

Centre for Continuing Education  
for the SEQUAL partnership

# In or out? Sexual orientation and the employability agenda

Final report of research findings

Anne Bellis, Teresa Cairns, Susan McGrath

Centre for Continuing Education  
[www.sussex.ac.uk/cce](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cce)

SEQUAL Partnership  
[www.surrey.ac.uk/Education/cse/sequal.htm](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/Education/cse/sequal.htm)

**US**  
University of Sussex



## Contents

Introduction	2
Research methodology	4
Literature review	8
The LGBT communities of Brighton & Hove and Hastings	16
Employability: the role of the voluntary and community sector	23
Health, community safety and employability	28
Discrimination and harassment in the workplace	32
Equalities training and mainstreaming	37
Conclusions and recommendations	40
Notes	44
References	45
Appendix 1: list of organisations contacted for this research	48
Appendix 2: closure of GLAM	49
Appendix 3: publicity for the Brighton LGBT JobFair	50

## INTRODUCTION

This research has been conducted by Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Sussex as part of the SEQUAL Development Partnership (SDP), which aims to explore discrimination in the labour market and promote equal access for all. The Partnership consists of eight Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from across the UK, which all have experience in community education, development and regeneration – the Universities of Bristol, Glasgow, Sussex, Surrey and Warwick, London Metropolitan University, Edge Hill College of Higher Education and University of Wales, Bangor. Each partner is addressing at least one of the following themes concerning discrimination and equal access to the labour market: gender, class, race and ethnicity, political and religious belief, disability, age and sexual orientation. In recognition of the complex nature of discrimination and the way it impacts on people's lives, the SDP is also exploring a number of cross-cutting themes, including geographical and social isolation; language and culture; health issues; identity and citizenship. The research aims to articulate and enhance the understanding of complex, but vital lessons learned from practice, so that it can be of real impact on policy formulation in the interest of promoting employability and equity of access to employment.

The Centre for Continuing Education has a long history of working in partnership with local communities and organisations across Sussex. Over the past eight years, we have developed and delivered community based courses for various socially excluded groups including the long term unemployed, residents of peripheral housing estates, black minority ethnic and refugee groups and disabled people. We have also been involved in conducting community-based research into issues relating to social exclusion, citizenship and lifelong learning (eg Stuart and Thomson 1995; Coare 2000; Coare and Johnston 2003). The wide range of community networks established as a result of this work has formed the basis of the fieldwork for the SEQUAL research.

The aims of the Sussex strand of the research have been to:

- explore issues of employability and discrimination in relation to sexual orientation
- evaluate the effectiveness of existing EU-funded interventions in promoting employability and combating discrimination for members of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities
- identify and disseminate examples of good practice in equalities work linked to this theme

Labour market discrimination linked to sexual orientation has received little attention within previous research literature. However, following the European (EU) Employment Directive (Council Directive 2000/78/EC) and the UK Government's 2003 legislation outlawing discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, the issue is now firmly on the policy agenda. This report, therefore, appears at an opportune moment.

The research presents a comparative case study of Brighton and Hastings – two seaside resorts on the south coast of England. They are both areas of significant

disadvantage in relation to Sussex, the South East and nationally, and also feature prominently in the list of 157 most deprived wards in the country. We believe that a consideration of employability issues in relation to this target group should be located within this broader socio-economic context.

The research findings presented here have mainly come from interviews with members of the LGBT communities in both areas, and with representatives from local voluntary and statutory organisations. These findings have highlighted significant differences between the two localities, and in the profiles of their LGBT communities. We are particularly grateful to Spectrum and the Rainbow Alliance – the two LGBT community and voluntary sector umbrella organisations for Brighton & Hove, and Hastings, respectively – for their active support and contribution to this project.

The first section of the report provides a description of the methodological approach to the research, the main research methods used, and outlines further collaborative work which has taken place during the dissemination phase of the Sequel project. The literature review provides a theoretical framework for the research findings and includes an outline of relevant EU and UK legislation, previous research into sexual orientation and discrimination in the workplace, and a brief history of LGBT campaigns for equal rights. The third section presents a comparison of Brighton & Hove and Hastings, in terms of their population and labour market characteristics and a profile of their respective LGBT communities. The fifth and sixth sections outline key employability issues for members of the LGBT community and highlight innovative practice from the voluntary sector in addressing some of these issues. The seventh section deals with discrimination and harassment in the workplace on grounds of sexual orientation, reflects on issues of ‘safety’ for LGBT employees and the monitoring of sexual orientation. The eighth section discusses issues relating to the ‘mainstreaming’ of equalities and presents two case studies of good practice in equalities training and awareness raising. The final section of the report offers conclusions and recommendations arising out of the research findings.

Anne Bellis, Teresa Cairns, Susan McGrath  
December 2004

If you would like further information about this research or the SEQUAL Partnership, please contact:

Mike Boice, Project Coordinator: [m.j.boice@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:m.j.boice@sussex.ac.uk) or Anne Bellis, Researcher: [e.a.bellis@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:e.a.bellis@sussex.ac.uk)

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Methodological approach**

This research project has been conducted within a broad methodological framework of critical action research. This is an approach which is committed to challenging social inequalities and bringing about change, rather than claiming to describe the world from a 'value free' standpoint (Carr and Kemmis 1986; Usher et al 1997). The action research paradigm also implies a participatory approach, which aims to engage actively in dialogue with those who are the subject of the research. Through our commitment to this empowering approach, we have developed an ongoing collaboration with individuals and groups from the LGBT community in both localities, and together with our research partners, have developed further initiatives as described below (pp 6-7).

We have also been influenced by the feminist research perspective, in particular its emphasis on recognising the power relations implicit in any research situation and on making explicit the researcher's own standpoint within the research frame of reference (Gluck and Patai 1991; Cameron et al 1992). From this viewpoint, we have considered it necessary to acknowledge our 'outsider' status as researchers in relation to the LGBT community, and our own lack of direct experience of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. This 'outsider' status may have had implications in terms of interviewing access to some members of the LGBT community. We may also have inadvertently made heterosexist assumptions in the way we have interpreted some of the research data. However, through the process of seeking feedback on the research findings at various points in the project, we have sought to represent as clearly as possible the views and 'voices' of members of the LGBT community.

### **Research methods**

A broad range of both qualitative and quantitative research methods have been utilised as part of this study including:

- a literature review and document searches
- mapping exercises in both areas to identify organisations receiving EU (European Union) funding for work with socially excluded groups, or for supporting training and employment within the local community
- semi structured interviews (55 in total) conducted with a number of individuals and organisations including: LGBT support groups; other voluntary/community organisations; service users and beneficiaries; local authorities; employment and training services; trade unions and employers (a list of organisations contacted is provided in Appendix 1)
- case studies of discrimination in the workplace and of good practice in equalities work
- ongoing action research eg consultation and dissemination events with representatives of key LGBT organisations. To facilitate this, information about the research has been circulated via LGBT forums, websites, presentations and informal discussions.

The pilot phase of the project was conducted in May 2002, making use of CCE's extensive community networks in Brighton and Hastings as a starting point. A mapping exercise was conducted to facilitate contact with relevant organisations and individuals and identify key issues of local concern. This was carried out mainly through telephone contact across a range of local and national organisations involved in employment issues, health and social welfare, local authority and community based activities. Our original approach to the research was to explore and assess the impact of existing EU-funded interventions in relation to the research theme of sexual orientation and employability. However, as initial mapping activity suggested that very few such interventions were in existence, we later changed our approach to focus more directly on LGBT networks and support organisations to obtain data concerning labour market discrimination in both localities.

The second fieldwork phase was carried out between October 2002 and December 2003, and involved interviews and information gathering across a range of individuals and organisations in Brighton and Hove and Hastings. As we became aware early on in the research that there were significant differences between the two research areas, a broad methodological framework was developed to allow for flexibility of approach.

At an early stage in our fieldwork, we became aware that two extensive quantitative surveys of the LGBT communities in both geographical areas had recently been carried out. The aim of these surveys was to investigate the needs and concerns of the LGBT communities in Brighton and Hove (Webb and Wright 2001) and Hastings (Fairley and Nouidjem 2004), and to reflect their views on a range of topics including health, housing, employment, and community safety. We believe that findings from our own qualitative research should be considered alongside these more wide-ranging quantitative studies. Accordingly, references to findings from the earlier surveys have been included at various points in this report, as they relate to and illuminate themes from our own research.

Our approach to interviewing has made use of a 'snowballing' technique, as our initial interviews with EU - funded projects have drawn us into contact with other networks, particularly within the LGBT community. Despite a risk of leaving some gaps and omissions in the data obtained, this is generally considered to be an appropriate method of data collection for small scale qualitative studies of this kind:

*Snowball sampling...is primarily [used] in the collection of in depth, qualitative data, perhaps on sensitive topics, where an obvious sampling frame does not exist and the best method of collection is through personal contacts.*  
(Jary and Jary 1995: 599)

The effectiveness of this method has become more apparent as the different strands of experience and concern within the LGBT community in both areas has emerged.

Access to interviews with more marginal and 'hard to reach' LGBT groups has been problematic, for example those with problems relating to drug and alcohol dependence, health or homelessness. As indicated earlier, this difficulty may have arisen partly from our 'outsider' status as researchers and our lack of previous history of working with these particular target groups. Another reason could have

been the overwhelming nature of their personal difficulties: some project workers explained to us that service users might be concerned about compromising their benefit entitlement by discussing work and training issues. Our problems with access to key target groups may also reflect a more pressing concern with issues of self esteem, health and welfare rather than employment and training opportunities, as reflected in the Brighton based 'Count Me In' research (Webb and Wright 2001). However, as our own research findings suggest, these factors could have a significant impact on employability, indicating the complex and interconnecting nature of these issues.

The research process has raised a number of ethical issues for us, particularly in relation to confidentiality and the importance of keeping informants' contributions anonymous. There has been a need for sensitivity to informants' personal circumstances, for example, in being aware of whether or not they were 'out' at the time of interview (see note 1). A particular challenge in relation to the fieldwork in Hastings was the absence, of any visible LGBT representative group with which to liaise in the early stages of the research. This required an innovative approach on the part of the researcher, and because of the sensitive nature of the information required, trust had to be built up between herself and those who could best provide it.

### **Dissemination of the research findings and further collaborative work**

Since the completion of the fieldwork, members of the research team have engaged in a number of events and activities, either initiated by ourselves or others. The dissemination phase of the Sequel Project has provided a number of useful opportunities for sharing the research findings, eliciting feedback and developing further collaborative work:

- A dissemination event was organised in Brighton in December 2003 in partnership with Spectrum, the LGBT Community Forum for Brighton and Hove. The event was advertised through the local LGBT newsletter and membership list and the Spectrum website. Specific invitations were extended to people who had been involved in individual and group interviews. The intention was to obtain feedback from members of the LGBT community about whether our identification of key issues accorded with people's experiences and understanding. The event attracted twelve participants – fewer than we had hoped, although our presentation of findings was well received and provoked a lively debate about many of the issues identified.
- This event has led to ongoing dialogue with members of the LGBT community in Brighton, particularly with those who share an interest in employment and equality issues. In September 2004, we participated in the UK's first LGBT JobFair in Brighton. This was organised by 'A Place at the Table', a not-for-profit company whose mission is to promote the 'business case' for social inclusion to employers, to offer equalities training, and to organise events around various equalities themes. The aim of the JobFair was to promote the recent changes in employment law in relation to sexual orientation, as well as offer employment opportunities to members of the LGBT community. The

event attracted 350 visitors and over 20 employers took part. The SEQUAL team in Sussex agreed to part sponsor the event and held a stall with information about the SEQUAL project. Informal conversations were held with employers to make them aware of the research and its findings.

