



Right Royal Get Together LGBT Networking Event

Report and Evaluation December 2005

Paul Roberts
Community Development Manager

The **intercom** Trust
PO Box 285, Exeter, EX4 3ZT
01392 201012

www.intercomtrust.org.uk
paul@intercomtrust.org.uk

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Introduction

In the mid-1990s a survey conducted by the pink press found that LGBT people regarded the South West peninsula as the second scariest place to be Out in Britain, and the third scariest in the United Kingdom as a whole. (The Borders were perceived as being marginally worse than the South West, and Northern Ireland was bottom of the poll).

Has anything changed in ten years? In respect of individuals, though there is definitely a visible increase in people's confidence about coming Out, there is still a strong and widespread anxiety about prejudice and discrimination—and some of the helpline-calls we take confirm that people are right to be wary.ⁱ But in respect of community awareness, and community development, there has been the beginning of a sea change.

Over the last eight years Intercom has been working to develop mutual trust and confidence across the spectrum of local LGBT community groups and projects across the South West peninsula, and to promote community development and local engagement in the real issues that affect LGBT people and communities. We have been in a strong position to monitor a process by which LGBT VCOs have become more confident in networking, more interested in looking at social outcomes such as active citizenship, and newly committed to shared aims around practical community development. Intercom has itself been part of that process. Eight years ago, the founders of the Trust agreed that to give the trust a name that actually included a word like “gay” would mean that no officer in a statutory agency would dare to be known to have spoken to us. And at the time it must be said we were right to be wary. All credit to the one police force (out of three) which instantly welcomed our existence; but on the other hand I have seen officers from other statutory (and voluntary) agencies display something close to panic when, in a meeting, they discovered what “Intercom” actually meant, and realised they were sitting across the table from someone who identified as LGB or T.

And so, looking back eight years, I realise it would once have been impossible to imagine this degree of growth amongst the LGBT community support groups. None of us envisaged there could ever be a conference which 45 LGBT voluntary and community groups would attend, and a further 25 would try to attend.ⁱⁱ This growth in confidence is partly due to positive messages sent out by central government during the last four years: the repeal of Section 28 and other discriminatory legislation, the equalisation of the age of consent, the introduction of qualified employment protection, and the introduction of civil partnerships.

However, such messages inevitably take years to have widescale effects across the diverse LGBT communities, which have been marginalised and oppressed over several centuries. We find many LGBT people in the peninsula are unaware of some of these changes, and far more who feel that—in respect of their own personal safety—these positive changes will

ⁱ We find that in general young people are more confident about coming Out, at least to parents if not usually to peers or in school, than they used to be, and young people are comparatively far more confident about coming Out than older people. However, there seems to be a pattern that suggests that young people are more likely than older people to come Out one step further than is in fact safe.

ⁱⁱ The 25 apologies were all related to frontline groups' lack of capacity.

take many years to affect the social environment around them, and make it less intimidating for themselves and others like them.

I am in no doubt that the success of the conference is mainly due to the commitment, vision and sheer hard work of local community members across the peninsula who have done so much to empower themselves and to develop their local communities. They have achieved an enormous amount.

And there is even more to do. Our Community Mapping Project in Spring 2004 showed that the existing voluntary and community sector in the peninsula was able to reach only one per cent of potential service-users.ⁱⁱⁱ The calls that we and our partner-agencies take on our helplines demonstrate all too painfully where the gaps are. Geographically, most of northern Cornwall, western and northern Devon, and western and northern Dorset make up one extended and dismaying gap in service-provision. Thematically, we can identify a worrying lack of community resources for gay men in Cornwall, for women in northern Devon, eastern Devon and Somerset, for young people in central Devon, northern and central Dorset, and almost all of Cornwall, and for trans people in particular in Cornwall. Finally, across the entire peninsula there are serious and urgent gaps in service-provision for older LGBT people, for bisexual men and women, and for LGBT people who are affected by crime, or who are in need of any form of advocacy against prejudice or against active or passive discrimination.

This conference was a tremendous achievement on the part of all who attended, all those who helped to make it happen, including our colleagues at GOSW, and those who facilitated or stewarded the event. I would like to single out for notice, and for thanks, my colleague Paul, who more than any other single person is responsible for not only its outcomes but for the fact that it happened at all. His commitment to dealing in advance with all potential barriers to participation made it a truly inclusive event; his organisational skill was tested in many respects during the set-up period, and came through undamaged; and his friendly and thoughtful chairing of the event itself created an unforgettably positive, flexible, and welcoming environment. An event that eight years ago we could never have imagined could ever take place ended with a unanimous request from the attenders that similar community-building events must now take place on an annual basis.

