



University of Brighton

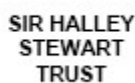
Out On My Own: Understanding the Experiences and Needs of Homeless Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth

**Mark Cull
Hazel Platzer
Sue Balloch**

June 2006

Health and Social Policy Research Centre

Faculty of Health
School of Applied Social Science





University of Brighton

FOREWORD

This is a contribution to our series of research papers which brings work in the Health and Social Policy Research Centre (HSPRC) and the School of Applied Social Science to a wider audience. The HSPRC aims to:

- foster and sustain quality research in health and social policy
- contribute to knowledge, theoretical development and debate
- inform policy making, teaching and practice

Its main areas of expertise are in:

- community and service user empowerment
- inter-agency working and partnership
- needs analysis and evaluation
- health and social care
- policing and criminal justice
- psychosocial studies

HSPRC publishes a regular newsletter and an Annual Report, as well as a separate series of occasional papers. Recent reports include:

Cunningham, L. and Haynes, P. (2005) *Evaluation of the Relationship Support Programme: Brighton Oasis Project*

Pemberton, S. and Winn, S. (2005) *The financial situation of students at the University of Brighton: the fourteenth report, 2004/5*

Fyvie-Gauld, M. and Rodriguez, P. (2006) *Scoping and consultation exercise of the Bevern View – a residential care home for young people with profound disabilities*

MacDonald, D. and Mullineux, C. (2006) *Both Sides of the Coin: Neighbourhood Renewal in Context*

Further information about the Centre can be obtained from:

Sallie White, Research Administrator
HSPRC University of Brighton
Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9PH

Telephone: 01273 643480
Fax: 01273 643496
Email: s.s.white@brighton.ac.uk

Contents

Acknowledgements	viii
1. Executive Summary	1
1.1 Overview of the study	1
1.2 How the study was conducted	1
1.3 Causes of homelessness in LGBT youth	2
1.4 LGBT youths' experiences of housing and homelessness services	2
1.5 The health and well-being of homeless LGBT youth	3
1.6 The need for specialist accommodation for homeless LGBT youth	4
1.7 Recommendations	4
2. Introduction	7
3. Background and review of the Literature	9
3.1 Prevalence of homelessness amongst LBG youth	9
3.2 Causes of LGBT youth homelessness	11
3.3 The mental health of LGBT youth	12
3.4 The sexual health of LGB youth	12
4. Methodology	15
4.1 Sampling methods used to research LGBT populations	15
4.2 Sampling methods used in this study and characteristics of the sample	16
4.3 Interview schedule and questionnaire design	17
4.4 Interviews with service providers	18
5. Findings	19
5.1 Young people's childhood backgrounds and experiences at school	19
5.1.1 Family background	19
5.1.2 Experiences at school	21
5.2 The relationship between first episode of homelessness and sexual identity	24
5.2.1 Eviction or being asked to leave	25
5.2.2 "Choosing" to leave	26
5.3 The relationship between later episodes of homelessness and sexual identity	27
5.4 Young transgender people and reasons for homelessness	28
5.5 Patterns of homelessness in LGBT youth	29
5.6 LGBT youths' experience of homelessness	31
5.6.1 LGBT youths' experiences of housing advice and homelessness services	31
5.6.2 LGBT youths' experiences of accommodation	37
5.6.3 Mental health and homelessness	40
5.6.4 Sexual health and homelessness	44

5.7	LGBT youths' identified need for specialist support	45
5.8	Findings from the interviews with service providers	48
5.8.1	Monitoring of sexual identity and transgender identity	49
5.8.2	Service providers' views on specialist support	50
6.	Discussion	55
	References	57

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following people for their contribution to this study:

Research Participants – the young people, frontline workers and service managers

Funding organisations – Pride in Brighton & Hove, Primary Care Trust (Gay Men's HIV Small Grants Scheme), Brighton & Hove City Council, The Sir Halley Stewart Trust, The Albert Kennedy Trust and the Community university partnership programme (Cupp)

Steering Committee – Nigel Jenner (Youth Support Service), Danny Jacob (AKT), Helen Jones (Mind), Lee Dodge (THT), Emma Welsh (Allsorts), Kate Simmons (Hove YMCA), Jaine Huntley (Brighton & Hove City Council)

Referrers – Allsorts Youth Project, The Albert Kennedy Trust, Hove YMCA Housing, Stopover, Brighton & Hove Foyer, The Oasis Project

Terence Higgins Trust - Street Outreach Service
St. John's Ambulance
The Claire Project
Andrew Roberts, Revenge Nightclub

Rachel Brett, YAC Services Manager, Hove YMCA
Liz Tomlinson, Hove YMCA (project artwork design)
Julia Harrison, Hove YMCA
Anabel Carrington, Hove YMCA
Niki Eldridge, Hove YMCA
Arash Nassir-Pour, Hove YMCA
Lianne Samways, Hove YMCA

Arthur Law, Spectrum
Fergus Crow, Anti-bullying Consultant, Brighton & Hove City Council
Nick Hibberd, Housing Needs Manager, Brighton & Hove City Council

Lisa Fairbank and Lambent Productions
James Ledward, G-Scene
Jamie Hakim, 3Sixty

We would also like to thank Claire Gracethorne for her early contribution to the research process.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Overview of the study

The research project investigated the needs and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) homeless youth in Brighton and Hove. This was done through interviews and questionnaires with 44 LGBT youth who were homeless or had been homeless in the past and through interviews with 21 local service providers. The report makes recommendations about how local services can be improved for LGBT homeless youth and how homelessness in this population could be prevented; in particular it identifies how the provision of specialist accommodation for homeless LGBT youth would prevent further homelessness and improve their health.