- Early in 2003, a series of meetings took place in Hastings between members of the SEQUAL team, the Rainbow Alliance (the newly formed LGBT umbrella organisation), Hastings Voluntary Action, the Equalities Officer from Hastings Borough Council and the coordinator of the Local Strategic Partnership. The aims of the meeting were to plan the joint dissemination of findings from the SEQUAL research and the recently conducted survey of the local LGBT community by the Rainbow Alliance, and to incorporate the findings from both research projects into the new equalities strategy being developed by Hastings Borough Council. An equalities event has been planned to disseminate the research findings to a wider audience in the Hastings area, including SMEs (small and medium enterprises), voluntary and community organisations and key organisations in South East England.
- Discussion has also taken place in Hastings about the development of a training programme for employers, which was highlighted by the SEQUAL research as a priority concern. The production of an equalities 'toolkit', supported by SEQUAL funding has been undertaken by one of the SEQUAL team in partnership with a researcher from the Rainbow Alliance. This will have a particular focus on employment issues linked to sexual orientation. An event to promote the toolkit was held in the new University Centre at Hastings in October 2004 and was attended by local employers.
- We have also been involved in disseminating our research findings at a national level. Two members of the research team presented papers at the 'Mainstreaming Equalities' conference in Liverpool in April 2004, based on our findings in Brighton and Hastings respectively (see note 2). Copies of our summarised interim findings were distributed to conference delegates.
- In October 2004, the research team led a workshop at the SEQUAL Partnership international conference in London, 'Tackling Discrimination and Promoting Employability'.

Our participation in these dissemination activities, and in particular, our ongoing productive partnership with LGBT community organisations in both Brighton and Hastings, has added a valuable dimension of collaborative action research, which will help to ensure that issues of employability and discrimination in the workplace will continue to be addressed after the lifetime of this project.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the report provides a theoretical framework for the research and has drawn on a number of different sources including relevant EU and UK legislation, policy documents, internet resources and academic literature relation to sexual orientation issues. The literature review is divided into the following sections: social policy development in the context of the European Union; anti-discrimination policy in the UK and the current legal framework; a brief history of LGBT campaigns for equal rights; previous research into sexual orientation and discrimination in the workplace.

### **An overview of European social policy development**

In the early history of the European Union (1950s), social policy tended to play a subordinate role to trade and economic policy (Geyer 2000; Hantrais 2000). According to Hantrais, there was a general assumption that social development would result from economic integration:

*Social harmonization was seen as an end product of economic integration rather than a prerequisite.*  
(2000:1)

This perspective was to change over the following twenty years, with a growing recognition that a more proactive approach to social issues would be required:

*The next twenty years...saw a growing commitment, at least in principle, to the social dimension as a component of European integration and a necessary complement to economic policy rather than simply a spill over from it.*  
(Hantrais 2000:1)

An indication of a more interventionist approach to social policy in the 1970s can be seen from the Social Action Programme, which was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1974 (Council Resolution 21.1.74). This related mainly to the work environment and focused on issues such as the attainment of full employment, improved working conditions and increased involvement of workers in decision making. This initiative established the context for social policy development for the next ten years:

*The 1970s saw a spate of action in the areas of education and training, health and safety at work, workers' and women's' rights and poverty, leading to the establishment of a number of European networks and observatories to stimulate action and monitor progress in the social field.*  
(2000:5)

This expansion of social policy development continued into the late 1980s and early 1990s, with initiatives such as the Social Charter, the Social Dimension and Social Protocol. At this time, 'EU policies regarding labour, gender, social inclusion, and so on, rapidly expanded' (Geyer 2000:1).

Geyer also points out the politically contentious nature of this area of EU policy, which has led to a number of conflicts and disagreements between member states:

*During this period, debates focused on the nature and need for EU social policy. Generally, free-market conservatives argued against it and social democrats for it. (2000: 7-8)*

The contentious nature of social policy is clearly illustrated by the UK Conservative Government's objection to the social chapter of the Maastricht Treaty (1992), which was a statement of commitment to promoting the fundamental social rights of workers. This opposition led to the removal of the social chapter from the main body of the Treaty and a separate protocol on social policy was included and endorsed by the other eleven member states (Hantrais 2000). However, the UK's oppositional stance was reversed in 1997, when the incoming Labour Government fulfilled its manifesto commitment to becoming a signatory to the social chapter (Corbett 2002).

Geyer goes on to outline key areas of social policy development which have taken place in recent years including: policies relating to gender, poverty and exclusion, race discrimination, age, disability and public health. The growing prominence of the theme of anti-discrimination across all these policy areas was made explicit in the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam which came into effect in May 1999. In the 1990s, the European Union faced major social problems, resulting from slow economic growth, long term unemployment, population ageing and other factors. As a result, employment was another important element in the Treaty (Hantrais 2000; Freda 2002).

In 1999, four main lines of action were identified – these became the four 'pillars' to be incorporated into national action plans: employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities. The prioritising of equal opportunities can also be seen in the two Directives following on from the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Employment Directive and the Race Directive. The Employment Directive requires member states to 'take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation' in areas of employment or training:

*The Employment Directive underlines the commitment of the EU to improving job opportunities as a central priority and is an important step in the development of a common European Employment Strategy to develop and implement policies of equal treatment in employment and training. (Freda 2002:8)*

By the 1990's, 'the social dimension had moved up the agenda' although still cast in a supporting role to economic policy (Hantrais 2000: 18). Another feature of policy in the 1990s, as illustrated by the Treaty of Amsterdam, was the growth of a more coordinated approach to social policy, brought about by the common challenges faced by member states (slow economic growth, long term unemployment etc). Through the treaty, the EU affirmed its commitment to adopting a more proactive and coordinated approach to tackling social problems. In 1996, Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission, emphasised the interdependence of the social and economic dimensions:

*There can be no social progress without economic progress: but conversely, economic wealth cannot be built in a social desert...the social dimension is not a cost or a burden, but rather a source of dynamism that will enable us to take on the challenges of the future...*

*(Address to European Forum on Social Policy 1996, quoted in Hantrais 2000:19)*

However, according to Hantrais, the role of the European Union continues to be seen as essentially 'supportive and complementary' despite arguments put forward (for example by the French) for a more interventionist approach (Hantrais 2000). She observes that the main responsibility for the design and implementation of policy continues to be at member state level.

The way in which EU policy initiatives have been reflected at the national UK level can be seen through initiatives such as Employment Zones and New Deal programmes. The ESF-funded Equal Programme provides another illustration of the way in which the EU can provide a supportive basis for the development of member state social policy. The purpose of the Equal Programme is to identify and promote innovative approaches to tackling discrimination and removing barriers to employability. Within the UK context, this initiative fits well within a broader framework of anti-discrimination legislation which has been developed over a number of years.

### **Anti-discrimination: the UK policy context**

Measures taken to implement the latest EU legislation on anti-discrimination vary a great deal between member states. Some countries, including Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK, already have systems of protection against discrimination in place for certain groups (EC Annual report on Equality and Non-discrimination, 2003).

In the UK, there is a history of legislation from the 1970s, protecting individuals from discrimination in employment on grounds of sex and race, with disability included in 1995.

- The Sex Discrimination Act (1975) offers protection from discrimination on the grounds of gender or marital status in employment, as well as trade union membership, education, provision of goods and services and housing. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) was established in 1975 with the main objective of enforcing legislation to eliminate sex discrimination and generally promoting equality of opportunity between women and men (Clement and Spinks 2000).
- Under the Race Relations Act (1976), it is unlawful to discriminate against someone on grounds of their colour, race, nationality or ethnic origin. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) has extended the original legislation to protect against additional forms of racial harassment and discrimination. For example, it now covers all public authorities, including the police, prison service, customs and excise and local authorities (Freda 2002). The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was set up by the 1976 RRA and has

the following duties: 'to work towards the elimination of racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity; to encourage good relations between people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds; to monitor the way the race relations Act is working and recommend ways in which it can be improved' (CRE 2003).

- The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) was introduced to combat discrimination against disabled people, for example, by promoting employment rights and improving access to buildings, transport and services (Clement and Spinks 2000). The disability rights Commission is an independent body established in 2000, which promotes civil rights for disabled people and aims to create 'a society where all disabled people can participate fully as equal citizens' (DRC 2003).

Until December 2003, no anti-discrimination legislation existed in relation to sexual orientation. However, following the EU Employment and Race Directives, the UK Government was required to amend existing anti-discrimination legislation, and introduce new laws relating to sexual orientation, religion and belief (December 2003) and age (by December 2006). In October 2002, the Government published its long awaited proposals for implementing the EU Directive on Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation. The consultation paper 'Towards Equality and Diversity: Making it Happen' outlined the Government's assessment of the priorities for equality and the challenges posed by the new agenda. In December 2003, the 'Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations' were introduced, which outlaw direct and indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation in employment and training on grounds of sexual orientation.

This legislation has placed discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation on the UK policy agenda for the first time. The next section traces the historical development of lesbian and gay campaigns for equal rights over a number of decades.

## **LGBT campaigning for equal rights**

The lesbian and gay rights movement has been in existence in the UK since the 1960s. The late 1960s and early 70s, in particular, was an important period for the development of gay politics and culture. (Palmer 1995; Brighton Ourstory Project 2001). In 1967, gay male sex was partially decriminalised by the Sexual Offences Act. In 1969, a series of violent confrontations took place between gay people and the police outside a bar in New York's Greenwich Village. The Stonewall Riots, as they came to be called (after the name of the bar), were perceived as a highly significant moment in the history of resistance against gay oppression. Shortly afterwards, radical organisations such as the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) sprang up in the USA, UK and elsewhere. They were committed to the struggle for equal rights and gave expression to the new found confidence of the gay rights movement:

*...GLF was revolutionary in its aims. It advocated 'coming out', working together for social change, sexual freedom and challenging gender stereotypes. It gave birth to Gay Switchboard and Gay News, Britain's first national gay newspaper. Now, pubs, clubs and newly forming social and campaigning groups could advertise their existence – and be found even by isolated individuals.*

*(Brighton Ourstory Project 2001)*

However, from the mid 1970s the lesbian and gay political movement began to suffer a decline which continued well into the 1980s. An exception to this was the campaigning activities of a small number of left-wing activist groups, such as radical feminist campaigns against male violence. Radical feminist activity in Brighton during the 1970s and 1980s provides an interesting illustration of the conflicts and tensions experienced by many left political groups during this period:

*Brighton had a strong radical lesbian presence and a feminist awareness of the power relationship between men and women permeated lesbian politics in the town during the seventies and eighties. This led to a separation from GLF and CHE (The Campaign for Homosexual Equality), which were regarded as having no interest in lesbian issues, and a focus on issues affecting women generally – campaigns against male violence, eg the peace movement, Women’s Aid, and Rape Crisis. (Ourstory Project 2001)*

In the late 1980s, in the UK, there was an outbreak of anti-gay prejudice following the AIDS epidemic. As part of this, the introduction by the Conservative government of Section 28 of the Local Government Act, has been described as ‘a defining moment’ for lesbian and gay politics in the UK. The Act, which prohibited local authorities from ‘promoting homosexuality’ or ‘pretended family relationships’ led to a widespread revival of lesbian and gay political activism and ‘...helped to politicise a new generation of lesbians and gay men...’ (Palmer 1995: 35).

One consequence of this increased activism was the formation of the important national campaigning organisation, Stonewall, established in 1989:

*The organization would work towards legal equality and social justice for lesbians and gay men, using a combination of lobbying, campaigning, research and education. (Palmer 1995: 36)*

According to Palmer, there were other developments resulting from increased lesbian and gay activism:

*...the expansion of the lesbian and gay publishing sector; the growth of lesbian and gay groups in trade unions and in political parties; and the enormous growth in the scale of the annual pride march and festival... (1995: 36).*

The history of Gay Pride from its modest beginnings in the 1970s parallels the changing fortunes of the movement as a whole. Only about 1000 people regularly attended London Pride events during the late 1970s and early 1980s. By 1988, when the Section 28 legislation was passed, attendance had risen to 40,000 (The Knitting Circle 2004); annual attendance now exceeds 80,000. Similarly, Brighton Pride grew from the 1970s ‘when only a tiny minority of the town’s gay population was ready to take to the streets’ (Brighton Ourstory Project 2001) to becoming a major annual event on the Brighton calendar. In 2001, the festival attracted large-scale sponsorship and was attended by 60,000 people.