Michael Halls
*Executive Director
and co-founder
The Intercom Trust*

ⁱⁱⁱ This project, like our current infrastructure & community development work, was funded by central government through the Change Up infrastructure-development programme. We offer our respect and thanks to all those funding officers at Government Office for the South West who have provided us with such strong and committed support over these years.

Executive Summary

The first ever conference in the South West Peninsula of Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans community and voluntary sector groups and projects took place in September 2005. The overall aims of the conference were community-development, sharing best practice, community consultation, and enabling networking and strategic thinking across the communities.

There were at the time eighty-eight frontline groups and projects known to us across the peninsula, the majority of which had had no previous direct contact with any of the others.

The barriers to success included:

- the diversity and invisibility of the sector
- its reliance on the scarce voluntary hours of individuals many of whom have only limited control over their working hours
- the unsupportive local social environment in which both Intercom and these frontline groups function
- all the issues around privacy and Outing which affect LGBT people in the rural South West

If the event were to be successful it had therefore to be scrupulously inclusive, widely perceived as providing safe spaces for all, and responsive to individual and community needs.

Above all, it had to be perceived by attenders as worthwhile in itself. This meant there had to be extensive community consultation in advance, over many months, about the identification of community needs and desired outcomes.

Sixty-seven people attended, representing 45 of the 88 groups. A further 25 groups would have liked to attend but were unable to participate because of capacity limitations. Thirty-seven attenders were women, and thirty were men. 6 people were transgendered (4 women, 2 men).

Outcomes

1. There was a remarkable development of community awareness and community engagement during the weekend, which has significantly changed the environment within which the sector operates;
2. There was a suggestion from the floor, which was immediately supported by all frontline groups present, that a new community-owned Standing Council ought to be set up with representatives from the different parts of the LGBT voluntary and community sector, whose remit should be strategic community development across the peninsula and developing community resources. Intercom was asked to undertake to establish and administer this;
3. It was agreed, again *nem. con.*, that the frontline groups present felt that the peninsula (the old counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset) was a workable and self-defined geographical region appropriate for effective networking and strategic community development;
4. It was unanimously felt that the event needed to be repeated, possibly in a split format: one event which would be largely internal to the LGBT communities, though with outside input in specific areas, and another, more public, event oriented towards the

widest possible community, centring on raising public awareness and understanding of community needs, and raising community understanding of the statutory, commercial and voluntary sector environment in which we live and work.

5. Intercom's own community consultation conducted during the event showed strong backing for the idea of a community-owned secure intranet (working title: the Gateway Project) to which the frontline groups would have access, and to which they could turn for reliable and helpful information about common issues that affect communities and their members, good practice, and other shared resources. Intercom has commissioned a costed feasibility study of such a project.

Action points

It was agreed in the final plenary session that Intercom will bring these action points to future meetings of the proposed Standing Council and will take responsibility for ensuring they are acted on.

Plenary session action points

1. Intercom to facilitate the setting up of a new Standing Council along the lines indicated by the attenders, at which it will be a priority to start dealing effectively with the other action points below.
2. Intercom to investigate means of setting up the community intranet (the "Gateway Project")
3. Intercom to investigate means of repeating the event and extending it as requested by the attenders
4. There was a very strong feeling that funders in all sectors need to be challenged to demonstrate that they are providing funding fairly, without discrimination or prejudice, on a basis of need, and that they have understood and assessed fairly the needs of LGBT people and community-led frontline and infrastructure groups.