1.2 How the study was conducted

- In-depth interviews were conducted with 33 LGBT youth and questionnaires were conducted with another 11 LGBT youth, leading to a sample of 44 young people aged 16-25.
 - Of these young people, 23 were young men, 17 were young women and four identified as transgender (all male to female).
 - In terms of sexual identity 18 identified as gay men; 15 identified as lesbian or gay women; 10 identified as bisexual and one of the transgender women identified as heterosexual.
 - Eight of the young people (18%) were from Black and Minority Ethnic groups.
 - A third of the young people had spent their childhood in Brighton and Hove and the remaining two thirds had migrated to the area. Most of the in-migration was due to the reputation of Brighton and Hove as a safe place for LGBT people to live.
 - Two thirds of the young people we interviewed were 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET).
 - A quarter had been in the care of the local authority.
- Most of the young people who participated in the study were recruited through a youth advice centre's housing advice drop-in, where monitoring of sexual identity and transgender identity was taking place. Young people were also recruited through street outreach and the sample thus included homeless youth who were disengaged from services.
- The types of homelessness experienced included "sofa-surfing", living in squats and rough sleeping and it included those living in temporary accommodation and supported housing. Nearly half of the young people in our study were sleeping rough or had done so in the past.
- Service providers were also interviewed, or took part in a focus group, to investigate their levels of awareness and possible training needs, in

relation to meeting the needs of LGBT homeless youth. Eleven people took part in the focus group and a further nine were interviewed including frontline workers and service managers.

1.3 Causes of homelessness in LGBT youth

- The sexual identity, or transgender identity, of a young person was implicated directly or indirectly in the initial cause of homelessness in most cases. Some young people were evicted from the family home, or chose to leave, because their parents were intolerant of the young person's sexual identity; others chose to leave because they presumed their parents would have a negative reaction if they did know about the young person's sexual identity.
- Although homeless LGBT youth share many of the characteristics of homeless youth in general, in that they tend to come from disrupted families and are more likely to have been in care, there was evidence that LGBT youth were more vulnerable to abuse within the home.
- As well as violence and abuse within the home, some young people identified that homophobic bullying and assaults at school and in the neighbourhood contributed to their decision to leave home. Two of the young transgender people also identified that abuse within the home and neighbourhood contributed to their initial episode of homelessness.
- Some young people chose to leave home because they felt isolated in the place where they lived and wanted to live in a place where LGBT lives were more visible.
- Sexual identity and transgender identity were also implicated in young people's subsequent episodes of homelessness. Homophobia from other tenants or residents in rented accommodation and in supported housing contributed to further episodes of homelessness.
- Some young people also became homeless when fleeing from domestic violence in same-sex relationships.

1.4 LGBT youths' experiences of housing and homelessness services

- Homeless LGBT youth reported negative experiences of local authority homelessness applications and it appeared that their vulnerability and hence their priority need for housing was not always recognised. This was often the case for young people without a local connection.
- Homeless LGBT youth reported feeling unsafe in existing temporary and supported accommodation. There were some incidences of homophobic harassment from other residents and lack of appropriate intervention by staff.

- A number of the homeless LGBT young people felt safer sleeping rough and had gone on to develop a pattern of long term transient homelessness.
- Young LGBT people reported feeling isolated and unsupported within existing services; most felt that specific housing provision with a critical mass of LGBT residents and specialist workers would help to overcome this isolation.
- Most of the young LGBT people were in favour of services monitoring sexual and gender identity, if it was done sensitively.

1.5 The health and well-being of homeless LGBT youth

Homeless LGBT youth were particularly vulnerable in relation to their mental and sexual health.

- 67% reported they had been bullied at school and this appeared to be linked to truanting and exclusion from school.
- Where young LGBT people had been bullied and they had tranted and/or were excluded from school, this was linked to educational under-achievement.
- None of the young people had received sex or relationship education at school which was inclusive of LGBT lives.
- 26% of the participants had been physically abused as children and 30% had been sexually abused or sexually assaulted.
- Abuse at home and bullying in schools is linked to homelessness in LGBT youth.
- Nearly all the young people in our study reported a history of mental health problems or substance misuse. Over two thirds had a history of attempting suicide and half reported alcohol or substance misuse.
- Furthermore, 21% of the young people were, or had been, in abusive relationships with partners.
- Some of the young people in our study were vulnerable to exploitative sexual relationships which were linked to their homelessness: 40% reported that they had had unprotected sex and 20% reported that they had sold or exchanged sex.

1.6 The need for specialist accommodation for homeless LGBT youth

- Local services have sound policies in place designed to prevent or deal with homophobic harassment, and attempts were made to make existing services safe and accessible. However, these were not always effective and existing services were not always safe for LGBT youth.
- Homeless LGBT youth felt that they would benefit from specialist accommodation which was exclusively for LGBT youth with identifiable LGBT staff; they felt this would help them to overcome the effects of homophobia and isolation that they had experienced when growing up and which they had also subsequently experienced in supported accommodation.
- Specialist provision for homeless LGBT youth would help them to develop skills and support networks which could alleviate the effects of their earlier experiences of abuse and homophobia in schools and within their families. This could potentially play an important role in the prevention of further episodes of homelessness, reduce their vulnerability in relation to their sexual and mental health and prevent long term patterns of homelessness.
- Service providers recognised that it was difficult to provide the kind of support isolated LGBT youth needed within existing services, although specialist LGBT workers could help to alleviate isolation.