Another issue which became the focus of a major campaign in the mid-1990s was equalization of the age of consent for lesbians and gay men. This took the form of intense lobbying of Members of the UK Parliament, to persuade them to support an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill of 1993-4, aimed at equalizing the age of consent. Although the motion was not at that time successful, those involved in the campaign felt they had made progress in raising awareness of the issue:

*We mounted the biggest ever pro-active campaign for equal rights for lesbians and gay men, and we began to realize our own strength from it.*  
(Palmer 1995: 39)

It was not until December 2000 that an equal age of consent finally achieved legal status for lesbians, gay men and heterosexuals alike.

### **Sexual orientation and employment issues**

The mid 1990s was also a period in which the LGBT campaigning groups began to challenge more actively discrimination in employment on grounds of sexual orientation. Organisations such as Stonewall and LAGER (Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights) have been in the forefront of highlighting the inadequacy of UK anti-discrimination legislation in promoting equality in employment for the LGBT population. In 1993, Stonewall carried out research investigating the treatment of lesbians and gay men in the workplace (Palmer 1993). The aims of the research were to:

*...investigate the extent and effects of discrimination and harassment experienced by lesbians and gay men at work, and in seeking work, the extent to which they feel obliged to conceal their sexuality at work, and whether equal opportunities policies can help.*  
(1993: 3)

The findings indicated that 16% of respondents had experienced discrimination at work and a further 21% suspected they had. An additional 48% reported harassment because of their sexuality:

*The harassment described ranged from mild to very serious, and included unwanted jokes, innuendo and loaded comments, verbal abuse, being sent to Coventry, malicious gossip, name calling, bullying and victimisation, being 'outed', false accusations of child abuse, graffiti, abusive phone calls, anonymous mail, damage to property, blackmail, violence and even death threats*  
(1993: 1)

The third major finding from the research was that two thirds of respondents concealed their sexuality in the workplace.

The Stonewall findings were reinforced by an independent report produced by the Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR) in 1995, which provided further evidence of the significant levels of discrimination and harassment experienced by LGBT people in the workplace. The report also highlighted some of the negative

attitudes and mistaken assumptions about lesbians and gay men among the heterosexual population, such as the opinion of 40% of respondents that secondary school teaching was an unsuitable occupation for gay men (Andrews 2001).

Until the new legislation came into force in December 2003, there had been no legal redress against harassment in the workplace, less favourable treatment, less equal pay and dismissal on grounds of sexual orientation. In their response to the government consultation paper on implementing the Employment and Race Directives, LAGER outlined a number of different forms of discrimination which they had encountered in the course of their work. These included:

- personal prejudice from employers or work colleagues leading to failure to recruit, employ or promote, poor appraisals and dismissal
- views expressed in the workplace that being lesbian or gay is immoral, abnormal or an illness
- assumptions that everyone is heterosexual unless otherwise stated
- concealment of sexual orientation for fear of differential treatment
- malicious 'outing' of LGBT employees against their wishes
- lack of recognition of same-sex partnerships eg in relation to work-related benefits or caring responsibilities
- stereotyping and misinformed assumptions about the way in which lesbians and gay men lead their lives
- assumptions that the lives of lesbians and gay men are dominated by sex and sexuality, leading to intrusive questioning into their private lives
- discrimination experienced by gay men because aspects of their private lives have been criminalised eg some gay employees had lost their jobs because of their criminal records under the law of 'gross indecency', which had been used to penalise gay men for public displays of affection.

(LAGER 2002)

Generally there has been a positive response to the UK Government's recent anti-discrimination legislation from LGBT campaigning groups, such as Stonewall and LAGER. However, they argue that the new equality measures do not go far enough and have raised various issues of concern. For example:

- There is a need for legislation to be backed up by a code of practice to provide guidance to employers, employees and law courts on how the new measures should work in practice (NB 'Sexual Orientation and the Workplace: A Guide for Employers and Employees' has now been produced by ACAS and is available from their website)
- Training should be provided for employers, employees, employment tribunals, advice agencies etc
- There are still equality issues to be addressed in relation to workplace benefits. For example, the proposed pension scheme, which privileges the rights of married rather than unmarried couples, is particularly discriminatory in the case of those in same sex relationships:

*'We believe that all pension schemes should allow for same-sex couples to have equal benefits to opposite sex couples regardless of marital status'*

(LAGER 2002: 9)

- The Regulations allow for continued discrimination by certain religious organisations, for example where ‘the strongly held religious convictions of a significant number of the religion’s followers’ can be legally used as a justification for refusing to employ people from the LGBT community.
- Proposals for a new unitary Equalities Commission to deal with all aspects of discrimination and to replace all existing bodies such as the Equal Opportunities Commission and Commission for Racial Equality have not been universally welcomed. LAGER argues that separate commissions should be retained and a new one set up to deal with sexual orientation. They express concern that a single statutory commission ‘might be used as an excuse for a cost cutting exercise’ and would be inadequate to address complex issues of discrimination faced by diverse groups of people in the workplace.
- LAGER also argues that, in addition to legislation, there should be a proactive campaign to challenge people’s prejudices and ‘overcome centuries of institutionalised homophobia’ (2002:13).

This literature review has traced the growing prominence of social issues within the context of EU policy development and has indicated the EU influence on recent UK legislation to tackle discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. The review has also outlined the history of campaigns for lesbian and gay equal rights in the UK context and described an increased focus in recent years on challenging discrimination in employment.

## THE LGBT COMMUNITIES OF BRIGHTON AND HOVE: DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

This section of the report presents a comparative case study of Brighton & Hove and Hastings and provides evidence of both similarities and differences between the two areas. Brighton and Hastings are both seaside resorts on the south coast of England. Despite their location within the second most prosperous region in the UK, there are high levels of social exclusion within both urban areas, with some wards included among the 157 most deprived in the country (Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2000). A profile of the LGBT communities in both localities will be considered within this broader socio-economic context.

### Profile of Brighton & Hove

Brighton & Hove has a resident population of just under 250,000 with 160,000 (about 65%) of working age. A strong service sector is a particular feature of the local labour market, with a large percentage of the working population employed within the public services, education, health, financial and business services. (Brighton & Hove City Council Economic Development Team 2004). The creative and new media industries have played a significant part in the city's economic development since the 1990s, currently accounting for around 18% of local businesses. Tourism also makes a considerable contribution to the local economy, supporting about 20,000 jobs across a range of sectors.

Within this labour market context, a significantly high percentage of the working population are self-employed or in freelance, part-time or seasonal employment. 53% of those in work are employed full time, 29% work part time, with 18% self-employed (Sussex Economy Forecasting Model 2001). 2.8% of the adult population of Brighton & Hove is currently unemployed – a similar figure to the national average (2.4%). However, this profile is higher than the regional unemployment rate of 1.5%. Seven of the twenty-six wards in the city have unemployment rates of over 7%.

Brighton & Hove has a high level of educational achievement amongst its working age population. The Labour Force Survey shows 58% of the working age population with qualifications at level 3 or above while 40% have qualifications at level 4 or above. This compares with 42% and 24% nationally (Labour Force Survey 2001). The number of young professionals studying and working in Brighton & Hove is 5 times the national average. The city has a higher proportion of its population in the 25-44 age group than either the South East or the UK overall. This age group is the most economically dynamic section of the population and also the most highly qualified. A contributory factor to this high qualification profile is the presence of two universities – Brighton and Sussex – which produce around 7,000 graduates each year:

*The students and the in-migration of highly educated people make the city's workforce amongst the most highly educated in the country.  
(B&HCC Economic Development Team 2004: 4)*

Despite this, there is some evidence of a 'dual economy' in the city, in which higher skilled knowledge workers are supported by a growing number of lower skilled service sector employees (Sussex Enterprise 2002).

This growing divide between high and low skilled members of the labour force reinforces an impression of Brighton & Hove as a city with significant levels of poverty and social exclusion among the population. Brighton & Hove is the 94<sup>th</sup> most economically deprived local authority area in England putting it in the top 30% of deprived areas. Two wards - Marine and Moulsecoomb - rank in the top 10% of most deprived wards in England. Marine Ward is the 10<sup>th</sup> most educationally deprived ward in England and the most educationally deprived in the South East. Eight wards in Brighton & Hove rank in the worst 10% of wards in England for housing conditions. Both Marine and Moulsecoomb are in the top 5% most deprived wards in England for child poverty. 22% of individuals live in households in receipt of some form of income related benefit, compared with just over 18% in England overall.

Earnings are lower than both regional and national averages and labour costs are therefore cheap. However, as earnings are failing to keep up with property prices, there is evidence of residents moving out of the city to find affordable housing elsewhere. This development has implications both for the local labour market and for growing social divisions within the population:

*Housing affordability has become a major issue for the city, affecting recruitment and retention for local employers and widening the divide between the city's rich and poor residents.*

*(B&HCC Economic Development team 2004:4)*

Evidence from two recent surveys (Webb and Wright 2001; Platzer 2003), and our own research findings, suggests that similar socio-economic divisions exist within the local LGBT population. Estimates of the number of lesbians and gay men in Brighton and Hove range from 20,000 to 35,000 – although this population has not been accurately enumerated (Webb and Wright 2001). Brighton has had a well-established gay culture since the 1930s and, over the decades, has developed a reputation as a 'tolerant haven' for lesbians and gay men (Brighton Ourstory Project 2001). Since the 1990s, the growing confidence of this community has been reflected in the development of an extensive and vibrant commercial scene and events such as the annual Brighton Pride festival (see pg 13). This has led to a gradual recognition by the City Council of the significant contribution made by the LGBT community to the local economy and sexual orientation is now a key element in the marketing of the city:

*With the change of government in 1997 and a growing realisation of the power both of the pink pound and the pink vote, Brighton and Hove Council began to acknowledge the rights of the LGBT taxpayers. Mindful of the annual boost to the local economy provided by many thousands of LGBT visitors, the Council became keen to be seen as supportive of Brighton and Hove's LGBT community.*

*(Brighton OurstoryProject 2001: 10)*

Gay businesses choose to move to or start up in Brighton while other businesses are aware of, and target, the 'pink pound' (see note 3). Brighton and Hove Council

recently hosted a publicity visit for the gay press from the USA promoting the city as a gay tourist destination. According to a gay activist, large companies like 'Bass' run and supply a large number of gay venues and made a profit of approximately £11million from gay businesses in Brighton and London during 2002. Given the vibrancy of Brighton's gay scene this is unsurprising, yet recent research commissioned by Spectrum identified that non-scene and non-alcohol related community spaces for safe social interaction were some of the key requirements expressed by LGBT community members. (Platzer, 2003).

While the current high profile given to the gay scene in Brighton and Hove is both an affirmation of LGBT identity and an acknowledgement of the undoubted economic rewards to the city's economy, it also runs the risk of presenting a narrow and stereotyped image of the LGBT community which fails to take account of its diversity. A far more complex picture has emerged from two recent community-based surveys highlighting the needs and priorities of the local LGBT population. The first of these, The 'Count Me In' survey, was conducted in 2001 with Social Regeneration (SRB) and Primary Care Trust (PCT) funding, and has been an important addition in terms of information about the LGBT community in Brighton and Hove. More recently, Spectrum – the umbrella organisation for LGBT community and voluntary organisations - commissioned a survey of LGBT community groups in Brighton and Hove, 'Creating Safe and Inclusive Spaces in our Communities' (Platzer 2003). From the findings of both these surveys, a picture has emerged of a complex and heterogeneous LGBT community with a diverse range of experiences, needs and aspirations. They are variously old, young, have disabilities, are members of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, are single parents, experience bullying and need employment and training. The hierarchies of power within society are mirrored within the LGBT community, while negative attitudes towards same sex relationships result in discriminatory attitudes and practices layered over these. This produces a complex interaction of class, gender, age, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation.