Workshop action points

5. The following serious gaps in services were identified:
 - appropriate social and support services for older LGBT people
 - safe dedicated social and support spaces for lesbians
 - social and support services for trans people
 - a support / befriending service for isolated LGBT people (e.g. at home, in care-homes, etc.)
 - the LGBT voluntary and community sector itself ought to be doing more to promote its own services
 - the LGBT voluntary and community sector needs to do more to raise community awareness of (e.g.) safer sex, legal and financial issues, discrimination issues
 - work is needed to make all schools safer and more positive environments for LGBT young people, and specifically to educate young people better about Trans awareness
 - service-providers need more training to enable them to recognise and deal with the discriminations that LGBT people encounter
 - public-service awareness raising on same-sex domestic violence issues
 - there should be more public community events (e.g. local Prides) to raise general public understanding, and to celebrate our communities

- there should be local community events to develop local communities and provide support services for individuals in the localities
 - there should be local events to which local service-providers can be invited to meet LGBT people and discuss / inform themselves of local LGBT community activities and of local community needs
 - the LGB frontline groups themselves, and also other service-providers, need more training on:
 - trans issues and the needs of trans people
 - same-sex domestic violence issues, and the extent of S-S DV within LGBT communities
 - there should be better information-sharing around homophobic bullying in schools, and better co-ordination of the work of those groups that are trying to combat homophobic bullying in the peninsula
 - young people, especially those who use public sex environments or the internet, need to be informed and empowered to protect themselves better against exploitation or abuse
 - the frontline groups need training on the criminal justice system, community-safety issues, and tactics for reducing homophobic and transphobic crime
 - more / better police liaison is needed
 - there should be a peninsular strategy on reducing hate-crime
 - more beds are needed for LGBT people in domestic violence refuges
 - Intercom should somehow re-establish its weekly Rainbow Café or some similar regular safe drop-in
 - there is a widespread need for local sustainable LGBT community centres across the peninsula
 - a database of potential Trustees for LGBT frontline groups
 - funding information packs, model policies etc. for frontline groups
6. Local helplines in the peninsula should work closely together, and (ideally) promote all their contact details on a single shared poster that could be widely distributed.
 7. There should be a database of LGBT-friendly businesses and service-providers
 8. There should be more public campaigns on the issues that affect the communities
 9. There should be an investigation of the extent to which the filters used by public-service internet terminals and other computers and networks block legitimate sites that LGBT people need to access
 10. There are serious issues of access to appropriate healthcare for:
 - older LGBT people
 - lesbians
 - trans people
 11. There needs to be improved networking between women's groups within the sector
 12. There needs to be improved networking between trans groups within the sector
 13. There need to be better dedicated advocacy resources to assist lesbians who are having difficulty in accessing public services on a basis of need.
 14. There needs to be a rural media and outreach strategy that will inform isolated LGBT people better about frontline group resources and help and information services.

Setup & Preparation

The idea of a community conference has long been a concept Intercom has wanted to develop in the far South-West. As part of the Change Up grant received from Government Office for the South West we were given the opportunity to implement this.

The inspiration behind such an event was to establish a platform for all LGBT groups and projects across the Peninsula to join forces to network, explore current issues facing the LGBT communities and give people the opportunity to learn more about each others work. It would also be a driving force for all the frontline groups, including Intercom, to establish current priority needs for our sector and where Intercom should be focussing its infrastructure development work.

In order for an event of this nature to be successful, we had to develop ways of making all arrangements accessible in ways that a conventional conference wouldn't necessarily need to consider. Highlighted below are several of the important factors:

Community Trust and Confidence

Intercom has worked hard over its eight years of operation to gain the trust and confidence of the frontline groups we support. The success of this event would be a product of the hard work put into this and would ultimately extend our positive working relationships with the groups. This meant not only organising an event that would be accessible, but something people felt they wanted to attend.

We recognise that the time frontline groups have available to participate in an event of this nature is very limited and that in order to see it as something worthwhile, they need to have confidence that something can be achieved from their attendance. In order to follow this principle we had to ensure the event was community-led from start to finish. We extensively consulted with the frontline groups as to their needs, wishes and desirables from the outset. We produced an initial consultation questionnaire that was sent out to all the groups on our database before planning the formal structure of the weekend, asking for their views on workshop topics, hopes for the event, even right down to evening entertainment. The questionnaire and the direct contact we had with groups made it clear that we were not trying to impose things onto groups that they didn't want. At this stage we ourselves had no concrete idea of what the structure of the weekend would turn out to be. This was definitely shaped by the results of the consultation exercise.

The overriding view from this consultation was to have an event that had a good balance of strategic discussion and also social interaction. Both of these things are extremely difficult to achieve normally due to the sheer distances the frontline groups cover geographically, and the fact that most groups rely on volunteers who have their own full-time jobs.