1.7 Recommendations

- There is a need for local LGBT only supported accommodation and specialist support workers.
- There is a need to make existing housing and homelessness services safer for LGBT youth.
- There is a need to improve the assessment of LGBT youth making homelessness applications to the local authority in order to identify vulnerability and priority need.
- There is a need to develop the monitoring and assessment of sexual identity and transgender identity in other services, including social services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, in order to identify needs and provide appropriate support.
- Earlier preventative work in schools, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, social services and youth services should be developed to reduce the incidence of homelessness in this group. This could be achieved through:

- The provision of LGBT specific supported lodgings
 - Adult and peer mentoring
 - Family mediation
 - Referrals to appropriate support groups
 - Challenging homophobia in schools and delivering inclusive sex and relationship education
 - Providing a structure so that LGBT youth can access support through schools, and widening access to LGBT youth support within the Youth Support Service
 - Providing specific educational support for LGBT youth who truant or are excluded from school
 - Management and frontline staff undertaking LGBT, homophobia and heterosexism awareness training
- Further support needs to be given to LGBT youth who have under-achieved at school and college because of homophobia and lack of support. The age restriction on the Connexions service should be extended beyond 19 years, to educationally disadvantaged, vulnerable LGBT youth who are NEET, until such time as primary and secondary schools are able to provide a safe and inclusive environment.

2. Introduction

The aims of this study were to explore the reasons for homelessness amongst lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth and to understand the relationship between young people's sexual identity, or their transgender identity, and their subsequent experiences of homelessness. We specifically wanted to find out about LGBT homeless youths' experiences of local housing and homelessness provision and to establish whether or not there was a local need for LGBT specific accommodation or other specialist support for homeless LGBT youth. In order to investigate this, we conducted a qualitative study which included 44 LGBT youth aged 16-25 who were currently homeless or who had been homeless in the past. We also conducted focus groups or interviews with 21 local service providers.

Homelessness is defined broadly in this study and includes runaways, young people "sofa-surfing" and staying temporarily with friends, those living in squats and those sleeping rough on the streets. It also includes those who were found to be in "priority need" by the Local Authority under the terms of the 1996 Housing Act. "Priority need" is assessed by determining whether or not a young person is vulnerable in terms of their health, their age (if they are under 18), or because they are fleeing from trauma such as violence or abuse. If they are not found to be in priority need the local authority has a duty to provide advice and information; if found to be in priority need the Local Authority has a statutory duty to find accommodation which may include temporary accommodation, such as bed and breakfast, or supported housing such as hostels run by the Foyer Federation or YMCA, as well as permanent accommodation.

3. Background and Review of the Literature

In order to understand the relationship between sexual identity, or transgender identity, and homelessness, we need to explore what evidence there is that LGBT¹ youth are more likely to become homeless than heterosexual and non-transgendered youth. We need to consider what is already known about the relationship between homelessness and sexual identity or transgender identity. We also need to look at research on the LGBT population and consider how the effects of discrimination impact on people's lives and how these may affect vulnerability to homelessness and its further effects. By discrimination, we are referring to the effects of the irrational fear and hatred of lesbians, gay men and bisexual people (homophobia) and transgender people (transphobia). We are also referring to institutional heterosexism where there is an assumption that it is preferable that people should be heterosexual thus devaluing and rendering invisible non-heterosexual lives.

Homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism lead not only to overt acts of discrimination but also to isolation, making it difficult for LGBT to "come-out" and access support from family, friends and communities. We know from previous research that LGBT people are often rejected by their family and peers or suffer violence and abuse from family and peers (Hetrick and Martin, 1987, Hunter; 1990); suffer from bullying at school (Rivers, 1997; Rivers, 2002); violence in the streets (Palmer, 1993; Snape et al., 1995; Mason and Palmer, 1996; GALOP, 1998; Beyond Barriers and FMR, 2002) and unfair treatment in the workplace (Calandrino, 1999; Palmer, 1993; Snape et al., 1995) because of their sexual identity or transgender identity. We also know that the impact of this discrimination leads to vulnerability in terms of both mental health (Schneider et al., 1989; Bagley and Tremblay, 1997; Flowers and Buston, 2001; Webb and Wright, 2001; King et al., 2003b) and sexual health (Rotherum-Borus et al., 1992; Vincke et al., 1993; Rotherum-Borus and Fernandez, 1995; Flowers et al., 2000). It is likely that the effects of such discrimination within families and wider society would make LGBT youth more vulnerable to homelessness; the available data on the prevalence of LGBT youth homelessness strongly suggests that homophobia and transphobia do play a significant role in increasing the vulnerability of LGBT youth to homelessness.