Platzer (2003) argues that the visibility of the more prosperous members of the LGBT community perpetuates myths about the 'pink pound' and reinforces the perception of funders that the LGBT community does not experience social deprivation and therefore such issues need not be addressed. In her study of the impact of sexuality on local government policy-making, Carrabine makes the same point: 'Lesbians and gay men are perceived as being middle-class; therefore they are not 'needy' [and] do not need Council services...' (1995: 101). She also argues that within local authority policies relating to social inequality 'there appears to be a hierarchy of disadvantage' within which certain groups become invisible. Within this hierarchy, "race" is relatively high, with disability below it and women's issues next and sexuality somewhere near the bottom' (1995: 98).

Thus it can be argued that, in Brighton and Hove, the relatively high profile of the LGBT community in economic terms has had the effect of masking social inequalities within that community. The social consequences of this inequality is evident in homeless statistics, the gay sex industry, HIV/Aids support work, incidents of homophobic bullying in schools, same sex violence, and community safety in both 'gay' areas and marginal housing estates (all issues that have emerged in interviews). Raw data from the local Rough Sleepers Unit suggests that a significant

number of rough sleepers on the streets of Brighton and Hove identify as LGBT and their sexual orientation was the principal reason for coming to the area.

A similar theme emerged from our interviews with project workers from LGBT support organisations, during which concerns were expressed that, in its enthusiasm for promoting the city as a 'gay Mecca', the Council may be in danger of overlooking the needs of more socially excluded members of the LGBT community. One informant commented that this approach was 'irresponsible...if the council then failed to acknowledge other aspects of the city' which would impact on the lives of LGBT people moving into the area. The feeling was expressed that some of the negative consequences, such as a lack of affordable housing and low paid or seasonal employment, had been marginalized because of their potentially negative impact in discouraging people and businesses from moving to the city. While there is a significant migration of LGBT people to Brighton and Hove because of its reputation as a 'gay friendly' town, the most pressing problems many of them face are finding somewhere affordable to live, regular employment and a range of health - related issues (including mental health and those relating to drug dependency and HIV/AIDS). Over 50% of the respondents to the 'Count Me In' survey had moved to the city because of the existence of the LGBT community, but almost 20% did not have anywhere to live when they moved into the area. Equally, while more than three-quarters of respondents were employed, over 21% had no work. Nearly a third of this economically inactive group were disabled and nearly a quarter were retired (Webb and Wright 2001).

An interview with the coordinator of Spectrum highlighted the support needs of other marginalised sections of the LGBT community, such as disabled people and those from black and minority ethnic communities. Spectrum had begun fundraising for outreach workers to develop activities and support capacity building with these groups. As a result of this initiative, an LGBT group, Women of Colour, had been formed, and the LGBT disabled people's forum had recently held its inaugural meeting in Brighton.

## **Profile of Hastings**

As with Brighton and Hove, issues of employability for members of the LGBT community in Hastings need to be considered within a broader social and economic context. Hastings is a medium sized coastal town to the east of Brighton, with a population of 85,000. Although once considered one of the most attractive seaside resorts in England, it has suffered a sustained period of economic decline over a number of years (Hastings Borough Council 2002). It is currently ranked as the most socially deprived borough in the south-east region and the twenty seventh most deprived area nationally (Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2000). Five wards fall within the most deprived 10% in England: Broomgrove, Castle, Central St Leonards, Hollington and Gensing and four wards come within the worst 10% in England for educational achievement (IMD 2001 and 2003).

According to the Hastings Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, there are a number of key factors contributing to this socio-economic decline, including a poor transport infrastructure; the decline of the tourist industry; a lack of brown field sites available

for industrial and commercial development; and a low skilled workforce (Hastings Borough Council 2002: 10).

Unemployment levels in the town are high with a 4.1% average compared to 1.6% for the south east region. Male unemployment within the most deprived wards is much higher at 13.3% (1066 Enterprise Jan 2003). In addition, 8% of all unemployed have never worked and 36.2% are long term unemployed (Hastings Borough Council Oct 2003).

Unlike Brighton, there are low levels of skills across the workforce. A lack of basic skills has been identified as a particular problem, with 25% of the working age population experiencing difficulties with literacy or numeracy (Dept of Education and Science 2001).

The local labour market is dominated by the public service sector, with the major employers being the county and local councils, the child support and the benefits agencies, the district general hospital and the further education college. In 2001, 40% of the workforce was employed within the statutory sector and over 25% in the hotel, catering and distribution industries (Hastings Link 2002).

A representative from SEEDA (South East Economic Development Agency) observed in an interview that the local labour market is characterised by an unusually high number (3,500) of small businesses. This has implications for patterns of employment in Hastings, such as the increased casualisation and insecurity of the workforce, often with verbal contracts only. According to this informant, the prevalence of seasonal work adds to the higher unemployment figures out of season, especially amongst the transient, unskilled population. Poor transport links heighten geographical isolation, especially within the most deprived areas, and this, when linked with high levels of poor health among the Hastings population, can also increase psychological isolation. In terms of 'employability', both geographical and psychological isolation can prevent the take-up of employment and training opportunities.

The LGBT community in Hastings is much smaller and less visible, and currently lacks the collective 'voice' that has developed in Brighton in recent years. However, a wide-ranging survey has recently been conducted by the Rainbow Alliance, a newly formed umbrella organisation of LGBT community and voluntary groups (Fairley and Noudjem 2004). This research has provided valuable information about the LGBT population and raised awareness of key issues of concern, such as health, community safety and access to benefits. According to this study, there are no accurate figures available of the size of the local LGBT population, but the report authors estimate the figure to be around 3000 – 4000 (or 3-4% of the total population).

Despite the limited information available about the LGBT population at the time we conducted our fieldwork in Hastings, our research indicates its diverse and heterogeneous nature. For example, there were obvious differences between the needs and opinions of gay and lesbian interviewees - though perhaps not to the same extent as in Brighton, where the economic currency of the 'pink pound' can be seen as male-orientated. In an interview with a group from the Gay Helpline in

Hastings, the impression was given that there had been an active and well-supported lesbian scene several years earlier but that this was now peripheral to that of gay men, which itself was not highly structured or visible locally. One informant commented on how the decline of this local 'scene' had led to increased social isolation for lesbians still living in Hastings:

*Both lesbian and 'straight' women felt safer in the bar on Thursday (gay) nights at the ...pub but this doesn't happen any more...  
(member of Gay Helpline focus group)*

Age also emerged as a significant factor in the context of work-related issues. For some young people it was attitudes of parents and teachers, and bullying which have the most impact on school or college work. Having spoken to a counsellor, one 16 year-old interviewee 'came out' at school in 2002 because he wanted to help change things but felt he wanted to do it 'without offending others'. Education matters, particularly in the case of this student, who saw it as a way of legitimately leaving the area and finding a community, such as a university or a large city, in which to find more like-minded people.

A recent article in the Observer magazine drew attention to the prevalence of homophobia within secondary schools:

*The battle for equality hasn't been won yet. Gay rights activists are currently striving to stamp out institutional homophobia - notably bullying at schools (October 26 2003).*

Elderly members of the LGBT community, of which there are several in the town and who were contacted via the Hastings Gay Helpline, shared many older people's concerns regarding caring for a partner, whether they would be able to live together in residential care, what their rights were regarding pensions, tenancies or 'next of kin' rights, should they be hospitalised. However, members of this older generation were not necessarily sympathetic to the equalities agenda. One older gay respondent questioned the need for equal opportunities protection in any form, seeing it as 'a difficult topic. I strongly dislike any form of state interference....'

The interview with the Gay Helpline group highlighted an absence of appropriate services targeted at the LGBT community:

*Social services refer people to us but this isn't appropriate because we're a social support group. The helpline can't be all things to all people. There's a lack of awareness in mainstream services about LGBT issues.  
(member of Gay Helpline focus group)*

In common with large sections of the Hastings population, lifestyle choices are constrained by poverty and social exclusion. Local wages are lower than average (as in Sussex as a whole), therefore travelling to the LGBT 'honey pots' of Brighton, London or Manchester for socialising is not a regular option for LGBT people in lower paid work. As one informant commented:

*Dinkies ('double income no kids') fuel Brighton – here it's low incomes even for gay couples.*

Similar financial constraints were also experienced by retired members of the local Gay Helpline focus group, having to cope on modest pensions.

This impression of the complex interaction of social and economic factors and their impact on people's lives is reinforced by the Rainbow Alliance research which found that 36% of respondents had actively considered moving away from Hastings, with the lack of appropriate social venues in which to meet other LGBT people cited as the main reason (Fairley and Noudjem 2004). Another reason, given by one of our own interviewees, a gay activist, was that people were leaving Hastings 'to look for higher wages and better living conditions'.

An interview with an employee from Hastings Borough Council, who was involved in equalities work, conveyed the impression that, as in Brighton, there appeared to be a 'hierarchy of disadvantage' within the Borough Council's equalities strategy: the priority area was race and ethnicity, with disability and sexuality next in line. This informant had previously worked for a large urban authority in the Midlands which had a long established culture of dealing with diversity among the local population. In contrast, she felt that in Hastings there was less experience of equal opportunities issues and a need to 'encourage a climate of openness' about discriminatory attitudes and practices.

The comparative approach used in this case study has highlighted both similarities and differences between the two research localities and their LGBT communities. For example, factors such as high levels of social deprivation and the predominance of low paid, seasonal employment are likely to have implications for the employment opportunities available in both areas. However, Brighton, with its well established and high profile gay social scene would appear to be a more congenial and less isolating location for many LGBT people than Hastings. Our case study also indicates that the LGBT populations of both Brighton and Hastings are heterogeneous and diverse, but this diversity is not necessarily reflected in local authority equalities strategies.

## **EMPLOYABILITY: THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR**

'Employability' is a contested term which often carries with it underlying assumptions of the primary responsibility of the individual in terms of developing and updating personal skills and being 'responsible economic citizens' (Hake 2003). This approach has been criticised as over-simplistic and failing to take into account the barriers and social exclusion faced by many sections of the population. Our research has highlighted the vital role played by the voluntary and community sector in Brighton and Hastings in supporting the needs of socially excluded sections of the local population in both areas. This section of the report will outline key employability issues for members of the LGBT community and describe innovative practices emerging from the voluntary sector to address some of these issues. This kind of case study approach to identifying examples of promising practice in tackling issues of employability and social exclusion is in line with the broader aims of the Sequel programme.

According to the recently commissioned Spectrum survey of LGBT community organisations (Platzer 2003), there are at least 50 LGBT support groups in the Brighton and Hove area. Some of these are informal and organised around shared social interests; many others are formally constituted groups which provide services to socially excluded members of the LGBT community:

*Where formal groups were providing services such as advocacy, counselling or training, nearly all of the service users were severely socially disadvantaged in terms of income, housing and employment. Furthermore, many suffered the effects of social isolation which arises from societal homophobia and many also suffered from enduring mental health problems.*  
(Platzer 2003: 15-16)

The groups consulted in the survey identified that the main priorities for the LGBT community should be 'health, mental health...improving access to mainstream services and addressing discrimination within the LGBT community and the wider community' (2003: 18). The training needs of LGBT organisations themselves would also have to be addressed, in order to build their capacity and help them work more effectively in meeting the needs of their service users. Most groups consulted expressed concern about the 'interface' between the LGBT community and mainstream services:

*There was a general feeling that local mainstream services still needed to improve in relation to LGBT access.*  
(Platzer 2003: 12)

In the fieldwork for the SEQUAL research, a total of 28 LGBT voluntary and community sector organisations were contacted in Brighton and Hastings (see appendix one for list of organisations contacted). Eleven of these organisations offered services to people from the LGBT community and addressed a range of social and health needs including: sexual health, mental health, living with HIV/AIDS, drug and alcohol dependence, homelessness, victim support and unemployment. Although employment and labour market issues were not identified as priorities by the Spectrum survey, our research identified voluntary organisations in the Brighton

area which were actively involved in promoting employability, for example, through the provision of employment advice and guidance and employment training. The following two case studies will illustrate how, through this work, these voluntary organisations were helping to improve access to mainstream employment services for their clients, as well as raising awareness of LGBT issues within those services.