Barriers to Involvement

The diverse nature of the LGBT groups and projects based in the region meant that the factors we had to consider were not so much the standard economical factors (transport, accessibility of venue, language, etc), although these were still addressed. Instead, we had to consider more social, personal and emotional barriers that are important for many people in our communities.

Venue—being an LGBT exclusive event, any venue chosen to host the event had to have the right ‘feel’ about it. This meant not only ensuring the venue would be welcoming to an event of this nature, but also one that practices its written policies. After evaluating our options we opted to use one of the campuses of the University of Exeter. Intercom has a long-standing working relationship with the Student’s Union at the University and knows the university is proactive in its work around diversity, ensuring buildings are safe environments for everyone. This event was a celebration of what the LGBT communities in the far South West have achieved and can continue to achieve. Any venue had to be fully behind us on this issue. It would have been hypocritical and also alienating for representatives from the groups to be faced with an event that was hosted at a venue known to be hostile to these issues in any way.

Personal Identity—not all participants hoping to be at the event were ‘out’ and this was a serious consideration in all our planning. We knew that some people would not want to give out their personal details so all information given out to attenders was on the basis of first names only. It was an individual’s choice whether they gave out more than this. We felt this was a fair system so no one felt under any pressure to release their own personal details should they have not wanted to.

We also had an arrangement whereby those taking up overnight accommodation could opt to put down a false name for this purpose so the venue would not have any of their personal details.

Social space—as per the outcomes of the initial consultation exercise, it was important to give ‘safe space’ to particular groups within our communities (e.g. women’s, men’s, trans), allowing them the opportunity to socialise and discuss any particular issues they have.

It is interesting to note that despite having these spaces available during the social part of the event, as far as we could work out, they were not used. We would like to think this reflects the collaborative atmosphere created over the weekend by all the participants.

Attendance & travel costs—for the majority of those who help co-ordinate a local LGBT group, their involvement is entirely voluntarily. The implications of this were that giving up two days to attend the event would have been hard for some. We considered this factor and set aside a small amount of money for anyone who approached us and needed to cover lost earnings. We also offered groups who approached us the opportunity to reclaim a contribution to their travel costs.

Location of groups—another factor we wanted to take into account during our preparation was the location of the groups in relation to Exeter. For those on the outer periphery of our area, the journey to Exeter can be some two and a half hours. We tried to ensure that the event was just as accessible to them with its timings as it was to those close by. We took the decision to hold the event over 24 hours but spread this over two days, with day one starting at 2pm and day two finishing at 2pm. This gave everyone the chance to depart and arrive back to their homes at a reasonable hour.

What’s in a Name?

Another consideration for any organisation organising an event is what to call it. We had made the conscious decision that we didn’t want to put people off the event by giving it a stuffy title. In the end we decided to call it the Right Royal Get Together because it had an air of fun about it and was more about bringing people together to network than trying to bore them for 24 hours!

What we were looking for...

There were two factors for us to consider when planning the event: what we wanted those attending to take away with them & what we wanted to take away. A lot of time was spent trying to get an effective balance of these two factors and we believe this was reflected over the weekend!

What we wanted those attending to take away

There hasn't been an event in the past where LGBT groups from across the whole Peninsula have been given the opportunity to come together and have the opportunity to meet and discuss LGBT specific issues. We wanted to ensure everyone was given a chance to raise the issues they were bringing along with them from their group, so we tried to develop a broad range of activities over the two days, both strategic and social.

There are times when groups can feel like they are the only LGBT group around and this can be extremely isolating. We wanted to bring the groups together and show them all that although there might not be a comprehensive provision of services for *all* LGBT people across the region, what we do have we should be proud of having achieved. In the run up to the event, we had updated our regional map of LGBT organisations and were fairly stunned to see the growth in the number of groups since our mapping project just twelve months prior. At that point there were 67 identified LGBT groups, which included Student Unions. Now, we had 88 groups on our map, *not* including Student Unions. This is an extremely pleasing increase in numbers and we wanted to highlight this community achievement, and development, in provision.

Having worked hard at making the event community led, it was important to leave attenders with a sense of it being what they had wanted and expected so we left space within the structure of the event to add in a couple of extra workshops dependant on the needs of those turning up on the day. This would then give the opportunity to address some key issues that may have slipped the net during the consultation phase.

What we wanted from the event

As well as wanting to plan and organise an event that the groups would find worthwhile attending, and go away with a sense that it was successful, there were several points we were looking to address over the weekend.

