



## **Housing Report 2013**

In November 2013 The LGBT Federation NE (The Fed) hosted an event bringing together housing providers, tenants and other interested parties from across the north east.

### Purpose of the event

In 2011 eight housing providers participated in an event to explore housing issues raised by the LGBT community in the North East, thereby meeting the requirements of the Stonewall submissions by consulting and engaging with the LGBT community. Broader issues were also discussed (eg equality, information and hate crime) and a plan to review this situation in 2013 was put in place.

The Fed is a regional organization, working to bring together LGBT Communities to have a strong voice on life issues. We have a membership base of more than 500 people, and our members are black, white, male, female, non-disabled, disabled and of all different religions and beliefs or none. We are continually striving to work with policy makers and service providers and develop awareness of the benefits of having LGBT people actively responding to their services. The Fed has a regional evidence base that correlates regeneration with numbers of LGBT people living or working in an area. There is also research by Richard Florida with the "gay index" making a link between prospering areas with numbers of LGBT people living and working in that area. The bringing together of businesses and LGBT people has demonstrable economic as well as community development benefits and this is one of the drivers for events such as this.

### The event

The 2013 event in Newcastle hosted by The Fed, was attended by LGBT Fed members representing the whole north east region (Northumberland, Durham, Tyne and Wear, Middlesbrough, Darlington, Hartlepool and Stockton/ Teesside), and by sixteen housing representatives from the North East.

The event began with a presentation of developments since 2011 submitted by the housing providers (see App 1) in order to identify and acknowledge change. There followed an update on the recommendations from the 2011 report, facilitated round table debates, and question and answers.

Five discussion topics were identified:

1. Developing an LGBT Housing Charter
2. Alternative models of accommodation and support for older LGBT people
3. Identifying LGBT friendly landlords and housing providers
4. Constructive ways of housing providers working with The Fed
5. Current LGBT housing issues

What we found:

#### 1 Developing an LGBT housing charter:

There was a general feeling in the meeting that an LGBT charter would be a useful tool for service providers and service users alike. It would need to be inclusive and well written, and that in practice there is a need to ensure those who would action the charter should be well trained and aware of the needs of LGBT services users (whether self identified or not).

Points from the discussions:

- All staff are properly trained on LGBT issues
- Advertise the Charter widely to promote LGBT housing issues
- Charter to be translated into DVD for deaf LGBT service users
- Use clear plain English without any acronyms
- Domestic violence awareness training provided to all staff
- The Fed to lead on this initiative
- Develop methods of sharing good practice
- Role of Charter – could improve sustainability of tenancies if tenants feel more comfortable with landlord

## 2 Alternative models of accommodation and support for older LGBT people:

Any 'grouping' of people may have particular needs that should be specifically acknowledged and catered for, which might best be summed up by the statement "there needs to be choice. One size doesn't fit all. Having choice is best practice."

Points from the discussion:

- Young LGBT People – want specific support workers (the same one) for consistency. Support workers need knowledge about LGBT issues which are often "non-visible" issues.
- Specialist services are required. Understanding of issues required by housing advice services
- Older LGBT People – South Tyneside Homes tackling discrimination/harassment in older supported housing units, now training staff in tackling homophobic incidents. Running a campaign to challenge this behavior (posters) Generational bias. LGBT (50-60 yr olds will require specific services in years to come
- Emergency accommodation for 16 – 18 yr olds – would be useful to have specialist LGBT service as this would make it easier for young people to open up
- There needs to be choice. One size doesn't fit all.
- Missing some other issues ie linking disabilities and LGBT, information needs to be relevant
- Older persons housing for LGBT –challenges of "normalizing" LGBT issues in such environments
- Challenge some of traditional attitudes of staff and tenants

## 3 Identifying LGBT friendly landlords and housing providers:

Discussion included the suggestion of an identifiable 'list' of LGBT friendly housing providers, and also the suggestion that there be mechanisms in place to identify and prevent discrimination.