### **Case study 1: Information, advice and guidance (IAG)**

The Brighton and Hove GAINS (Guidance Advice and Information Network Services) was established in 1999 through DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) and EU funding. Its role was to provide locally accessible and good quality information, advice and guidance (IAG) services to adults about opportunities for learning and work. The emphasis on delivery through local IAG partnerships arose from the perception that the local partners would have a more coherent local knowledge of existing services and gaps in provision and would enable a more coherent coordination of existing services. The importance of involving the voluntary and community sector alongside statutory institutions was recognised from the beginning of the project. This was to facilitate contact with key target groups where the advice and outreach work of the voluntary and community sector is particularly effective. Its effectiveness in reaching 'hard to reach' groups was seen as essential given the outcomes of the initial research for the IAG project. This revealed that those most in need of information, advice and guidance, as well as most in need of continuing their education to improve their skills were least likely to use existing advice and guidance services.

Links across the Network membership resulted in more effective relationships between agencies and the beginning of skills sharing across the Network. One example was the training offered by the IAG worker at GLAM (Gay and Lesbian Arts and Media) to IAG outreach workers within the Network about issues of sexuality, ways of responding and advice about how referrals might be made. This was a positive development and an example of how the Network has grown organically, with members beginning to share skills across organisations thus contributing to an improved level of service available to clients.

For GLAM the outreach project offered the opportunity to make contact with organisations that might refer clients to their information and advice service as well as their training facilities. As a result, they developed much closer links with other information and advice agencies. They also established working relationships with other organisations that found out about them through the Network. For their own part, GLAM had more confidence about referring people on to other information and advice agencies, as they became more familiar with these organisations. Previously, GLAM had been more focused on training delivery with a minimal level of information and advice giving. The outreach project increased the range of potential referral agencies and therefore their client base. The potential for increased publicity and ideas for a more extensive training programme were the most evident outcomes from the outreach work.

There was recognition within the Network that IAG does not always operate in neat boxes isolated from other types of support. Local research carried out for the IAG

project has shown that most information and advice that actually enables adults to access learning and jobs is usually part of a package of general support available in diverse community settings. Effective IAG takes place as part of vocational training, in adult and community education centres, outreach projects, community development, welfare rights work and housing advice rather than simply in dedicated advice centres.

Our research suggests that GLAM's work through the GAINS Network was an isolated example of good practice. GLAM's coordinator confirmed to us the findings from the Spectrum survey that mainstream IAG services are not effectively reaching members of the LGBT community, while there is insufficient capacity within the voluntary sector to compensate for this gap in provision. At the time of this interview, funding for the IAG service was available through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). According to the coordinator, this funding covered the costs of short-term delivery only and did not adequately address the longer term capacity building needs of a small voluntary organisation like GLAM, or the sustainability of their training programmes for socially excluded members of the LGBT community (see footnote 4 and appendix 2 – closure of GLAM ).

## **Case study 2: employment training for people with HIV status**

Another important service offered by the voluntary sector in Brighton was in relation to the employment training needs of people diagnosed as HIV positive. Access to appropriate employment advice and training is an important issue for members of the LGBT community with HIV status. For example, they may not be ready to return to full time work and may need more flexible work situations, raising issues about eligibility for sick leave and sick pay. Others may decide to change their occupation, but there are few appropriate opportunities available for skills updating or retraining (interview with HIV support worker).

'Brighton Body Positive' (BBP) plays a major role in the provision of key services to people with HIV status in Brighton and Hove. In partnership with GLAM, they have developed an ESF-funded programme ('Life Train Express'), which offers vocational training, career advice and guidance and job search skills to anyone diagnosed with HIV. At the time of our research, GLAM and Body Positive were the only training providers in Brighton and Hove who specifically recruited through the LGBT community.

While a 'positive' diagnosis does not indicate sexual orientation, statistics from Body Positive indicated that 95% of those diagnosed with HIV in the local area were gay white men. However, both Body Positive and Open Door (a drop-in service for people with HIV status) indicated an increasing number of service users who were female, black African, or were applying for exceptional leave to remain in the UK.

An HIV positive diagnosis raises significant issues about access to employment advice and training opportunities. HIV positive people are now going back into work after diagnosis, while ten to fifteen years ago people tended to leave work and go onto disability benefits. With the development of combination therapies many people with HIV status have not become so ill and now want to go back to work. However,

a gap of several years in employment history becomes a problem. According to the HIV worker, employer responses depend on the employment sector and the size of the company. For example, large corporations tend to have better human resource management policies that incorporate HIV status along with sexual orientation in their equalities policies (eg American Express, Marks and Spencer).

Many people in this situation may not be ready to go back into work and need more flexible working situations to allow for ongoing treatment or recurrent bouts of illness. This raises issues about eligibility for sick leave and sick pay which can lead to a cycle of illness-stress-illness. There is also a tendency for people with HIV status to revert to casual work as an alternative to remaining in a stressful work situation. As there is a preponderance of small to medium sized enterprises in Brighton and Hove and an extensive service sector, this kind of employment is more readily available. For example, bar work in the commercial gay scene is the mainstay employment indicated by Body Positive focus group participants.

An interview with a support worker indicated that people with HIV status often take the opportunity to change occupation, which may involve retraining, skills updating or seeking self-employment. Despite the demand for the updating of skills among this particular target group, the Employment Service had no specific recruitment or training programmes for HIV positive people. Yet, gaps in areas such as information technology, resulting from long periods of illness, might mean that people had missed out on key labour market developments.

Our research reinforces the conclusion of the Spectrum survey that mainstream services in Brighton need to address issues of access for members of the LGBT community. An interview with a representative from the Employment Service indicated that they were not aware of having a policy of working with the LGBT community directly, although they did anticipate that a significant proportion of their clients would be LGBT and addressed this in their equalities training. The Employment Service was not aware, either, of offering specific advice or re-training programmes to people with HIV status returning to work. However, they felt it would be useful to have more information about both unemployed LGBT people and HIV positive returners to the labour market, to facilitate their transition to Job Centre Plus. At the time of interviewing, they did not have any data to inform their work with these client groups. As the Employment Service was now an ESF co-financing organisation, it wanted to encourage innovative ideas about delivering training to all communities in Brighton & Hove, and welcomed any input to facilitate this.

Hastings, like Brighton, has an active and vibrant voluntary sector, with over 500 voluntary and community organisations in the area, according to a local directory (Hastings Voluntary Action 2004). As part of our original mapping exercise, we contacted a number of voluntary organisations which were receiving EU or national project funding to support employment training or development within the local community. It became apparent that none of these was solely directed at the needs of the LGBT community. We subsequently made contact with four organisations offering support or services to members of the LGBT community. None of these groups received EU funding or were involved directly in employment related training.

However, interviews with project workers and community activists in Hastings and Brighton have highlighted other issues of concern to members of the LGBT communities in both areas which could be seen to have an impact upon their employment and training needs, particularly in relation to health and community safety. These issues will be explored in the following section.

## HEALTH, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND EMPLOYABILITY

Issues relating to health and to safety in the community have been identified as a high priorities for the LGBT communities in both Brighton and Hastings (Webb and Wright 2001; Fairley and Nouidjem 2004). This section will explore how factors such as poor mental health and vulnerability to homophobic attitudes and behaviour, while less directly linked to employability, can nevertheless act as barriers to training and employment.

### Health issues

Health related issues are a high priority in Hastings for the population as a whole. For example, numbers of cases of coronary heart disease, cancer and mental illness are all above the local health authority average (Hastings Health Authority Annual Report 1999). A recent survey estimated that a high percentage of residents in the economically active age range were suffering from some degree of mental ill health (ONS Surveys of Psychiatric Morbidity 2001). The recently published Rainbow Alliance survey of the LGBT community in Hastings reported that about 45% of the survey sample had suffered some form of mental health problem or depression at some point in their lives. Nearly half of these respondents felt that their illness or depression was linked in some way to their sexuality.

In an interview with an outreach worker from the Terence Higgins Trust, it became apparent that the multi-layered problems of poverty, mental and sexual health tended to create more tensions for those who needed support regarding their sexual orientation. Funding strands for the latter are often drawn from Home Office or Health Authority initiatives which, though more flexible than those within regeneration or similar sources, can be seen as unnecessarily labelling the LGBT community with the 'stigma' of HIV/ Aids or mental illness.

A particular concern was raised in this interview about the sexual practices of some young gay men in the area. The informant expressed concern about the number of their casual sexual encounters with bisexual older men and envisaged the need for specific outreach work on safe sex for this group in the part of the town where this was taking place. He described the situation for LGBT people in Hastings as:

*'very closeted. It's a cultural, class issue within the deprived communities.'*

In the past, there had been difficulty working with young people in schools around issues of sexual orientation, because of the inhibiting effect of the Section 28 legislation (see page 12 of this report for further discussion of section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act). However, this need was now being addressed by the Terence Higgins Trust, which was working in Hastings through the GLYSSN project (Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Young People's Network). The aim of the project was to offer support to young people exploring their sexual identity or those who might be suffering from homophobic bullying. It also focused on issues of sexual health. Supporting what the outreach worker described as a 'mobile clientele', there were contact points around the town, including a community learning centre, which offered

training opportunities as well. The use of an open access venue such as this was viewed as a positive development, offering a much needed 'safe space' for vulnerable young LGBT people. The centre might also prove to be a suitable venue for the equal opportunities training that the outreach worker identified as a priority need.

An interview with a counsellor who had previously worked on a young people's sexual health initiative raised issues about the diversity of health support needs within the LGBT community. It was her impression, for example, that lesbians had been missing out within recent sexual health initiatives as 'a lot of work is linked to HIV/AIDS, which is seen as a gay (male) issue.'

A female worker within the Terence Higgins Trust, based at a local clinic, was concentrating on the needs of asylum seekers – a growing number of asylum seekers are moving to the Hastings area as part of the UK government's dispersal programme. According to this informant, this was very delicate work which highlighted the need to raise awareness among the local population in Hastings around issues relating to both asylum and HIV/AIDS.

In addition to this good practice in terms of service delivery, the Terence Higgins Trust also provided some examples of creative employee support in its contract practice, such as offering same-sex bereavement leave. This had come out of direct experience of client and staff needs and was part of the organisation's overarching equal opportunities policy.

### **Safety in the community and training environment**

Issues relating to community safety have focused mainly on feeling unsafe and vulnerable to homophobic attacks or abuse in public places. A focus group interview with the Hastings Gay Helpline identified personal safety as a major issue, with many members feeling that their social lives are proscribed as there are so few 'safe' public meeting places. One informant commented that:

*Hastings is a very violent place...its alcohol-fuelled violence.*

Another said that because of widespread homophobic attitudes:

*It's extremely difficult to advertise an LGBT event in a public place.*

Similar issues were raised by informants in Brighton, where the LGBT community has a much higher profile. One interviewee, who had been involved in LGBT equalities and community safety issues for some years, pointed out that the existence of a large LGBT community could make living in Brighton and Hove 'more dangerous if you are LGBT, not less'. A larger community was more diverse but also more visible, and could become an easier target for those who viewed it as threatening or unacceptably different.

Informants involved in community safety and health promotion indicated some of the consequences of a large and diverse LGBT population. For example, young gay

men who previously may have headed to the gay scene in London are now arriving in Brighton. This brings problems such as rough sleeping and unsafe sexual behaviour that do not always get reported. The incidence of same sex violence within relationships has begun to be acknowledged, with advice and support for lesbians and young gay men available through the Women's Refuge Project. A project funded through Brighton and Hove Primary Care Trust began by recognising that one of the factors contributing to unsafe sexual behaviour amongst men was low self-esteem. Green Carnation Productions has produced a CD-rom, 'Free Beach', to provide an opportunity for gay men in Brighton and Hove to discuss these issues. (Spectrum newsletter, issue 4 summer 2003).