Intercom is and always will be a community-led organisation so this event was the perfect opportunity for us to take stock of the community needs we have identified within our current work and reconcile these with the views of the groups attending.

It was also a great opportunity for us to consult the LGBT frontline groups around issues that directly affect them, such as the forms of support we are currently offer.

Conference Activities

We were delighted to see that out of approximately 88^{iv} frontline groups in the peninsula, 45 attended the weekend and 25 responded to our correspondence but had to send their apologies due to prior engagements. There were also 18 groups where we had no response to the varying information we sent out. These were mostly women's groups in the far West area^v.

In terms of actual numbers of attenders, there were 67 people at the event, with 30 of these male and 37 female. Within the LGBT sector there tends to be a greater number of gay men attending events than lesbians, so we were delighted with this outcome of numbers.

Welcome

All too often when you attend a conference the opening speeches can become rather tedious, so we were very conscious to keep this part of the event as short and as to the point as possible.

There were several key factors we needed to highlight during this part to ensure everyone present was happy with the arrangements and felt completely comfortable. As we had in the consultation, we raised the issue of people's privacy over the weekend. We were looking to take photos but were aware that not everyone would want to have their picture taken under these circumstances. We raised this issue and asked for a show of hands so we could ascertain where people stood on this issue. We were then able to take care in respecting people's wishes on this matter.

Workshops

Workshops formed a large part of the structure of the event and gave everyone a chance to engage in active debate around particular topics. The themes of the workshops derived from our initial consultation. We tried to keep as broad a range of topics on offer as possible and many of the workshops ran twice to accommodate everyone being able to attend those topics important to their group.

The following workshop titles took place during the weekend: (accounts from individual workshops can be found in the conclusion of this report)

1. Equality-The Legal Situation
2. Homophobic/transphobic crime
3. Outreach to Rural & Isolated People
4. Campaigning
5. Community Building
6. Formal structures for a group
7. Domestic Violence
8. Civil Partnerships

^{iv} The number of groups is approximate as this number tends to be fluid due to the nature of small community groups. The number was correct and the time of the event.

^v We have one central contact for women's groups in the far West who then disseminates our information to other smaller groups.

9. Bi-Ways of the South West
10. The Art of Me
11. Men's Sexual Health & other issues (Men and their Dicks!)
12. Dangerous Liaisons--cruising, etc
13. Dealing with Diversity
14. Homophobia in schools
15. Women's issues
16. Young people's issues
17. Trans issues
18. Older people's issues
19. Workplace Exploration--the Employment Equality Regs
20. What are the right priorities for us?
21. LGB & T? Should Trans be included?

The primary function of the workshops was to allow representatives from all the groups to participate in active debate and discussion around topics that meant something to them and their group. Many of those who attended the event don't get the opportunity to engage in this level of discussion around LGBT issues so it was vital to offer a broad range of topics that would appeal to everyone.

Another important function for the workshops from an Intercom perspective was to take this unique opportunity to consult with, and inform, the local communities on specific issues of concern such as community safety issues and same sex domestic violence.

When seeking workshop facilitators, we wanted to utilise the skills we had within our communities as much as possible and ask them to contribute to the event. Out of all the workshops only two were facilitated by someone who lives outside of the South West Peninsula^{vi}.

We tried wherever possible to pair up the workshop title with someone who had some form of experience in that area. We had discussions with each facilitator to allow them to lead the focus of each workshop title in the way they wanted to, rather than having conditions prescribed upon them. This led to much more relaxed workshops and useful information coming from them.

Food!

We recognise from our experience of attending conferences that some of the most productive times to make useful contacts are during coffee and meal breaks. With one of the key outcomes of the event to allow groups to network and learn about each others work, we carefully planned the refreshments and meal arrangements to maximise these opportunities.

On the Saturday evening we planned for a sit down evening meal, although we tried to make this as informal as possible. We arranged it so that those staying for dinner were free to choose their seating rather than creating a pre-arranged seating plan. This allowed people who might not normally have contact with each other the opportunity to share information across the region.

^{vi} We were extremely fortunate to have an expert in the field of homophobic bullying, and a friend of Intercom, who joined us for the weekend and facilitated these two workshops.