3.1 Prevalence of homelessness amongst LGB youth

It has been argued in both North America and the United Kingdom that lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are over-represented amongst the homeless. Estimates that up to 40% of young homeless people are lesbian, gay or bisexual have been arrived at by pooling the knowledge of workers in

¹ There is considerably less research into the homelessness and health of transgender youth than there is on LGB youth. This leads to some apparent inconsistency in our report between the uses of LGB or LGBT. We include T with LGB if our findings, or those from previous studies, relate to LGB and T youth. We use LGB or T on its own if our findings, or those from other studies, relate to one or other population.

homelessness agencies. For example, Kruks (1991), found that homeless agencies in North America estimated that 25-40% of street youth identified as LGB; Dunne et al. (2002) found that one housing agency in London estimated that 26% of their clients identified as LGB. These estimates rely on the knowledge and awareness of workers in homelessness agencies and it is useful to compare these findings with research studies where a measure of self-reported sexual identity, or sexual behaviour², is included in the study design.

By and large most research studies of homeless youth do not report the sexual identity of their research participants. However, two large scale quantitative North American studies do report on this. In order to make sense of these findings we need to be able to compare them to estimates of the proportion of people within the general population who identify as LGB: in Britain the second National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (NATSAL) found that amongst 16-44 year olds, 8.4% of men and 9.7% of women reported that they had ever had sex with a partner of the same sex (Copas et al., 2002). Bagley and Tremblay (1998) found that in a group of 18-27 year old men, 11.1% identified as gay or bisexual and 14% had ever had a same-sex experience. Both these studies used random household sampling and would therefore not have included anyone who was currently homeless. Of further interest are the US based Youth Risk Behavior Surveys (YRBS) conducted in high schools; in a YRBS conducted in Massachusetts, 2.5% of the 15-18 year olds identified as LGB (Garofalo et al., 1998).

These studies suggest that somewhere between 2.5% and 14% of the youth population may identify as LGB. However, when we look at the proportion of homeless youth who identify as LGB the number is considerably higher with figures ranging from 19-26%. Cochran et al. (2002) studied a group of 375 homeless adolescents aged 13-21 in Seattle. They found that 22% of these young people identified as LGB. Noell and Ochs (2001) studied a group of 532 homeless youth aged 13-20 in Portland, Oregon; they found that 26% of these young people identified as LGB. In another study conducted in Montreal of 909 homeless 13-25 year olds, 23.2% of girls and 19.1% of boys reported having had a same-sex partner (Roy et al., 2000).

Although there is compelling evidence indicating that LGB youth are particularly at risk of homelessness, there is much less research on homelessness amongst transgender youth. In fact, we have only found one study of homeless youth where the researchers established whether or not young people identified as transgender (Cochran et al., 2002). In that study, one person out of the total sample of 375 participants identified as transgender. A survey conducted in Northern Ireland (Carolan and Redmond, 2003) which included 14 transgender people in a sample of 362 LGBT youth, found that the young transgender people were more likely to have been homeless than the rest of the group (29% vs 16%). However, given that we

² There is a complex relationship between sexual identity and sexual behaviour; people tend to report same-sex behaviours so figures are not always comparable. In this study young people were included in the study if they identified as LGB (or T).

are dealing with a very small minority population³ we cannot infer from such studies whether or not transgender people are more at risk; it has been noted that even very large scale surveys cannot pick up prevalence in very small sub-groups (Fenton et al., 2001).

It would seem to be clear from the studies of large cohorts of homeless youth that there is a disproportionate number of LGB youth amongst the homeless population. There is also some evidence that transgender youth are also at risk of homelessness. Given what is known about the continuing discrimination towards LGBT people within families, at school and in the wider society, it is likely that young LGBT people will be vulnerable to homelessness. Young LGBT people may become homeless initially because they are evicted from the family home where LGBT identities are not tolerated; they may be abused within the family home or feel unsafe to come-out and so leave home. They may also leave home because they feel isolated and want to live in a more metropolitan place where LGBT lives are more visible and there are LGBT communities. Brighton and Hove is generally perceived to be the “gay capital” of the United Kingdom and this leads to such in-migration. Bullying at school, or in the neighbourhood, may also influence their decision to leave. Young LGBT who leave home for these reasons may become homeless immediately, or become more vulnerable to homelessness subsequently.

3.2 Causes of LGBT youth homelessness

Homeless LGB youth share the characteristics of young homeless people in general, in that most come from disrupted families and it has been noted that it can be difficult to disentangle the role that sexuality plays in LGB youth homelessness (O'Connor and Molloy, 2001; Prendergast et al., 2001). Sexuality can play a significant role in the causes of homelessness but it “may not always be the immediate or obvious explanation (such as one might tick a box)” (Prendergast et al., 2001, p. 77). For young people themselves, the link may not always be clear unless they have had time to reflect (O'Connor and Molloy, 2001). Furthermore, once young people are further along in their homelessness trajectory data may only be collected on the trigger to the current homelessness crisis leading to under estimates of the role that sexuality played in the initial cause of homelessness (Dunne et al., 2002).

However qualitative studies of homelessness in LGB youth have found that the young person’s sexuality can be a direct cause of homelessness (e.g. where they are evicted by parents who were intolerant of lesbian or gay sexual identities). It can also contribute to the first episode of homelessness if, for instance, they do not feel safe to disclose their sexuality at home or they feel isolated and leave to live in a more cosmopolitan area. Prendergast et al. (2001) found that 4 out of 19 people they interviewed were homeless as a direct result of their sexuality and that for the majority, their sexuality had played a major role in their homelessness. Other qualitative studies have also

³ The Gender Trust say that current estimates are that only 1 in 10,000 people are transgender (The Gender Trust)

identified that sexuality plays a role in the homelessness of LGB youth because of intolerance within families and related evictions, verbal or physical abuse, or fear of such intolerance (O'Connor and Molloy, 2001; Stonewall Youth Project, 2000). A quantitative study conducted in North America found that LGB youth left home for similar reasons to heterosexual youth (i.e. family conflict and desire for freedom) but the LGB youth had more episodes of leaving home than heterosexual youth and that 14.3% of the LGB youth had left because of conflict with their parents over their sexual identity (Cochran et al., 2002). The LGB youth also experienced more physical abuse within their families than the heterosexual youth. Dunne et al. (2002) also analysed quantitative data from an LGB supported lodging project and found that in a third of cases young people were initially homeless because of their family's inability to accept their son or daughter's sexuality.

