengthy newsletters.

The survey also uncovered a number of inaccuracies in the contact list, and hence some groups may be out of touch. The survey used a mechanism by which groups leaders were addressed by name in correspondence, and used

eye catching images. This is seen as good practice in marketing and may be a way of attracting more attention to the newsletter.

Action:

- Continue to widen publicity about the services, using case-studies
- Make funding advice, funding advocacy and strategic funding work much larger, and assist with grant applications
- Explore ways of working more closely with older and bi-sexual groups with the Collective
- Explore how Collective members could help make face to face contact with schools to effectively market training.
- Use Collective to provide cross-group support and help groups cope with changes in key players
- Investigate how Gateway can improve awareness of LGBT resources that exist among the region’s groups and infrastructure services.
- Use marketing tools (such as Constant Contact) to increase the effectiveness of Intercom’s newsletter.
- Update contact lists, and establish annual contact by phone or visit



Q3.2 Intercom aspires to be a responsive service. But how do groups describe their experience of it?

Groups who had used Intercom’s services were given a list of words and asked if these described Intercom’s service delivery to them.

Descriptive term	Yes	Partially	No
Accessible (in availability terms)	21 (84%)	3	
Accessible (in disability terms)	9 (36%)	7	6
Adaptable	21 (84%)	4	
Attentive	21 (84%)	4	
Competent	21 (84%)	4	
Easy to Understand	20 (80%)	3	1
Enabling	21 (84%)	3	
Helpful	23 (92%)	2	
Practical	21 (84%)	4	
Other (words put forward by respondents): Smiley, fun, empowering & supportive, fabulous, friendly, fantastic, personable, realistic, inspiring, approachable, service-user focused.	5		

The reaction to Intercom’s service is highly positive, with 92% of respondents saying it had been helpful and over 80% saying that Intercom had achieved its responsive aspirations.

The accessibility of the Intercom office is a known problem and one the organization would like to address. The Devon Collective meeting recommends further investigation of whether the perception of inaccessibility is about the office stairs/ layout solely. It may be prudent as a matter of good PR to highlight how the service aims to come to users - rather than requiring them to come to its offices - as its accessibility strategy.

In one instance, it was commented that an Intercom advisor had contradicted advice from another source in a manner that was felt to be a bit 'superior', and one other group felt Intercom's advice had not been easy to understand.

Action:

Enhance evaluation so that *each* piece of support offered to a group is used to help determine why approx 16% of groups find Intercom lives up to its aspirations partially (as opposed to totally), and to improve service

- Consider use of tools such as the 'Quick Evaluator' technique (ref Open Hearts Open Minds and add the service aspirations to its checklist of client expectations. http://www.sitesplus.co.uk/user_docs/118/File/6_Tools_for_collaborating.pdf),



Q3.3 How has Intercom's community development support helped organizations?

This was an open question and whilst responses were varied, the impacts that respondents described fall under the following broad headings:

How the assistance received has helped organizations	Groups who described this as the key outcome for their group
Better Public Visibility (Collective website; Publicity design; Advertising through newsletter)	11 (44%)
Strengthened Governance (Setting up a group, policies, constitutional matters, charitable status, trustee development)	9 (36%)
LGBT Community's Cohesion (Collective; Networking; Sharing knowledge and resources)	7 (28%)
Confidence	2 (8%)
More secure funding	2 (2%)
Better relationships with external agencies	1 (4%)



Q3.4 Knock-on benefits for individuals using groups

Respondents were asked - with an open question - to give *one* example of how Intercom's help to them as a group has had knock-on benefits for the individuals they support.

The intention of this question was to help paint a picture of the end benefit of the community development service. The comments given conveyed the common view that the service enabled groups to provide clients with a sense of belonging – to the their group, the wider LGBT community - reduced isolation and greater confidence. On analysis, the knock-on benefits for individuals can be broadly summarized under the following headings. (Sample comments are used to illustrate the headings. The percentages indicate the number of respondents whose comments relate to the headings. For all the comments given, see Appendix Q3.4)

Networking – community solidarity & security (28%)

- ☞ Intercom organised a Youth Lynx residential, where a number of LGBT youth groups got together - this gave young people a feeling of belonging to a wider community and gave them the opportunity to meet other LGBT people, plus a number of useful workshops were organized, such as sexual health.