One informant was working as a victim liaison officer in an area of the city receiving New Deal funding and discussed the particular problems faced by young gay men living on socially disadvantaged, marginal housing estates and their vulnerability to homophobic crime. He commented that moving away from their community could be equally problematic:

*If they move into hostels they can encounter the same prejudices there...*

Some attempts were being made to provide support for LGBT rough sleepers. It was acknowledged that there was a need for the provision of safe housing similar to women's refuges, for young people who needed access to services and advice about health and welfare.

The link between 'safety' and employability may not be immediately obvious. However, findings from our research suggest that homophobic attitudes can also pose a significant barrier to members of the LGBT community in the training environment.

As part of our research, we contacted training organisations which work with socially excluded groups and the long term unemployed in both Brighton and Hastings. Staff from these organisations reported that the use of homophobic language and behaviour by many trainees was commonplace. The clients of many training organisations are white, working class, young or middle-aged men, who have a tendency to be insensitive about issues of sexuality, ethnicity or gender. This can make the training environment insufficiently safe for LGBT trainees to 'come out'.

Similar discriminatory attitudes towards LGBT people were reported among young participants on a training scheme in Hastings. The scheme offered training and employment preparation to 14 - 24 year-olds with learning and social needs. With links to local employers, the borough council, youth services, police, courts and probation service it had well-defined support networks and its equal opportunities policy was written in collaboration with the Hastings Partnership. This stated that:

*The Partnership are committed to actively challenging racism, sexism and all forms of discrimination faced by minority ethnic people, by women, by people because of their sexual orientation or by people with disabilities.*

The youth service contributed some expertise to the workshops and this included

some input into the equal opportunities sessions for the trainees. There were also links with GLYSSN, the support group for lesbian, gay and bisexual young people.

A member of the training staff admitted that there was a need to challenge equalities practice at all levels within the training scheme but without clear priorities or skills in this field, it did not appear to happen. The equalities unit in the training package was not always handled well by staff who were not confident in the topic and some trainees really did need challenging. Homophobic language was common place, according to at least two other interviewees who worked with young people. It was felt that racism was being tackled more successfully and they would support an equal opportunities programme to look at how to deal with homophobia in a similar way.

Training links and other strategies for young people's support in Hastings were also discussed during an interview with a youth worker. The local Youth Council had a young person's ethnicity representative, but there was no one representing the interests of young LGBT people. The youth worker viewed sexual orientation as something that young people did not easily discuss and might only disclose their concerns prior to leaving a counselling session or dropping out of a group. She supported the view that Hastings could be seen as a 'macho' society, linked to a culture of alcohol drinking, and in this disadvantaged climate, the use of 'gay' or 'queer' as an insult was common place. The one bisexual young person who had raised the issue of homophobia within the Youth Council had subsequently moved away from the area, but the worker was hopeful that as the Youth Council gained in confidence and mutual trust, young members would create a supportive atmosphere in which more open debate could take place.

An interview with the organiser of one successful EU funded project raised an issue about employability and discrimination which could have an impact on members of the LGBT community seeking employment within community settings. One discriminatory factor for this and other similar EU projects offering childcare support was the involvement of men in the caring role. Terms such as 'gay' and 'paedophile' had been used by adults and children towards male helpers, and similar examples of homophobic attitudes had also been given by the youth services. For some youth workers, issues around discrimination because of sexual orientation were more important than racism, in that 'myths and misinformation' got in the way of young people being able to talk about their concerns in groups or in private. 'There is a level of hatred that horrifies the team', one said when interviewed.

The case study cited above gives an insight into the casual use of discriminatory language and the lack of trust in some sections of the community. It also indicates a potential economic barrier for LGBT people of working age, especially if they happen to be single parents, if they feel they cannot easily access local employment or skills training in these disadvantaged communities, such as jobs in childcare, play work or as teaching assistants. The impact of such prejudice on any LGBT residents in these areas could be acute and unlikely to encourage integration or acceptance.

## **DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE**

Evidence from both national and local surveys over the last few years has consistently identified significant levels of discrimination and harassment experienced by LGBT people in the workplace. (Palmer 1993; Webb and Wright 2001; Fairley and Noiudjem 2004). For example, 26% of respondents in the Brighton 'Count Me In' survey and 19% in the Hastings research reported discrimination, harassment or abuse at work on the grounds of their sexual orientation.

Over the course of this research, we identified four cases of harassment at work, which are outlined below. All these incidents pre-dated the legislation which came into force in December 2003, making it unlawful to discriminate, directly or indirectly against anyone, or subject them to harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation in the context of work or vocational training. (Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations, 2003 – see footnote 5). While these case studies only represent a small sample of the kinds of discriminatory behaviour experienced by LGBT people, they will help to give an insight into some of the issues involved, how these were dealt with by employers, and the extent to which employees felt they had been supported.

Employee A was still at college; he had a part-time job in a small local branch of a convenience store and decided to come out to his colleagues at work. This led to difficulties between Employee A and one of the other employees. His other colleagues, however, supported his complaint to the manager, who had the other person removed from the branch. Employee A had experienced homophobic bullying at school but had found the majority of teachers and support staff very helpful. In reflecting on this experience during the interview, he expressed the view that more obvious and accessible support was needed to encourage young LGBT people to seek help to come out and to challenge negative attitudes.

The importance of this case was in the impact it had on employee A and his attitude to future employment. Because he felt he had had some good support and preparation from his school, he felt able to challenge his colleague. The positive outcome from his workplace experience had encouraged him to be positive about his future and he intended to continue at the local college then into higher education. However, he did not see his future working life being in Hastings.

Employee B was a care worker with a social services department, who had faced homophobic verbal abuse from clients. He did not feel that sufficient management support or protection was offered to staff in his situation and expressed the view that 'lip service is paid to equal opportunities' within his department. However, he did receive support from colleagues and had access to a trade union, had he decided to take matters further. Compared to Employee A, he was less inclined to challenge the discriminatory behaviour he had experienced. As an older worker, he felt he was unlikely to seek work elsewhere but had learned coping strategies over the years.

Employee C had worked in London and moved to Hastings for a local government post, where she came out to a select number of colleagues. Relations with some of her colleagues had become difficult thereafter and culminated in an accusation

against her, by a female employee, of sexual harassment. She countered this with complaints of sexual and racial harassment by her fellow workers. The industrial tribunal case against her was dismissed and, although she felt that the process had vindicated her own position, by the time the case had been decided in her favour, she had lost her job and was working elsewhere. Whilst receiving some support from her trade union and her GP, she felt her partner and long term friends had given her the most help in coming to terms with what had happened. Employee C also drew attention to the fact that there was no equal opportunities officer in post at her place of work at the time of the tribunal. As a result, there was no procedure for evaluating this incident and feeding back the findings into the organisation's equal opportunities policy.

The fourth case study provides a different kind of illustration of the complex nature of anti-victimisation work and equal opportunities action around sexual orientation in the workplace. As a result of a local Anti Victimisation Initiative (AVI) some serious cases of victimisation were reported in a local authority department, with staff subjected to stalking, sexual harassment and homophobic abuse. Although these cases would normally have been taken up by the AVI, the staff who were being victimised decided not to make formal complaints. Working conditions under the contractor at that time were deteriorating and workers were worried about job security. However, when the department came back in-house after a troubled history of being contracted out, some training sessions were organised around equalities issues for all the staff, including managers and supervisors. The training dealt with a range of issues, including racism, domestic violence, sexual harassment and homophobia and received a great deal of positive feedback about its impact. The equalities worker who organised the training commented on the particular problems faced by LGBT employees in certain types of work environment:

*The workers in the ... department are about 98% male and white... it's not the place to be out, really...*

### **Creating a safe workplace environment**

During this research, a common response received to questions about employment related issues, suggested that many LGBT people preferred not to be open about their sexual orientation until they felt their working environment was safe. This issue was raised during an interview with a public sector union representative who was also a gay activist. He commented that some people chose to be selectively 'out' at work and that this could often reflect underlying tensions within the work environment:

*For example...we have a member who works in a family centre in the north of the city...she's an out lesbian and everyone thinks that's great and sexy and fun and very modern – her colleagues do – but ...she's not out to her client group...because she doesn't feel safe...she doesn't feel there's support from colleagues because...when you talk about issues of safety and oppression...any areas that could be perceived as difficult...then people don't want to know...because 'get on with it' 'what's your problem' so there's no empathy there...it's not seen as an issue*

*for the employer – it's an issue for the individual lesbian or gay man who is providing a front line service...*

*(J, union representative)*

The difficulty of deciding whether or not to be open about sexual identity in the workplace could also be compounded by the unquestioned assumptions made by heterosexual work colleagues:

*...your life outside work – by that they mean your sexual identity – is not a work issue...if you bring it into the workplace you're seen as rocking the boat...why do you bring your sexual identity into the workplace?...the fact that I'm surrounded by heterosexuals who always bring their sexual identity into the workplace...let alone all the other constructs they put up...your sexual identity is not seen as a work issue – it's seen as private and out there...*

*(J, union representative)*

Jane Andrews highlights this same issue from the point of view of a gay college lecturer in Further Education, and draws attention to the way in which negative perceptions of LGBT identity can become internalised:

*Do you dread that casual chatty conversation which strangers sometimes engage in? That question: 'And are you married?' Those of us who are lesbian, gay or bisexual know that the issues about being out or not is far from straightforward, and that, however open and confident we feel, we have to make numerous daily decisions about how 'out' to be...One of the insidious ways in which homophobia operates is through self censorship and silence. If you are gay you can never quite be sure what will be the response to 'coming out' so many gay people are always cautious.*

*(Andrews 2001, pp 74-5)*

The above examples raise the question of the kind of workplace support structures which would be most helpful and appropriate for LGBT employees. It was pointed out to us that there were practical problems in organising around sexual orientation issues in the workplace as people can effectively 'out' themselves by attending an LGBT forum or support group. According to a member of one local authority's LGBT forum, there were particular difficulties in offering support to workers in manual posts – such as those workers in the local authority department referred to in the previous section. Those employees the forum was set up for, 'hard to reach' people in the LGBT community working for the council, would not ask for time to attend the LGBT forum as that would 'out' them at work when they may not feel their work environment was sufficiently safe to do this:

*...there are pockets in the authority where it is not safe [to be out]...and those are traditional areas around building control...the manual side of entertainment venues...for example the \_\_\_ Centre...we have one member there who's had a lot of homophobia, who works in the electrical and maintenance section in that building...these are all traditional male working class areas...it's very difficult...*

*(J, union representative)*

On the other hand, self-organised fora were seen by those who participated as an important means of supporting LGBT staff and of monitoring equalities policies and discriminatory practices.

The attitude and behaviour of line managers and senior staff was viewed as another important factor. Another member of the LGBT workers' forum provided an illustration of this: the fact that a senior person in their organisation was 'out' at work, helped to create an environment which made it possible for more junior employees to 'come out' as well. The informant felt that this provided a positive model of workplace practice.

### **Monitoring sexual orientation**

The monitoring of sexual orientation emerged as another complex and contested workplace related issue from the research. On the one hand, it was considered a valuable method of collecting information to measure impact in the delivery of services. As discussed earlier, concerns had been expressed among LGBT community organisations in Brighton about limited access to mainstream services among sections of the LGBT population (Platzer 2003). A worker from the Brighton & Hove GAINS network reported that monitoring of LGBT take up of information, advice and guidance (IAG) services had been undertaken in recent years. This demonstrated that, out of seventeen target groups, the LGBT community had been consistently the lowest in accessing IAG provision.

