



Newcastle Tenants and  
Residents Federation

## LGBT HOUSING ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

In the last several months Newcastle Tenants and Residents Federation [NTRF] has been focusing on LGBT housing issues in Newcastle.

Our LGBT fieldworker Karen Graham was asked to:

- Find out what housing-related issues people from the LGBT community are facing as tenants/residents in Newcastle.
- Identify any key issues that can be taken up by NTRF in the context of its campaigning/policy influencing role.
- Provide the opportunity for people from the LGBT community to set up a task group, which will operate within NTRF's structure, enabling LGBT housing issues to be addressed as an ongoing priority within its strategic work.

**In order to do this Karen has established contact with:**

- Outpost housing [now merged with Albert Kennedy trust]
- Mesmac
- Tyne Trans Group
- Body Positive North East
- LGBT Federation
- Unison LGBT rep
- Unison Newcastle Branch Equality Officer
- Metropolitan Community Church Newcastle

**Actions to date:**

Three focus groups have been held with: young gay men; gay adults who are HIV+; Tyne Trans group.

**Key issues identified by these groups are:**

Homelessness – People may find themselves homeless following their disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Insecure tenancies/evictions – Some LGBT folk are thrown out of their homes when private landlords discover their sexuality.

Safety issues/hate crime – Some LGBT folk had experienced hate crime [including threats/abuse/violence] causing them to leave their home and move to a new area. Some perceive particular areas of the city as unsafe/unwelcoming.

Hostels – Some young people reported negative experiences of being placed in hostels and felt staff were unable to appropriately support them.

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LGBT specific advice and information – Many reported the lack of LGBT specific help in relation to seeking appropriate housing.

Housing Officers – Many felt these professionals lacked knowledge and understanding of being LGBT and how this impacts on housing, and had met with negative and/or offensive attitudes

**Key needs emerging from these discussions are:**

#### **Training**

Comprehensive training and training packs/resources are needed for housing staff to enable them to work well with LGBT people. This should include: challenging myths and stereotypes; identifying the specific needs of LGBT people in relation to housing; ensuring they are fully informed of specialist LGBT housing and safer communities for LGBT people to live in; challenging discriminatory language and attitudes.

#### **Local Area Connection**

Many LGBT people need to move away from their home community/area for safety reasons, thus leaving their local area connections behind. Some need to be based around specialist medical support [eg trans people and HIV+ gay people]. Some need to be in communities where there are larger clusters of LGBT people in order to feel safe. These are not generally regarded as representing local area connections. Work needs to be done to challenge/extend the application of the local area connection criteria when allocating housing.

#### **Intentional Homelessness**

Because LGBT people may feel they have to leave their homes for safety reasons, having left they are deemed to be intentionally homeless. Currently little regard is paid to the special extenuating circumstances which caused them to leave home.

#### **Responses to date**

NTRF is taking the following immediate steps:

- NTRF is now working in partnership with the LGBT Federation and the Tyne Trans group to address housing issues together and is discussing the development of training, and training packages, to address some of the issues raised.
- NTRF is using its role as a campaigning/influencing organisation to highlight the issues of 'intentional homelessness' and 'local area connection' with relevant agencies and organisations.

#### **Next steps**

Two more focus groups are planned. One for lesbians of any age and one for older people.

***If anyone wishes to take part in these focus groups, please contact Karen Graham by email to: [karen@thecapacityclinic.org.uk](mailto:karen@thecapacityclinic.org.uk) or by telephone 07794 411809.***

An online survey will be distributed by end November, watch out for this via LGBT Fed and Mesmac email circulations and PLEASE take part.