- Theoretically in UK no discrimination – need a mechanism to identify the good ones i.e. Charter, Plaque, Public Declaration that informs
- Consider other forms of landlord who have substantial numbers – estates, DRS, agents
- Agreed criteria such as check list that defines LGBT friendly
- Swap staff between housing providers –shadowing practice
- Focus groups LGBT to talk to tenants
- Complaints –need to be dealt with promptly
- Private landlords practice – how to centrally monitor bad practice
- Accrediting private landlords – key partnerships with National Associations to improve this

4 Constructive ways of housing providers working with The Fed:  
Several potential ways of working together were identified and events like this were acknowledged as being very productive to all parties in achieving this.

Providers and The Fed join together to do one lot of relevant documents – sharing the costs – have all the logos on  
Getting the message across from all Providers  
Documents, DVD, Audio etc.

Positive LGBT images in Annual Reports and in literature, eg  
Rainbow Flag

Attending events like this

Sheltered schemes – events about E & D and invite The Fed along

Need the right people to provide training rather than housing providers trying to do it themselves

The Fed to provide an advisory role – facilitating customer engagement – bringing their expertise and how to bring LGBT groups in the area to engage

Assist providers in finding resources

Do it on line! Live blogs –Live Question sessions – build on

line community with people feeding in from all walks of LGBT life

Use The Fed as hub to bring people and HP's together

Advertising events on HP web-sites

Get a group of HPs together to sign up for Housing Charter

Improve access to disabled LGBT people, trans, older, other minority groups

Attend events and become a Fed member

Share ideas but need networks/processes to sustain ideas and take forward

Housing Steering group as part of The Fed

Provide regular updates to The Fed. Have a shared space for ideas that can be accessed by Housing Providers

Use Social Media effectively

Central place for regional LGBT information

Regional staff network group supported by The Fed

#### 5 Current LGBT housing issues:

Several issues were raised, some of which will be addressed beyond this event, in future events, or via alternative means. The enthusiasm and willingness to voice and address issues was positively noted.

Improve customer care levels (to high level)

Meetings like this more accessible, open and friendly to come to than direct to the orgs

Important point raised by ex-nightstop host YP came out to him that may not have

Advocacy needs – may benefit because of issues LGBT related to their circumstances

Terminology on forms – lesbian and proud rather than gay woman

Re: contractors/repairs –training needs identified

Monitoring data – trans needs in particular – taking community requirements on board

Representation from individuals – pay them to use their

skills – feel brushed under the carpet – DVD  
accessibility. Don't rely on goodwill and volunteers – Keep it  
local

Step toward Scotland Stonewall more localized – better at  
listening to staff – more focus needs to bring us all together  
and include tenants

Older persons housing for LGBT –challenges of “normalizing”  
LGBT issues in such environments

Challenging old fashioned attitudes staff and tenants

YP-particular set of circumstances often kept hidden until  
they find their way out

Coming out/Faith issues –not the usual young homeless

Finding ways to engage with LGBT Tenants – consider  
pastoral workers

Albert Kennedy Trust – training Provider to deliver LGBT  
Housing issues – 25 years experience in training and  
managing agents for LGBT Youth and Housing

Providers should use their newsletters and website to  
demonstrate info and awareness of LGBT

Providers need to recognize the importance of “community”  
to LGBT people, rather than interpreting narrowly in a  
geographical sense. (e.g. even for those living elsewhere in  
the region, Newcastle was seen as an important centre of  
their community)

Visible support for LGBT community events sends a strong  
message.

Providers should share good practice re LGBT – learn from  
other providers

Suggestion of some sort of online feedback so LGBT  
community could make others aware of positive and  
negative experiences – particularly in relation to private  
sector renting, need to be careful about naming and shaming.

## **Conclusion:**

The 2013 Housing and LGBT event was a positive experience noting changes in practice and experience in the North East. There are developments in place and growth in people's understanding of the needs of services and individuals. There was a meeting of minds, a sharing of concerns and stressors, and an acknowledgement of areas for growth and development.

Should The Fed attract further funding to develop this collaborative approach in the future, more events will be advertised and facilitated, and items shared that would be useful to address to improve peoples experiences.

Some areas of intended development were:

"R U mad2" project measures change, she is interested in getting a small group together to evidence changes in service provision through various positive actions.

The Fed in partnership with Gateshead Learning Skills – is discussing a conference of multitude of service providers to discuss LGBT related issues.

The Fed in partnership with Newcastle Tenants and Residents Federation will be looking at training packages.

LGBT Consortium currently seeking funding to look at Older LGBT Housing Solutions