3.3 The mental health of LGBT youth

A considerable amount of research has shown that LGBT people, and particularly LGBT youth, are more vulnerable to mental health difficulties than heterosexual comparison groups. In particular studies have shown that there are higher rates of attempted suicide and depressive illness in the LGB population (Bagley and Tremblay, 1997, Garofalo et al., 1998, Bagley and D'Augelli, 2000, Webb and Wright, 2001, King et al., 2003a). Bagley and Tremblay (1997), for example, found that young gay and bisexual men were 13.9 times more likely to make a serious suicide attempt than heterosexual young men. One study of LGB youth report that 39% have attempted suicide compared to 6-10% of the general youth population (Rotherum-Borus et al., 1994); another recent study in Northern Ireland found that 27.1% of young gay or bisexual men had attempted suicide (McNamee, 2006). One study of LGBT youth (some of whom had been homeless) found that 64% of transgender youth had attempted suicide (Carolan and Redmond, 2003). Again, we have to interpret this with caution bearing in mind the small number of transgender people in the study and the lack of research in this area. There are also research findings showing a high incidence of drug and alcohol misuse in the LGB population (Bradford et al., 1994, Rotherum-Borus et al., 1995). There is a high incidence of mental health problems in the LGBT youth population and also in the youth homeless population; we further explore the relationship between sexual identity, transgender identity, mental health and homelessness in section 5.6.3.

3.4 The sexual health of LGB youth

Several research studies show that LGB youth in general, and homeless LGB youth in particular, have specific vulnerabilities in relation to their sexual health. There are reports of higher rates of unprotected sex amongst gay male youth than heterosexual youth, a high incidence of teenage pregnancy amongst lesbian youth and high rates of unprotected sex between male and female LGB youth (Hetrick and Martin, 1987; Martin and Hetrick, 1988; Rotherum-Borus et al., 1992; Rotherum-Borus and Fernandez, 1995; Vincke et al., 1993). A study of homeless youth found that LGB youth report higher

rates of unprotected intercourse, earlier age at first intercourse and more lifetime sexual partners than heterosexual youth (Cochran et al., 2002).

Young homeless people are also likely to sell or exchange sex in order to survive or to obtain drugs. Weber et al. (2002) found that young homeless girls engaged in prostitution were significantly more likely to have a female sex partner than young homeless girls not engaged in prostitution (33% vs 9%). A third of the young homeless women engaged in prostitution in their study therefore could be identified as lesbian or bisexual. They also found that having a female sex partner was a strong predictor that young women would engage in prostitution once they had become homeless (Weber et al., 2004). This was a prospective study and excluded young homeless women who were already engaged in prostitution from their baseline – we do not know, therefore, the sexual identity of those already engaged in prostitution and so this may be an underestimate of the proportion of young homeless lesbian or bisexual women who are engaged in prostitution. Another study showed that 21.1% of homeless boys had sold or exchanged sex (Roy et al., 2000) but sexual identity is not reported.

4. Methodology

In this qualitative study we conducted in-depth interviews with 33 young LGBT people and completed shorter questionnaires with another 11 young LGBT people. We also conducted focus groups or interviews with 21 local service providers. There are methodological challenges to researching homeless LGBT youth as they are a hidden and hard-to-reach population. We discuss how other researchers have attempted to overcome the sampling problem inherent in studying LGBT populations before describing how we undertook this study.

4.1 Sampling methods used to research LGBT populations

The LGBT population is hidden and hard to reach and it is recognised that it is extremely difficult to recruit a representative research sample using random sampling approaches. Typically research with LGBT people has been conducted using purposive sampling such as conducting research at an LGBT festival and/ or snowball sampling where LGBT research participants are contacted through key informants, LGBT community groups or commercial venues and then these people are asked to nominate others to participate in the research. However, these approaches do not appear to generate a sample that shares the demographic characteristics of the wider population in that the research participants over-represent the white middle classes (Davies et al., 1993; Martin and Dean, 1993). This kind of race and class bias has also been found to occur when conducting qualitative research in general (Cannon et al., 1991).

A further point to consider when using LGBT communities to recruit participants is that those who are attached to such communities may be different from those who are not. Some studies have found social class differences in relation to gay community attachment (Dowsett et al., 1992; Weatherburn et al., 1996). Rivers has suggested that LGB young people who access support through lesbian and gay communities may do so as part of a pattern of resilience (Rivers, 2000). This suggests that we may fail to include some of the most vulnerable people if we mainly recruit research participants who have accessed lesbian and gay community support. A final point to consider is the effect of recruiting research participants where their disclosure of sexual identity is a pre-condition of being invited to participate i.e. they would need to be “out” about their sexual identity in order to be put forward. Again, as with gay community attachment it is likely that people who are “out” about their sexual identity are probably different in some way from those who are not; we know that this is the case in relation to mental health and that there is a complex relationship between self esteem and disclosure of sexual identity to others (Cohen and Savin-Williams, 1996; D'Augelli and Hershberger, 1993; Hershberger and D'Augelli, 1995).