Community Awards

There are three people who have lived and worked in the region for many years who are widely recognised as having been key to making the far South West a safer and more accepting place for LGBT people. It was agreed that with the scale it was the perfect opportunity to give public recognition of this work.

During the evening meal Prudence & her partner Gay, and also Alan Crabbe were presented with glass plaques inscribed 'with love and thanks, LGBT Lynx South West 2005'.

This was an important event not only to recognise their contributions to the development of our communities over the years, but for everyone present to take stock of the achievements we have accomplished by working together in our different ways and to be proud to have such diversity in our region.

Concluding Plenary

At the end of the event, we took the opportunity to bring everyone together as a group one last time so we could evaluate the previous 24 hours and what needed to happen next. Rather than us firing even more questions at the groups, we wanted to open the floor to give them the opportunity to make any other points they didn't manage to make during the workshops.

The conclusion from these final discussions was that people were extremely keen to see an event of this nature take place again and for this to happen within the next 12 months. This would allow the momentum of the weekend to continue and hopefully allow the development of discussions and ideas from the event to flourish. When discussing what people would like to see happen if an event of this nature was to take place again, the resounding view was that ideally there should be two similar events, as follows:

Community-centred event—as this event had been, this should be a further opportunity for LGBT exclusive groups and projects to convene to discuss issues relevant to the work we are all doing. What people want to see within this though are workshops led by a variety of people and organisations, not just internally from our own communities. One solid example of this was to have the police come in to do a workshop so the communities could discuss strategies for being inclusive to our sector. The view of those attending was that having a regular event of this nature would help to create a stronger and more cohesive LGBT community.

LGBT-led event—this event would be an opportunity for the LGBT communities in the region to invite people outside the sector to engage in discussion and debate around the needs of our communities. People want this to be a chance to invite key business people in to talk about the work they are doing around diversity and an opportunity for us to ask them key questions on this topic. It was mentioned that we might be able to piggyback this type of event with other events already taking place in the region. We also discussed the idea of getting ethical sponsorship for an event of this nature in order to meet some of the set-up costs associated.

Another key conclusion from the plenary was the idea of establishing a Standing Council of LGBT groups and projects in the area. This would be a body of people made up from the range of LGBT groups who would decide current priorities and work strategically together towards these priorities. Those who made up the Standing Council would be voted in by the groups as a whole and would remain on the Council for a specified time. There would also be strict terms of reference to ensure those sitting on the Council were a fair representation of the types of groups in all localities of the far South West. This idea was proposed by one of the groups present and the idea was leapt upon because we all recognised that it can be difficult to get everyone together in one place on a regular basis. However, it could be fairly easy to gather an elected body of people together on a regular basis so we could effectively maintain the momentum between large-scale events.

Those attending agreed that this should be something that Intercom should host as it has the regional remit and is already providing support for the frontline groups.

This idea is something that Intercom is now going to take forward as of early 2006 along with the help of key volunteers and a list of people who attended the event and expressed an interest in helping with the set-up of this body. Further consultation will begin in January.

Conclusions

The event in itself was an invaluable opportunity for the groups and Intercom as an infrastructure organisation to enhance links and working relationships between our organisations.

Everyone who attended learnt so much about the different work that is taking place within the LGBT sector. The groups are now able to take this information to inform the members of their own groups. It also gave people the opportunity to establish their own local links and forge new partnerships.

Gateway Project:

Within the attendees packs we included a consultation sheet around the development of a secure website for the LGBT groups in the region that could provide key information to their work and would only be available to people with a password. We had already commissioned a feasibility study into how possible such a project would be and the cost implications associated with it. This revealed that it is something within the capabilities of Intercom's structure and the costs associated are sizeable but not unmanageable. We wanted to conduct this study before approaching the communities formally with a view to taking this project forward, so as not to raise their hopes up should the idea not be practicable.

The secure website would include information such as contacts for the groups, key contacts within statutory organisations (diversity officers, corporate equality officers, other relevant support organisations, etc), strategies for dealing with particular issues, some confidential community information, etc. The consultation document listed all the things we propose that should be on the website and asked people their views on this and whether they thought the concept would be something they want.

The resounding conclusion from this consultation was that this was definitely something the communities would like to see developed and would hopefully be a useful tool to developing a more cohesive and collaborative sector.

Workshop Evaluation:

With the workshops forming the major part of the event it is important to evaluate the key points from each of these and the ideas raised that can now be taken forward by both Intercom and the frontline groups (within the limits of current funding).