On the other hand, monitoring LGBT take-up of services raises issues about 'outing' people in circumstances where perhaps they do not consider their sexuality as significant. At a dissemination event with members of the LGBT community in Brighton, participants were divided on the issue. Those who argued against monitoring raised questions such as:

*'What is going to be done with this information, who has access to it and who will hold it?'*

They also pointed out the risks of 'traceability' and the need for people to feel safe about the outcomes of monitoring before they can accept it. The view was expressed that any funding body or mainstream service provider planning to include sexual orientation as a monitoring category should be aware of the sensitivities surrounding this issue and be prepared to consult with LGBT organisations about the most effective way of carrying this out.

A worker on an anti-victimisation project (and gay activist) commented that monitoring sexual orientation might suggest that LGBT communities receive special treatment and this could be seen as potentially divisive. Recent research into regeneration initiatives in the city suggests that such concerns can be well-founded. A lack of transparency regarding the processes governing information gathering and allocation of resources can lead to cynicism and the development of divisive attitudes towards particular areas and interest groups (Cairns, 2002).

This section of the report has highlighted a number of issues with implications for sexual orientation and equalities practice in the workplace, including experiences of discrimination and harassment, 'safety' in the workplace environment, and the monitoring of sexual orientation.

## **EQUALITIES TRAINING AND MAINSTREAMING**

Many of the findings outlined above, such as the homophobic attitudes prevalent among some sections of the workforce and the need for certain types of support structures to be available to LGBT employees, indicate a widespread need for equalities training around issues of sexual orientation. The task of raising awareness of the implications of the recent equalities legislation in an area like Hastings poses a particular challenge. As discussed earlier, small businesses, casual and seasonal employment are key features of the local economy. According to the representative from SEEDA, sole traders and very small businesses can suffer from a lack of up-to-date information on employment legislation, health and safety and disciplinary matters, leading to business isolation. In addition, lack of staff cover or sufficient turn-over to easily access training or information, plus unwillingness to see these as important aspects of development, increase the problem. Employees in this environment are unlikely to be unionised or to have access to information about their employment rights. This is likely to have significant implications in terms of implementing the new equalities legislation.

Access to good equal opportunities training has also been raised as an issue by organisations in the Hastings voluntary sector. One large voluntary organisation felt that the quality of training which is offered through local agencies is too generic and is not necessarily geared to the needs of local communities, either in its focus or in the skills of the trainers. A spokesperson from another voluntary organisation in the town felt that, whilst empowerment of communities was stated as a strategic goal, well trained and empowered people would make demands that could not be met. Therefore there was some ambivalence in implementing the strategy within the organisation itself.

Equal opportunities training had been available to local authority staff in Hastings and the materials had been well presented. However, a representative from a public sector union felt that there was little evidence, at the time of the interview, that what happened during the training sessions linked into workplace practice.

Our research has identified that a number of key service providers in Hastings are committed to working together to develop a coherent equalities strategy through the Hastings Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). One of the aims of the partnership will be to engage employers in both the public and private sectors in the task of raising awareness of the new legislative requirements relating to a range of equalities issues, and embedding good equalities practice across the employment sector.

In Brighton and Hove too, the Council's policy is to 'mainstream' equalities with the intention of embedding equalities practices within every area of operation. The links between the equalities agenda, regeneration initiatives in communities and work in schools and through the Primary Care Trust on sexual health are becoming clearer.

Through our research it became apparent that there is a significant range of expertise and experience in equalities work among the LGBT population in Brighton. Many of the equalities workers interviewed were at the interface between policy implementation and practical problem solving. Those working in the context of public sector unions, in particular, were playing a significant role in pushing forward the

equalities agenda. Some of the LGBT trade union activists we interviewed argued that there was a need to be proactive over equalities issues particularly in the public sector where equalities mainstreaming is actively underway. The aim is to establish good practice which will benefit all groups but (as already discussed), sexual orientation appears to be a lower priority area within local council strategies compared to race or disability. According to these informants, the process of mainstreaming could lead to the 'invisibility' of LGBT issues and a diluting rather than strengthening of equalities work.

We identified two case studies illustrating good practice in relation to equalities work, the first of these relating to contract compliance.

Following complaints from members of the public about homophobic behaviour, Brighton and Hove Council's training and development manager was asked to develop an equalities programme for staff from a private company contracted to work with the council. The training and development manager discovered that the company had a modular training programme that already included customer care but that awareness of equalities issues was very low. Engaging the entire workforce in equalities training would have been a major resource-intensive exercise and there was concern that it could be perceived as punitive and result in a loss of morale. The solution proposed was that the company and the training and equalities team jointly develop a good practice guide for staff which would directly apply the council's equal opportunities policy to their work.

The process of producing this guide involved considerable debate and negotiation. The first stage involved members of the council training and equalities team working with representatives from the council staff and the company's workforce to highlight the key issues for them. They were given basic grounding in equalities awareness and legislation and then worked through what the issues were in practice. The equalities team discovered some significant issues and took these, with an initial draft of a potential leaflet, back to the managers. The training and equalities team felt it was important to ensure there were clear messages in the guide about the equalities policy being beneficial to employees as well as being about their responsibilities, as it was clear that it was sometimes a stressful and difficult job.

The process of agreeing the good practice guidance was a learning experience in itself for all concerned. It was significant that all parties kept on battling to get it right, demonstrating their commitment to the process. One difficulty arose because of differences in belief about what represented good practice. The greatest bonus in persevering with the negotiation was that the end result was owned jointly. The process of using the leaflet now rests with the contracted company, who have integrated it into their training programmes.

Another positive example of good practice was in connection with Brighton & Hove's Anti- Victimisation Initiative and involved young people from a youth project which supports young LGBT people across the city. Members of the group, some of whom were cross-dressed, had been passing one of the council's office buildings that was surrounded by scaffolding with building work in progress. The workers subjected the group to a range of homophobic comments that upset and angered the young

people. Through the AVI, they contacted the Council to complain about their treatment by the building contractors. Although the building work had been contracted out by the Council, the workers' actions were still the Council's responsibility. A letter was sent to the contractor detailing the complaints from the youth project, which were investigated by the contractor and the workers involved reprimanded. This represented a quick and positive response by both the council and the contractor. It also demonstrated to the members of the LGBT youth group that the Council was acting on their behalf and had acknowledged their inclusion in Brighton and Hove's community.

A key point to emerge from many of the interviews was that local authorities should take a more proactive stand on equality issues by taking a lead over public contract negotiations and by emphasising equalities issues and anti-discriminatory practices. A number of people suggested that equalities implementation needed to be comprehensively evaluated and tested across council services. This would enable training needs around equalities issues to be more clearly and proactively identified. It would also enable local councils to check that their equalities policies were being put into practice rather than remaining as paper policies.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research report has explored issues of employability and labour market discrimination in relation to sexual orientation, through a comparative case study of Brighton & Hove and Hastings. We have put the case that a report on this subject is timely, in the light of recent UK legislation to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the workplace. We have also noted that this topic has received little attention in previous research literature. The report has identified innovative examples of good practice in addressing barriers to employability, and in this respect, is in line with the broader aims of the Equal programme.

We would like to offer the following conclusions and recommendations arising from the research findings:

- There should be recognition of the complexity and diversity of the LGBT population, and issues of sexual orientation should not be considered in isolation from other factors, such as age, gender, ethnicity and class. Several members of the LGBT community expressed concerns about a purely economic approach to sexual orientation within local regenerations strategies, which tend to overlook issues of social exclusion.

***Recommendation: Funding bodies, policy makers and mainstream service providers should take account of the diversity of LGBT communities within their social and economic regeneration strategies and provision of services for the socially excluded. Furthermore, they should proactively liaise with local LGBT community organisations about addressing issues of social exclusion within their particular localities.***

- There appears to be a 'hierarchy of disadvantage' within the equalities strategies of many organisations (including local authorities, employment and training services and voluntary organisations), with sexual orientation considered as a low priority, for example when compared to race or disability. We believe that this evidence highlights a major issue which should be addressed because of the potentially negative impact on employability at an individual level.

***Recommendation: Employers, funders and local authorities should recognise the inappropriateness of developing equalities strategies within which the discrimination experienced by some individuals and groups is perceived to be of a lower priority than others, and should actively seek to avoid constructing such 'hierarchies of disadvantage'.***

- Our research has highlighted the important role played by the voluntary and community sector in supporting the needs and representing the interests of the LGBT community, but there is a need for capacity building and increased resources to carry out this work more effectively. In particular, the fragmented nature of project funding has made long term planning for LGBT support

difficult and, in areas like Hastings, there appears to be no specific funding targeting the needs of this community. Through case studies we have also identified that, although employment issues are not prominent within local LGBT community strategies, some organisations are involved in promoting employability eg through the provision of targeted careers advice and employment training.

***Recommendation: Funding bodies and policy makers should recognise the important role played by voluntary and community organisations in supporting the LGBT population, and in particular, their valuable contribution in supporting the employability needs of more socially excluded members of that community. In the light of this, the need for capacity building and sustainable funding to support this work should be included within funding strategies.***

***Recommendation: there should be more research to identify the employability needs of the LGBT community in other areas of the UK with a view to directing more project funding (including EU funding) towards this area of work.***

- Issues of safety are important in the workplace or training environment. The commonplace use of homophobic language and behaviour, for example on training programmes or in some community settings, can pose a significant barrier to the equal participation of members of the LGBT community in the labour market. Discrimination and harassment in the workplace on grounds of sexual orientation still pose a significant problem, as reflected in national and local surveys, and findings from this research. We have also found evidence that the perception that it is not safe to be open about sexual identity in the workplace continues to be an issue for many LGBT people. We conclude that failure by employers to instigate measures to provide a safe and supportive workplace environment for LGBT employees can have a negative impact in a number of ways.

***Recommendation: Employers and training providers should ensure that they provide a safe and supportive environment for LGBT employees and trainees, for example by valuing diversity in the workplace and proactively challenging homophobic attitudes and behaviour amongst the wider workforce or training population. In addition, they should provide appropriate equalities training for all staff, including awareness of recent legislation relating to sexual orientation.***

***Recommendation: there should be more research to explore the theme of 'safety in the workplace' and its impact on LGBT employees, for example in relation to mental health issues.***

- Our research has highlighted the fact that people from the LGBT community who are HIV positive have specific employment and training needs and that specialised services working in this area make a valuable contribution in supporting the employability requirements of this particular target group.

***Recommendation: employers and mainstream providers of employment and training services should be more proactive in addressing the employment and training needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. In improving the services available to this target group, they should liaise with organisations offering specialised support services to people with HIV status.***

***Recommendation: Funders should support the capacity building needs of organisations offering IAG and training to people with HIV/AIDS, particularly those within the voluntary and community sector.***

- Monitoring of sexual orientation appears to be a contentious issue within the LGBT community. On the one hand, there is a need to measure impact on the delivery of services; on the other hand, there are risks of ‘traceability’ and suspicion about how the information will be used

***Recommendation: more research should be carried out into the impact of monitoring sexual orientation both within the workplace and within funded projects.***

- The large number of small businesses, casual and seasonal employment in both areas is likely to create difficulties in implementing and monitoring the new legislation. Our data suggests that adequate staff training in equalities issues is patchy across all sectors and not necessarily reflected in employer practices

***Recommendation: Employers, regional bodies, local authorities and local strategic partnerships should work in partnership to raise awareness of recent equalities legislation and ensure adequate equalities training across the sector for both employers and employees.***

- The current strategy of ‘mainstreaming’ equalities across the full range of local authority services poses a particular challenge. There are concerns among the LGBT community that the process of mainstreaming could exacerbate the ‘invisibility’ of sexual orientation in the workplace and lead to a diluting rather than strengthening of equalities work.

***Recommendation: local authorities should ensure that, in the process of ‘mainstreaming’ equalities across their services and employment practices, issues relating to sexual orientation remain clearly visible on the equalities agenda.***

The findings from this research underline the fact that issues of employability and labour market discrimination in relation to sexual orientation are under-researched. We are confident that this comparative study of Brighton & Hove and Hastings will prove to be of interest to those concerned with developing equalities policies and practices, such as employers, local authorities, statutory and voluntary organisations.