Enabling groups to exist (- funding/ setting up) (24%)

- ☞ Simply: without Intercom's input our youth group simply would cease to exist. Their extensive knowledge of what works and what doesn't in youth group terms and the policy assistance means that our group is professional in its approach to young people, but also friendly and client focused.
- ☞ (Group which Intercom helped to get set up:) People coming to the group have said it has helped them to feel part of a community. It has raised confidence and broken down barriers. The double stigma of marginalized sexuality and mental health is hard to overcome. The group has been a great support to people feeling they are not alone. There is a feeling of solidarity that exists within the group.

Reaching isolated users (16%)

- ☞ We are getting an increasing number of isolated individuals accessing the group and this has been vastly helped by Intercom's assistance in advertising and promoting the group.

Networking enabling client referral between groups (12%)

- ☞ Sometimes we have to really encourage young people to go to other services and because we've got to know other groups via Intercom it gives us and the young people confidence to use referral/ support mechanisms/ groups.

Information (8%)

- ☞ They've helped inform of events and other information that our users need, like legislation. Information is their biggest positive impact.

Press management (4%)

- ☞ They helped us protect individuals (by dealing with the press).

Section 4: Groups who have not used Intercom’s support:

At the end of section 1 30% of the survey respondents said they had never used Intercom’s community development services. They were therefore eligible to answer the questions here in section 4 (but were ineligible to answer questions in Sections 2 and 3, and were routed directly to section 4).



Qs 4.1 (& 4.2, 4.4) Here’s a list of Intercom’s community development services. Tell us which you were aware of, those that would have been helpful to you if you’d known about them, and those that would help you now.

30% (i.e. 12) of the respondents had not yet used Intercom services

It was clear that several of the groups who had not used Intercom’s service needed it, and subsequent to learning about the help available, 9 of the respondents (75%) said they would be contacting Intercom to take up support.

8 of the respondents have been going for over 2 years and have also known about Intercom for over 2 years - and yet have not asked for help. This indicates that even within a 2 year relationship, messages about Intercom’s community development services are not getting through to people effectively or quickly enough.

2 of the groups who said they *did* know of the support available and yet had not accessed it, noted they either didn’t know they were eligible to do so or hadn’t got themselves organized to ask.

As the table below shows, around half of the respondents to this section of the survey did not know about the full range of Intercom’s community development services (although a few more did know it could help them network), and there was very little awareness especially of Intercom’s training and management committee development services.

Type of support	No. of groups who have needed it now or in the past (out of 12 groups)	Groups unaware of it
Setting up new group	2	7
Promoting group	9	5
Designing publicity (leaflets/ websites)	8	6
Help with organizing events	5	6
Advice on management committees	3	7
Help with fundraising	7	6
Training	6	8
Networking with other LGBT groups	6	4
Linking in with public authorities	6	5

Action:

- Increase publicity about the distinct aspects of Intercom's community development services, (and about how groups have benefitted from them).
- Conduct consultation that looks specifically at how Intercom's communications with groups can be improved (some suggestions in action boxes below).
- Respond to groups requesting assistance (details of 2 groups are forwarded with this report. 7 other groups will contact Intercom)



Q 4.3 If your group has grown without support, what were the strengths that enabled you to do this?

9 respondents gave insight in response to this question (relevant comments from respondents to Q2.4 are also included here):

- Passion
- Experience of setting up another group
- Experience and expertise among Trustees and clients
- Ability to keep going
- Self-funding group
- Listening to and following demand
- Involving service users in service development (young people)
- Getting accredited recognition from Ofsted (via Connexions link)
- Getting recognition from local referral agencies

Action:

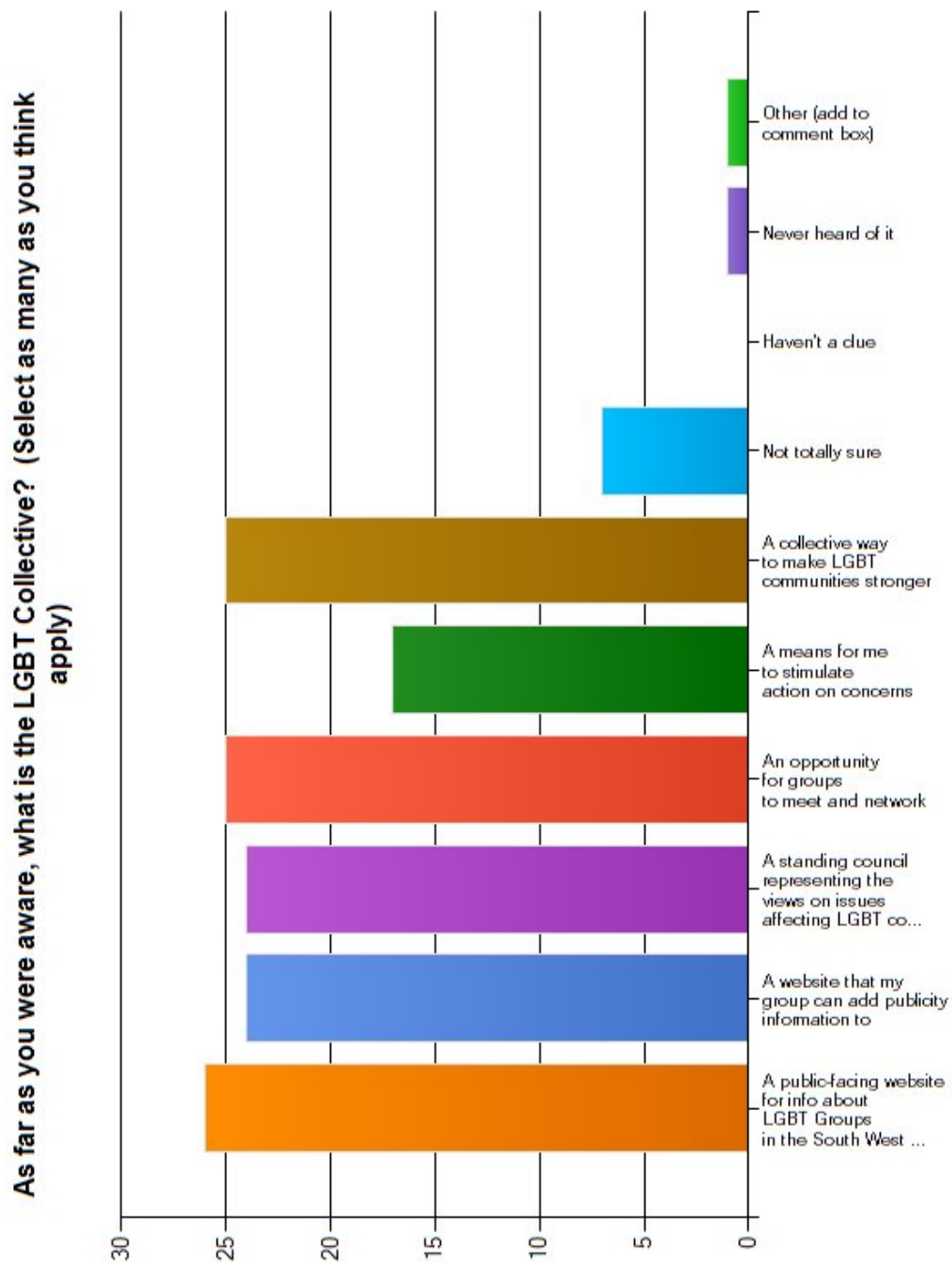
- Consider setting up peer advice surgeries during Collective sessions
- Consider using hypothetical or real case studies as topics for Collective sessions, in which groups work out what would help resolve a problem or develop capacity/ resources/ outreach in the case-study
- Consider how groups' public recognition can be enhanced by facilitating them with access to accrediting bodies
- Encourage groups to conduct skills-audits of their members so they ensure they uncover and make use of the skills available to them, in their own group or from peer groups

Section 5: The Collective



Q 5.1 As far as you were aware, what is the LGBT Collective?

Understanding of what the Collective is was fairly strong among most of the **38 respondents to this question**, with 63% - 68% recognizing its key functions. However only 45% stated they thought the Collective was a means for stimulating action on concerns.



2 respondents also chose to add further comment saying the Collective was a good model, and motivational.

Action:

Consider prioritizing strategic projects that will enable Collective participants to stimulate action on key concerns – quick wins.



Q 5.2 In your current understanding of the Collective, what are the priority issues you might like the Collective to address?