Previous studies of homeless LGBT youth in the United Kingdom have all relied on recruiting research participants who have either accessed specialist LGBT services (Prendergast et al., 2001; Stonewall Youth Project, 2000) or who have very clearly disclosed their sexual identity to workers in mainstream

services who then refer them to the researchers (Dunne et al., 2002, O'Connor and Molloy, 2001). Both Dunne et al. and O'Connor and Molloy reported that they had difficulties in recruiting a sample and they relied mainly on housing and homelessness services referring young people to them; it is possible that both samples over-represented young LGB people who were more out and confident as well as those who were more likely to have accessed LGB support. In one of these studies the researchers noted that they had mainly recruited young people who had accessed support from the gay community; they go on to suggest that these young people may represent the tip of the iceberg in terms of how intolerance and homophobia lead to vulnerability and homelessness for lesbian and gay youth (Prendergast et al., 2001).

Given these observations about the difficulties of researching hidden populations and the need to consider how vulnerability may be linked to lack of LGBT community support, and possibly linked to non-disclosure, we thought it was important to use a range of approaches to recruit young people into our study; we wanted to recruit a diverse range of people and include those who had not accessed specific support and those who had not previously disclosed their sexual identity or their transgender identity to workers in services. We were successful in recruiting a diverse sample as discussed in the next section.

4.2 Sampling methods used in this study and characteristics of the sample

We used a range of approaches to recruit our sample including publicity with LGBT groups, in the local LGBT press, and in LGBT commercial venues; publicity in youth, housing and homelessness services; an advertisement in a local newspaper; referrals from workers in housing, homelessness and related agencies; and street outreach. We mainly recruited young people who accessed a young peoples' housing advice drop-in session; this service was provided within a young peoples' advice centre and all young people who came for advice were asked to indicate their sexual identity and gender identity as part of routine monitoring; any young people who identified as LGBT were invited by their advice worker to take part in a research interview. They were offered an incentive of a £10.00 voucher to use for a mobile phone top-up or to use in a supermarket.

Most of the young people who we recruited came through the housing advice drop-in during a 6 month period; the workers invited all young people who identified as LGBT to participate, apart from two young gay men who were very distressed at the time of interview and it was felt to be inappropriate to ask them. All of the young people who were invited to participate agreed to take part in an interview. In total we conducted 33 interviews and 18 of these were recruited through the housing advice drop-in. Of the remaining 15 interviewees, three were recruited through workers in hostels and one through a worker in a substance misuse service; one was recruited through publicity in a gay venue; three were recruited through workers or outreach to LGBT support groups; one was recruited through street outreach; one was recruited

through a service providing a soup-run; one was recruited through an advertisement in the local press and four were contacted through other interviewees. In addition to conducting interviews, we also designed a shorter questionnaire to be completed with a researcher during outreach work or to be self-completed. The self-completion questionnaires were distributed via key workers in LGBT support groups and in substance misuse services. Most of the young people who completed the questionnaire did so with the researcher during street outreach. Fifteen young people completed the questionnaire and four of these subsequently participated in a research interview. In total 44 LGBT young people participated in the research.

The young people who participated in our study were aged between 16 and 25; 23 were young men, 17 were young women and four identified as transgender (all male to female). In terms of sexual identity 18 identified as gay men; 15 identified as lesbian or gay women; 10 identified as bisexual and one of the transgender women identified as heterosexual. Eight of the young people (18%) were from Black and Minority Ethnic groups. Two thirds of the young people we interviewed were 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET). A third of the young people had spent their childhood in Brighton and Hove; a third in the rest of the surrounding county and a third outside the area. We were moderately successful in including young people who had not previously accessed LGBT support and some who had never disclosed their sexual identity previously when accessing services. By conducting street outreach we also included some young people who were disengaged and not accessing youth or housing and homelessness support services. The sample we obtained was diverse in terms of demographic characteristics and in terms of the degree to which young people disclosed their sexual identity when accessing services.

4.3 Interview schedule and questionnaire design

The interview schedule was semi-structured and included questions about the young person's childhood background, in terms of their experiences in the family (and/or in care) and their experiences at school. They were asked about their current housing situation and what had led up to initial and subsequent episodes of homelessness. They were asked about their experiences of housing and homelessness services and they were also asked about their sexual and mental health and experience of using services. Young people were also asked to comment on their experiences of, and views on, monitoring of sexual identity and gender identity in services and their views on whether or not there was a need for LGBT specific housing or specialist support workers. The interviews took between 40 minutes and 3 hours to complete with most lasting between 1.5 to 2 hours. The purpose and conduct of the research was explained and all participants signed a consent form before being interviewed. Participants were also given an information sheet about the research and a list of local resources where they could access advice and support. The questionnaire was designed to be completed face-to-face with a researcher and included most of the items covered in the interview schedule.