They have also given us a much better understanding of what the community needs are in terms of the localities and as a region. They also highlighted the pressures that are being placed on the frontline service deliverers to meet those needs.

After hearing from the frontline groups what their needs are, it is guiding us into developing our infrastructure services further. We are able to focus our attention on the priority areas such as sustainable funding and successful promotion of the frontline services available. It has now equipped us to develop a better strategy for developing and supporting the frontline services.

Older People's Issues:

The workshop focused on care provision within health, social and housing as well as the social and emotional needs of older LGBT people. There were general concerns raised around the voluntary sector provision for older LGBT people.

- It was found there is a need for support groups for older people, which might look at incorporating issues such as education in the use of computers and the internet as these can provide a much needed social support for rurally-isolated older people.
- There should also be a campaign to highlight the prejudice within the health service (it was noted that this is not just an issue for older LGBT people, but our communities as a whole).
- We should look at increasing the visibility of older LGBT people in our communities and we might look at addressing this through organising specific events for this group of people or the creation of a magazine targeted for older LGBT people.

Women's Issues:

- There was recognition of a lack of sexual health information available to women and that with the health sector in general there are negative attitudes being expressed by healthcare professionals which should be addressed.
- Women only spaces should be developed to allow lesbians to help each other in terms of support and advice, creating more positive environments. There should also be better networking between the lesbian groups that already exist in the area.
- There needs to be more help for women when they need to complain (about healthcare professionals, statutory agencies, etc) and help to enable them to campaign more effectively around the needs of lesbians.

Community Building:

There is recognition that we have a broad range of existing LGBT groups in the region, yet these groups do not meet the needs of everyone within our communities, in each area. For example, we may have a support group for younger LGBT people in Mid-Cornwall and looking at this on a map this might show provision in that area, this only focuses on one particular group of people. There is a need to develop a variety of groups in each locality so we might have women's groups, an older people's group and a younger people's group, etc all located in the same area. Only then can we begin to feel we are meeting the needs of the communities as a whole.

- We should look into setting up working groups that can work on a feasibility study of a 'Rainbow Home' where a support team can visit LGBT people in their own home and within care homes as a support mechanism.
- More outreach work needs to be done within the LGBT communities in order to promote key issues such as safer sex, support services available (in all senses: legal, financial, emotional, discrimination, etc) and to establish the needs of individuals.
- Intercom should develop its website as a resource for the all parts of the LGBT communities.
- There should be more platforms for LGBT people to unite and network together, whether this is through virtual means such as the internet or through actual meetings.
- More training needs to be given to key organisations such as schools and statutory agencies for them to recognise the discrimination still being faced by many LGBT people.

- More events such as Bourne Free^{vii} should be set up in the area to enhance the visibility of LGBT people and the needs of our communities in relation to the community as a whole.

Trans Issues & LGB&T?

It was discussed that having a workshop with a generic title such as this and such a short discussion time, made it difficult to identify all the priorities as this was too big a spectrum to cover.

- There needs to be greater awareness of the issues that face the Trans communities through more events such as the Right Royal Get Together. Specifically, it was identified that more work should be done with those under 18 around general Trans awareness.
- Work needs to be done around gender stereotyping and looking at the fluidity of a transsexual's sexuality.
- Greater networking of existing Trans groups in the area should be happening and support given to enhance these groups. There is also only a small amount of Trans specific groups in the area and we should be developing more support groups in the region.
- Some research should be done into the health facilities available to Trans people in the far South West.
- Groups should consider having 'open' meetings to allow exposure, for those who appear nervous about accepting particular people within their group.
- Training should be provided for the frontline groups around Trans issues.

Homophobia in Schools

This was an extremely popular workshop and the discussion looked into what was actually happening in the region in this important area and ways of communicating this better. There appears to be a lack of knowledge as to who is doing what.

- Better co-ordination of work different organisations are doing in respect of work around homophobic bullying.
- Establishing of an email group to look at some of the issues underlying homophobic bullying and how we might be able to effectively address some of these.
- More training needs to be provided to school and school staff around homophobic bullying and the needs of younger LGBT people.

Community Safety:

As was discovered in most of the workshops, this was a vast topic to be able to cover in just one session. Various issues were looked at, including how the CJS is structured, reporting of crimes and the support available to victims and witnesses.