We also believe that the findings from this research should make a valuable contribution to ongoing debates about issues of employability, discrimination and social exclusion both within the Sequal partnership and more widely.

## NOTES

1. The expression 'coming out' refers to a psychological and social process of identification with being lesbian, gay, or bisexual: 'The term arose out of the re-emergence of radical sexual politics in the context of wider radicalization of political culture in the 1960s. It was, and continues to be, a key concept within gay and lesbian politics because of the challenge it presents to the negative imagery surrounding 'homosexuality' and the socio-political processes which render it invisible. Coming out involves a change in self-image for the individual which arises from an affirmation of his or her homosexuality. As a political strategy, the process challenges the normative frameworks surrounding institutionalized heterosexuality.' (Jary and Jary 1995: 96)
2. Cairns T (2004) 'Mainstreaming or embedding? A local case study in anti-homophobic equalities work'; Fairley A and McGrath S (2004) 'Mainstreaming Equalities in Hastings'
3. The term 'pink pound' refers to the spending power of some sections of the LGBT community, particularly middle class gay couples who are perceived to have more than the average disposable income because of their family circumstances (BBC Online Network 1998)
4. Sadly, in August 2004, the closure of GLAM was announced due to loss of vital funding from the Sussex Learning and Skills Council (see appendix 2)
5. The regulations make a clear distinction between:
  - Direct discrimination – treating a person less favourably than others because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation
  - Indirect discrimination – 'applying a criterion or practice which disadvantages people of a particular sexual orientation unless it can be objectively justified'
  - Harassment – 'unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them having regard to all the circumstances, including the perception of the victim'(ACAS 2003: 5)

## REFERENCES

- Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (November 2003) *Sexual orientation and the Workplace: A guide for employers and employees*  
[http://www.acas.org.uk/publications/pdf/guide\\_sexualO.pdf](http://www.acas.org.uk/publications/pdf/guide_sexualO.pdf)
- Andrews J (2001), 'Sexuality' in Gould M and Lahiff A (eds) *Equality, Participation and Inclusive Learning*, Greenwich University Press
- BBC Online Network (1998) *The Pink Pound*  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/the\\_economy/142998.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/the_economy/142998.stm)
- Brighton and Hove City Council (2003), 'Brighton & Hove and Adur Area Investment Framework: Socio-Economic Baseline Report' (ref pg 12)  
[http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/regeneration/Ch\\_4\\_Labour\\_Market\\_and\\_the\\_Economy.pdf](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/regeneration/Ch_4_Labour_Market_and_the_Economy.pdf)
- Brighton & Hove City Council Economic Development Team (2004) *Setting the Scene: A Review of the Brighton & Hove Economy*, <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/business>
- Brighton Ourstory Project (2001) 'A History of Brighton's Lesbian and Gay Community' <http://www.brightonourstory.co.uk/lgbt.html>
- Buckley M (August 2004) 'Cashing in on arty fun'  
[http://www.thisisbrightonandhove.co.uk/brighton\\_\\_hove/news\\_features/city\\_culture/page5.html](http://www.thisisbrightonandhove.co.uk/brighton__hove/news_features/city_culture/page5.html)
- Cameron D, Frazer E, Harvey P, Rampton MBH, Richardson K (1992) *Researching Language: Issues of power and method*, London: Routledge
- Carr W and Kemmis S (1986) *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge and action research*, London: The Falmer Press
- Carrabine J (1995), 'Invisible Sexualities: sexuality, politics and influencing policy-making' in Wilson A (ed) *A Simple Matter of Justice?: theorizing lesbian and gay politics*, London: Cassell
- Clements P and Spinks T (2000) *The Equal Opportunities Handbook*, London: Kogan Page
- Coare P (ed) (2000) *Adult Exclusion Sussex*, Centre for Continuing Education, University of Sussex
- Coare P and Johnston R (eds) (2003), *Adult Learning, Citizenship and Community Voices*, Leicester: NIACE
- Corbett R (2002) *A lot done, a lot more to do: Labour and European legislation*  
<http://www.fabian-society.org.uk/documents/ViewADocument.asp?ID=63&CatID=52>

Fairley A and Noudjem N (2004) *Go Hastings!: Report of findings from research into the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community in Hastings & St Leonards, East Sussex*, Hastings Rainbow Alliance

Freda B (2002) *Discrimination, Social Cohesion and Social Exclusion*, University of Surrey, Department of Educational Studies

Geyer R (2000) *Exploring European Social Policy*, Cambridge: Polity Press

Gluck S and Patai D (1991) *Women's Words: The feminist practice of oral history*, London: Routledge

Hake B (2003) *Fragility of the 'Employability Agenda', Flexible Life Courses and the reconfiguration of Lifelong Learning*, International Institute for Educational Planning

Hantrais L (2000), *Social Policy in the European Union*, Basingstoke: Macmillan

Hastings Borough Council (2002) *Hastings and St Leonard Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy* [http://www.hastings.gov.uk/neighbourhood\\_renewal.pdf](http://www.hastings.gov.uk/neighbourhood_renewal.pdf)

Hastings Borough Council (2002) *Hastings Link: A socio-economic profile of Hastings & St Leonards*  
[http://www.hastings.gov.uk/economic\\_intelligence/economic\\_business.pdf](http://www.hastings.gov.uk/economic_intelligence/economic_business.pdf)

Hastings Voluntary Action (2004) *Directory of Local Voluntary and Community Sector Resources*  
<http://www.hastingsvoluntaryaction.org/HVA-Directory.html>

Jary D and Jary J (1995) *Collins Dictionary of Sociology*, Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers

LAGER (2002), *A Response to the Consultation Document 'Towards Equality and Diversity: Implementing the Employment and Race Directives'*

Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2000) *Indices of Multiple Deprivation*  
<http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/indices.asp>

Office for National Statistics (2001) *Local Area Labour Force Survey Data*  
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/lfs>

Palmer A (1993) *'Less Equal than Others: A survey of lesbians and gay men at work*, Stonewall

Platzer H (2003) *Creating Safe and Inclusive Spaces in our Communities: A survey of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups in Brighton and Hove*, Spectrum

Snape D, Thomson K, and Chetwynd M (1995) *Discrimination Against Gay Men and Lesbians*, Social and Community Planning Research

Stuart M and Thomson A (eds) (1995), *Engaging with Difference: The 'Other' in Adult Education*, Leicester: NIACE

(Sussex Enterprise report on 'dual economy' – ref pg 12)  
<http://www.sussexenterprise.co.uk/data/869380.pdf?0.1617738377168665>

The Knitting Circle (2004), 'Knitting Circle: Pride History'  
<http://myweb.lsbu.ac.uk/~stafflag/pridehistory.html>

Trades Union Congress (April 2000), *Straight Up! Why the law should protect lesbian and gay workers* <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-2443-f0.pdf>

Usher R, Bryant I and Johnston R (1997) *Adult Education and the Post-Modern Challenge: Learning beyond the limits*, London: Routledge

Webb D and Wright D (2001), *Count Me In: Findings from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community needs assessment 2000*, Brighton & Hove City Council

Women and Equality Unit (October 2002) *Equality and Diversity: Making it Happen*  
[http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/equality/project/making\\_it\\_happen.doc](http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/equality/project/making_it_happen.doc)

## **APPENDIX 1: LIST OF ORGANISATIONS CONTACTED FOR THIS RESEARCH**

Allsorts Youth Project, Brighton  
Bisexual Gay and Lesbian Helpline (BLAGH)  
Brighton Body Positive  
Brighton Lesbian and Gay Switchboard  
Brighton Open Door  
Brighton and Hove City Council  
Brighton and Hove Disabled Dykes  
Brighton and Hove Employment Services  
Brighton and Hove Primary Care Trust  
eb4u (East Brighton New Deal for Communities)  
Fellowship of St Nicholas, Hastings  
GLAM (Gay and Lesbian Arts and Media), Brighton and Hove  
GLYSSN (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Youth Group), Hastings  
Hastings Advice and Representation Centre  
Hastings Borough Council  
Hastings Careers Service  
Hastings Horizons Project  
Hastings Police  
Hastings Primary Care Trust  
Hastings Trust  
Hastings Voluntary Action  
Hastings Youth Council  
Hastings Youth Service  
LAGER (Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights)  
Millennium Volunteers, Hastings  
NACRO, Brighton and Hove  
Rainbow Alliance, Hastings  
Rough Sleepers' Unit, Brighton  
SEEDA (South East England Development Agency)  
Spectrum Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Forum  
Sky's the Limit Project, Hastings  
Street Outreach Service, Brighton  
Sussex Careers Service  
Ten Sixty Six Enterprise, Hastings  
Terence Higgins Trust South  
Tomorrow's People Trust, Brighton and Hove  
Tressell Training, Hastings  
UNISON  
Victim Support, Brighton  
Working Together Project, Brighton  
Young People's Centre, Brighton  
Young People's Sexual Health Project, Hastings

## APPENDIX 2: CLOSURE OF GLAM

### PRESS RELEASE : 11th August 2004

For immediate release.

#### PRESS RELEASE READS:

“It is with regret that the Trustees of GLAM (Gay and Lesbian Arts and Media) have to announce that the organisation is to close. After a turbulent year it has proved impossible to continue providing arts and media training to members of the Brighton Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered communities.

Many rumours will have already spread across the City as GLAM has been winding down its activities for a few months. All of the projects we have been working on have been completed and the office has now been closed. The reasons for this are quite straightforward.

Back in December of 2003 GLAM were informed that our funding application to the Learning and Skills Council had been unsuccessful. This funding, which allowed us to deliver our training courses in skills such as web design, digital video editing, IT skills etc. was also to cover the running costs of the organisation. Whilst the LSC were keen to continue working with us, and invited an application for later in this year, the organisation was at a loss to make up for this sudden shortfall. Staff worked very hard to come up with activities and courses that could still deliver valuable courses to the LGBT communities whilst keeping GLAM afloat and allowing time for fundraising to take place.

Unfortunately we also lost staff during this period as well, which severely hampered our ability to plan, fundraise and deliver courses.

The trustees would like to thank all of the staff and volunteers who have given their energy, commitment, vision and passion to GLAM over its lifetime, and to thank all of the members of the LGBT communities who have also supported us. It has certainly been a rollercoaster of a ride.

We will be talking to LGBT organisations across the City to find a home for some of the equipment that GLAM has with the hopes that the LGBT communities can still benefit from those resources.

A database of other LGBT organisations will be placed on our website so that people can find information about other organisations that can offer services and support.

GLAM Trustees”

---

**LGBT - Directory** (Please click on the LGBT link)

<http://www.glam-brighton.co.uk/>

# A Place at the Table

## the Business of Inclusion

*1.1 presents the UK's first*

## Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender JOBFAIR

**2 The Hove Centre, Hove Town Hall, Brighton and Hove**

**3 Wednesday 8 September 2004 11am - 7pm**

The Jobfair celebrates the contribution made to the City of Brighton & Hove by our local LGBT community of more than 30,000 people, and celebrates the recent changes in employment law that now openly recognise the importance of this community to our society.

This will be an occasion to find work, as well as an opportunity to meet organisations who hold our community with respect, and celebrate our value in Brighton and Hove in particular, and this country as a whole. Extensive media coverage is expected. The Jobfair will be widely promoted throughout the LGBT community in Brighton and Hove, East and West Sussex, and the south east..

The Brighton and Hove City Council is the primary sponsor of the LGBT Jobfair, with Jobcentre Plus, Spectrum, Stonewall, The Clare Project and The Gender Trust supporting the event. Major employers with both local and national presence have already demonstrated their intention to be at the Jobfair, including American Express, Marks and Spencer and the University of Sussex, amongst others

The Hove Centre is an attractive central venue with good parking, excellent bus services, and is easily accessible from both Brighton and Hove stations.

There is no cost to visitors to the Jobfair; everyone is welcome.

For more information; email  
[info@aplaceatthetable.co.uk](mailto:info@aplaceatthetable.co.uk)  
or phone: 01273 243862 or 725312