4.4 Interviews with service providers

As well as conducting interviews with homeless LGBT youth, we also interviewed local service providers. The purpose of this was to gain further insight into local service providers' understanding of the specific needs of homeless LGBT youth, to identify how local services could be improved or developed and to identify whether or not local service providers had any unmet training needs in relation to providing housing and homelessness services to LGBT youth. We conducted one focus group with 12 local service providers and one-to-one interviews with another nine service providers. In total 21 local service providers participated in the study; they included four managers of supported housing projects; three frontline workers in supported housing projects; a manager of a day service and two housing advice workers from voluntary sector projects; seven housing advice and assessment officers from the local authority; one housing service manager from the local authority; one worker from a substance misuse service; one local authority manager involved in a review of children's services; one worker from a specialist LGB project for homeless LGB young people. In the focus group and interviews we asked service providers about how they perceived and met the needs of homeless LGBT youth and whether they thought there was a need for LGBT specific accommodation or specialist support workers; we also asked them about their experiences of monitoring young peoples sexual identity and transgender identity.

5. Findings

We report here on the role that sexual identity and transgender identity play in initial and subsequent causes of homelessness, and then report on LGBT young peoples experiences of housing and homelessness services. In relation to causes of homelessness, it is clear in most cases that other factors contribute to homelessness. We attempt to compare our findings with other studies of homeless youth in general, and homeless LGB⁴ youth in particular, in an attempt to further understand the ways in which LGBT youth are vulnerable to homelessness and its consequences. Our comparisons with other studies need to be interpreted with caution because of different sampling approaches and data collection methods; however, as seen in the review of the literature, both qualitative and quantitative studies indicate that LGB youth are more at risk of homelessness (i.e. we find a higher proportion of LGB youth amongst homeless youth populations than would be expected from estimates of the overall population) and sexual identity plays a role in the initial cause of homelessness. In order to understand the role that sexual identity and transgender identity play in terms of causes of homelessness, we first describe the family background and experiences at school of young people who we interviewed and attempt to compare these experiences to other homeless youth populations. We then examine young people's accounts of how they became homeless in order to understand where and how sexual identity and transgender identity was implicated in their initial and subsequent episodes of homelessness.

5.1 Young people's childhood backgrounds and experiences at school

In this section we explore the background of young people in terms of their families, or being in care, and their experiences at school in order to try to understand how LGBT youth may be particularly vulnerable to homelessness. It would seem that instability in families contributes to the risk of homelessness as it does with other young people, but there is an added vulnerability from the effects of homophobia and transphobia in the home, in schools and in society in general.

5.1.1 Family background

The young LGBT participants in this study shared many of the characteristics of other young homeless people in terms of their family backgrounds. Family conflict is cited as the main cause of youth homelessness (Smith et al., 1998; Randall and Brown, 2001) but the role of conflict regarding gender and sexual identity is not reported in these studies. However, there are apparent similarities between most LGB homeless young people and homeless young

⁴ Although two of the studies we cite appear to be inclusive of transgender homeless youth, Cochran et al. (2002) had only one transgender person in their sample of 168 participants and Stonewall Youth Project (2000) do not report specifically on homelessness in relation to transgender identity. In the absence of any other studies reporting specifically on the causes of homelessness and experiences of homelessness in transgender youth, when we discuss our findings in relation to other studies, we do so in relation to LGB youth.

people in general. Smith et al. (1998) found that two thirds of the 56 young homeless people that they interviewed came from disrupted families (i.e. where their parents had separated or made a new partnership after the child was aged three, or the child had spent a period of time in local authority care). Studies of homeless LGB youth have noted that homeless LGB youth share the characteristics of the general youth homeless population with the majority coming from difficult and unstable family backgrounds (Dunne et al., 2005; Dunne et al., 2002; O'Connor and Molloy, 2001). In our study, there was a similar picture in that three quarters came from disrupted families, using the same definition as Smith et al. (1998), and/or had been in local authority care. When we looked at these separately in our study, two thirds came from disrupted families, and a quarter had been in local authority care.

Smith et al. (1998) also explored whether or not young homeless people had a history of abuse within their families, including verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse or violence; they reported that about 20% of the young homeless people in their study had a history of abuse within the family which compares to about 60% in our study. It is interesting to note that in a quantitative study where LGBT youth were compared to heterosexual youth, the LGBT youth were more likely to have left home because of physical abuse than their heterosexual counterparts; this difference was statistically significant (Cochran et al., 2002). O'Connor and Molloy (2001) also noted a high incidence of physical abuse at home in their qualitative study of homeless LGB youth.

We found that a number of the young people that we interviewed reported that their parents had been abusive, or excessively controlling, towards them but not to their (ostensibly non LGBT) siblings. This evidence, combined with findings from other studies and apparent differences between populations, suggests that homophobia and transphobia within the family of origin make children with emerging LGBT identities particularly vulnerable to abuse within the family and vulnerable to subsequent homelessness. Such abuse may occur whether or not the parents or the young person are explicitly aware of their identity; the abuse and conflict may be triggered by the parent's awareness of an emerging non-conformity around expected gendered behaviours and roles. Our interview data also suggests that such children come to the attention of Social Services or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services but assessments fail to identify the role of sexual and gender identity in the family conflict. Further research to develop ways of assessing and identifying this vulnerability would enable earlier interventions to provide appropriate family support; this could contribute significantly to the prevention of homelessness within the LGBT youth population.