^{vii} Bourne Free is an annual event that celebrates the equality and diversity that exists in Bournemouth and the surrounding area.

- There is a big need for training available to frontline groups around community safety issues and we can stop offences occurring in the first instance, and how we can get a strong case together.
- There should be better, and in some cases more, police liaison around the needs and priorities of our communities in this area.
- We should create a regional strategy for reducing hate crime.
- Better support needs to be offered for victims and witnesses of homophobic and transphobic crimes.

Dangerous Liaisons

This workshop looked at issues around internet cruising within the LGBT communities. The focus was around how the internet has become a major form of meeting other LGBT people in a very rural area—and the pros and cons of this activity.

It was decided that this is one method of combating isolation but we have to be careful as it can lead to a lack of real social interaction between communities. It can also lead to self-esteem and confidence problems due to the ‘image-centred’ culture that can develop within the online communities.

- Work needs to be done around the security of cruising sites for young people and the need for greater control for under 16’s. It is easy for people, both older and younger, to create false identities online in order to target vulnerable people.
- We should be looking at the online communities as a way of engaging with more LGBT people.
- With the internet in general, research should be carried out around the use of public computers and how accessible key information for LGBT people is on these computers (ie some servers block particular search words such as gay).

Same Sex Domestic Violence

This workshop was facilitated by specialists from a same sex domestic violence project operating in Cornwall to raise awareness of this important topic and the issues that surround it.

- Identified need for more beds in refuges available for LGBT people.
- There should be a multi-agency response to dealing with same-sex domestic violence issues.
- There needs to be better and more education of people in all areas to break down the denial of such abusive relationships within the LGBT communities. There is currently a lack of ignorance and understanding of the topic and information should be available to a wider audience.

What Are the Right Priorities For Us?

The focus was around identifying specific work that Intercom might be able to develop within its infrastructure services to better meet the needs of the groups we are supporting.

- Intercom should consider re-establishing the Rainbow Café on Saturday mornings as this was a valuable service for LGBT people in the area. There was recognition that current staff would be unable to do this as their time is already very over-stretched.

There was discussion around using money raised through selling teas/coffees, etc to pay for a part-time employee to focus on this one activity.

- We should think about organising other similar events such as days out for the communities or organising community fairs across the localities of the region.
- Funding should be sought for LGBT community centres/space across the region, which could be used as drop-in/safe space for all LGBT people.

A Question of Support

This workshop was focussing in on the current form of support we can offer groups and shaping our future direction. The discussion highlighted, as per the Community Building workshop, that we need to ensure that when we look at a map of LGBT provision in the far South West as it stands currently, we need to recognise the uneven spread of the types and amounts of each group in each locality. In all future work we should be careful to try and ensure that the spread of groups reflects local needs.

- We should create a database of willing potential Trustees for LGBT organisations across the far South West and that a document should be produced for LGBT people, detailing what it means to be a Trustee and the responsibilities it brings.
- A funding pack should be created for all frontline groups identifying the various grants schemes open to LGBT groups, how groups can put together a project plan for funding and how to effectively fill in application forms.
- Some research should be done into the development of co-ordinated advertising for LGBT groups.
- We should create a model set of policies for frontline groups to be able to use in their varying capacities.
- We should co-ordinate and organise open evenings in different localities of the far South West for LGBT groups to promote themselves and for other non-LGBT people to be invited along to discuss resources available in those areas.
- There should be a printed version of the map showing all the LGBT groups across the far South West, although it was recognised this may not be fully possible due to some of the groups having a low profile.

Equality—The Legal Situation

- A project should be developed to look at businesses in the far South West so we can create a database of LGBT friendly/unfriendly organisations.
- We should look at doing more campaigns on key topics as they arise, to raise awareness of LGBT issues across the whole region.
- The issue of lack of provision within the protection of Goods and Services needs to be addressed and should become a main priority with the Equality Bill going through Parliament.

Outreach to Rural LGBT people

- There ought to be a rural media and PR strategy across the peninsula, to get important information about frontline groups' services and about help and support resources into the hands of those who are most isolated and most in need
- The various helplines ought to be co-ordinating their service-provision better (e.g. by arranging shared information resources and shared training), and they should be promoting their services better, e.g. having a single inclusive poster that could go across the entire peninsula (in addition to appropriate local and targeted promotion activities for each helpline as they think appropriate).