There was a broad spectrum of opinion, and little consensus in response to this question, reflecting the breadth of interests represented by the different groups. Of the 21 respondents to this question:

- 4 prioritized **sustainable income generation** for LGBT groups (including mergers)
- 3 prioritized **tackling homophobia**
- 2 prioritized **youth and education issues**

The remaining responses ranged across a number of other individual priorities:

- More networking for LGBTIQ youth groups
- Understanding of Trans issues
- Support for people who are coming out
- Support for older people
- HIV awareness in the Gay Community
- Growth of groups and service in South West
- Accessibility to groups
- Solidarity among the groups and collaboration
- Representation
- Enabling individuals to represent themselves at the Collective (rather than a group)
- Making sure groups have chosen/agreed to be ‘adopted’ by Intercom (raised also elsewhere in the survey by another group)
- Better publicity to individuals about the Collective, the Gateway and the groups
- Enabling groups to use the Gateway as a means of talking confidentially with each other.
- Keep website content and events up to date and correct – encourage groups to help with this
- Ensure Gateway is accessible to dial-up users

Action:

- Briefly debate the priorities listed above at Regional Collective and decide how to stimulate action on these priorities at county Collective level. Develop a programme for focusing on priorities in turn. Use evaluation of the factors enabling successful action on a priority, to build momentum for next priority.
- Incorporate these priorities into the development plan



Q 5.3. What's your experience of the way Collective meetings work?

Of the 36 respondents to this question:-

16 (44%) said they had never attended a Collective meeting (of which one thought the Collective was simply the login for a website)

12 (33%) thought they were fairly effective

5 (14%) said they were highly effective meetings

2 (6%) noted another member of their group had attended

1 (3%) felt they were ineffective



Q 5.4 If you have never attended a Collective event, please say why, and also say if anything would encourage/ tempt you to come

Of 14 respondents to this question:

- **6** said lack of time prevented attendance
- **3** said location was a problem (of which 1 offered their new residential training facility as a resource for collective members, another suggested moving county meetings around)
- **2** cited clash of commitments with other meetings
- **1** had forgotten a meeting, **1** didn't know about it, and **1** group had decided not to take part since the group did not see itself as having a campaigning role.

Action:

Encourage all groups to be represented at collective meetings, using the following suggestions put forward by respondents to this question:

- Make facilitation more focused
- Minimize paperwork
- Plan local activism at Collective sessions
- Monitor agreed actions in between meetings
- Achieve clarity about which groups want to be 'signed up' members of the Collective
- Publicize Collective's achievements – help groups get a strong picture of 'what's in it for them' if they attend
- Make communications to Collective members personal (address emails to a named person)

Barriers to attending were also highlighted and the nature of these indicate that alternative methods of conferencing may be needed, e.g.

- tagging meetings onto the back of training (n.b. setting offered above)
- using incentives to attend (meetings with funders?)
- using wider variety of locations in a County
- using internet, or telephony based methods of conferencing

Section 6: The Gateway



Q6.1. What is the Gateway?

Of 37 respondents, 26 (70%) knew that the Gateway was an intra-net for LGBT groups to communicate securely, 4 were unsure and 6 had never heard of it. 1 thought it was a supermarket. In some cases comments showed there was confusion about the distinction between the Gateway and the Collective websites. One consequence of this confusion is that some individuals have the impression that the Collective website is for use by groups only.



Q 6.2. What do you want from the Gateway - above and beyond the functionality it already offers?

36 people replied of which:

36% had never used it, and one respondent commented they were not sure if it was needed

19% were not sure what changes they wanted

19% were happy with it as is it

25% gave comments:

- Make a feed link between events info and newsletters
- Acknowledge that 1 in 5 of the target audience will be active users, the rest will be passive.
- Provide information further afield than SouthWest – keep abreast of national issues
- Make sure answers are given to questions that are posted (check for questions on a daily basis). The Gateway needs to be seen to be interactive – otherwise reputation of the service will be damaged
- Better publicity so that it is more relevant: I.e. several respondents said that they would like to see more active users.
- Ask groups first if they want to be involved
- One respondent offered to host the resource

Action:

- Investigate how Gateway can be administered daily
- Consider hosting offer
- Increase publicity about how the Gateway works including case-studies
- Improve clarity about the distinction between the Gateway and the Collective website
- Increase interactivity by pushing e-news linked to the Gateway out to named subscribers (as suggested earlier, using marketing tools)
- Invite e-news subscribers first, with secure automated subscription mechanism for e-news and for Gateway login

- Increase subscribers with e-news 'forward to a friend' function
- Add value, with e-news links to national picture stories
- Teach groups how to use the Gateway on the back of any other training, and/or, over the phone.

Section 7: Ensuring support is delivered where it's needed



Q 7.1. What's your advice about ways of reaching individuals who want to set up a group, but who don't yet know about Intercom and other peer groups who could support them?

15 respondents were unsure what to advise – one pointing out how big a subject outreach is.

Suggestions from 18 respondents offers encouragement for Intercom to carry on with outreach work that it is already doing, and includes some possible innovations:

- Mass mailing via Gaydar profile
- Approaching Groups on the Queer Youth Network website
- High profile advertising of a national LGBT service that will signpost people to Intercom
- Much higher profile for Intercom on on-line social networking platforms
- Improving search engine optimization for key LGBT words
- Use of mainstream media to advertise Intercom and reach people who are not out (e.g. TV, Radio, Newspapers, Women's magazines) using positive case-studies.
- Higher profile at non-LGBT locations to reach those who are not networked in any way
- Encouraging helplines to refer individuals to Intercom
- Intercom searching out groups and approaching them
- Word of mouth is best
- Making sure that the list of community development services Intercom provides is more widely advertised, showing it is like a CVS.
- Community mailing – big poster campaign in LGBT venues and in libraries
- LGBT networking events
- General encouragement for LGBT people to look for the support that exists
- Articles in LGBT press/ media
- Carry on doing what you are already doing!

Action:

Debate at Regional Collective:

- which of the suggestions listed above could be developed as useful innovations in outreach

- which of the suggestions Collective members themselves can act on, and set targets
- which actions Intercom already does and can do further work on



Q 7.2. If Intercom wasn't providing community development support to LGBT organisations, who else do you think you would approach if your group needed help?

33 respondents answered the question of which **14 said they could think of no-one other than Intercom.**

A further 21 comments were left providing a range of suggestions about who groups might turn to, but with 6 highlighting that these alternatives would be unlikely to provide the effective help that Intercom offers:-

5 said they would try approaching **Local Authorities or other public bodies** for community development support - Caveats were that finding their way through the system would be difficult, and that by contrast Intercom makes accessing support simple

4 said they would turn to **Councils for Voluntary Service**. 1 of these respondents said that Intercom need to make the case clear for what Intercom provides above and beyond a CVS, and another respondent said that Intercom would be seen as a far more friendly source of help to turn to than a generic service

3 said they would turn to **Equality South West**

2 suggested **Stonewall**, although concern was noted that it was not local and therefore might not be able to provide the help needed

2 respondents suggested **local businesses** might help

Other suggestions from individual respondents included:

- Connexions
- Healthy Schools Co-ordinator
- Internet (but unlikely to have survived with this only without Intercom)
- Over the Rainbow
- Gay Helpline
- Citizen's Advice Bureaux
- Age Concern
- Community Cafes

Action:

- Use the respondents' comments in Appendices Q 7.2 & 7.3 to evidence the case that Intercom provides an easy access and trusted source of community development assistance to LGBT groups, and that many groups would struggle to access help without it.
- Consider setting up an advice partnership with CVSs
- Improve referral from national LGBT infrastructure charities
- Discuss relationship with ESW at Collective



Q 7.3. Messages to funders.

33 comments were left for funders, the majority of which stated in various ways that Intercom provides an essential trusted service, depended upon by LGBT groups for a sense of strength and assistance with their growth;

The respondents' core opinion is that funders must not fail to increase investment in Intercom's Community Development work. Their reasoning is that it underpins and supports groups who are providing services that for many users are a life-line in very real terms – for example preventing despair, and even suicide. The majority of groups think their efforts to make Devon a more safe and inclusive place to be LGBT are far more effective due to their relationship with Intercom and the active backup, development and collective networking it provides.

Only 3 of the comments left were non-committal, but they were not negative either. (See Appendix Q7.3 for full comments). 6 comments did not refer back to Intercom's work but expressed a more general concern that community development support for LGBT groups should be provided in some way and that funding to the local level was essential. There were also 2 further comments suggesting that i) whilst Intercom's role is valued, it has assumed that LGBT groups want to be part of an unofficial 'membership' and that this should be checked out by giving groups a mechanism to opt out or in and ii) Intercom should focus on playing a strategic role in ensuring that each group's financial sustainability is achieved.

Action:

- Discuss at regional Collective how these messages (listed in Appendix Q7.3) should be incorporated in an Intercom development plan and put to funders.
- Review how becoming a 'member' of the Collective is activated – e.g. opt in or out mechanism.
- Plan strategic work to channel funding to local groups and achieve groups' financial sustainability