We also found that three young women and two young men reported that they had been sexually abused by immediate family members (15%) with over 20% reporting some kind of sexual abuse during childhood. These figures are most likely to be under-estimates as we did not ask directly in our interviews about sexual abuse and other researchers have noted that it tends to be under-reported (e.g. Randall and Brown, 2001). O'Connor and Molloy (2001) also noted high incidence of sexual abuse within families in their study of

homeless lesbian and gay youth. It is difficult to make comparisons with other studies but Craig et al. (1996) found during in-depth interviews that 42% of homeless women and 18% of homeless men reported childhood sexual abuse.

5.1.2 Experiences at school

Bullying and isolation

Over two thirds of the young people in our study had been bullied at school and in most cases there was a homophobic element to the bullying whether or not the young person's sexual identity was known about; in some cases the young person's sexual identity was known and in other cases it was assumed:

"I was out at school and I was bullied and beaten up for years" (Tracy⁵)

"I was 'outed' at school after I'd been seen with my girlfriend in a pub. I was called a dyke and had bottles thrown at me and insults written on my bag" (Maggie)

"I was bullied by one person in particular with some vicious name calling – he would call me a 'filthy fucking faggot'" (Patrick)

"I've been called gay ever since I can remember and with the bullying the gay thing really haunted me" (Dan)

"There was constant back stabbing and tormenting – they'd decided I was gay" (Peter)

For other young people the bullying was linked to being perceived to be different in some way:

"I was very badly bullied at school and one time I had my wrists broken – I think some of it was because I was seen as different - I was into the Goth scene" (Ellen)

"I was bullied from the age of 11 for having my hair cut short – I was called a boy in a skirt. Then I wore trousers but it carried on and they used to take the piss out of me, make snide comments and trip me up. When I was older they were all going on about two lesbians and I stuck up for them so then it all got turned round on me" (Becky)

The homophobic bullying in schools made it unsafe for young people to disclose their sexual identity:

"I was aware of my sexuality from when I was 10 but I didn't do anything at school because people will judge you and I would have had to leave" (Amber)

⁵ Quotes from interviews with research participants are indented in italics. All names are pseudonyms.

“I never came out at school because of what I saw happening to those who did – one girl had her head flushed down the toilet after she’d come out” (Tina)

“I saw what happened to people who came out – they were slated behind their backs” (Edward)

As well as being bullied, and feeling unsafe to come-out, young people also reported losing friends either because they were rejected or they isolated themselves in fear of such rejection:

“I lost a lot of friends when I came out which was devastating – they thought I would come on to them and it was very difficult – I find it hard to make friends now” (Tracy)

“I had a lot of friends but when I became aware of my sexuality when I was about 14, I pushed them all away because I was worried they would find out – I truanted a lot for the same reason” (Edward)

Effects of homophobia in schools: truancy and exclusion and educational under-achievement

We can see from the previous example how homophobia and bullying in schools was linked to truancy; we found that a third of young people in our study had either truanted and/or been excluded from school and that this was linked to homophobic bullying:

“I missed a lot of lessons towards the end and was excluded three times – I was narked and made a nuisance of myself because no one listened” (Becky)

“When I retaliated I was expelled 6 months before my GCSEs” (Peter)

Other qualitative studies of homeless LGB youth have also noted the link between homophobic bullying and lack of attendance at school (O'Connor and Molloy, 2001; Prendergast et al., 2001). Furthermore, a quantitative survey of 362 LGBT youth, found a relationship between bullying, dropping out of school, under-achievement and homelessness (Carolan and Redmond, 2003).

We also found that two thirds of the young people we interviewed left school with less than 5 GCSEs and in many cases did less well in their exams than had been predicted. There was a clear link between under-achievement, bullying and truancy or exclusion; half of those who had been bullied under-achieved and most of those who truanted or been excluded had been bullied and also under-achieved. Some young people also under-achieved and dropped out of college because of homophobic bullying:

“When I went to college some of the same people from school were there; when they found out I was gay as well that took the biscuit and I couldn’t handle it and left” (Tina)

We also found that some of the young people identified that conflict at home over their sexual identity contributed to under-achievement at school or later when they were studying at college.

Lack of support for LGB youth at school

Very few of the young people who had been bullied at school received effective support. One young woman was advised by a school nurse to come to school late in order to avoid being attacked on the way to school; this contributed to her absenteeism and did not resolve the problem. Some young people were excluded from school or threatened with exclusion if they retaliated against the bullying. Even where they were supported, the bullying did not stop:

“I complained and he was suspended for a while but it didn’t stop until I left school” (Patrick)

The lack of support for LGB youth within schools was especially noticeable in young people’s accounts of how sex education lessons failed to be inclusive:

“It was all heterosexual and none of it was relevant. I asked a couple of times if we could do anything on homosexuality but they just shunned my idea” (Tracy)

“We only had one lesson and lesbian and gay issues were not mentioned” (Amber)

“I went to every lesson on sex education and PSE and at the end of the year they said ‘we are not going to talk about homosexuality because we are not allowed to but if anyone wants to stay behind they can’ – but no one did” (Becky)

“You couldn’t bring anything up or say anything because people would just laugh” (Amber)

“They could say a lot more about gay sex, lifestyle and safety – when they did mention any gay issues they brought them up as an aside and made a joke of it – it wasn’t serious or inclusive” (Simon)

Young people also identified how it would have helped them if sex education lessons had been more inclusive. The young people discussed this in relation to their general well being and mental health but when we look at our findings about the sexual health of homeless LGBT youth in section 4.6.4, we consider that this lack of appropriate sex education is likely to have also affected their sexual health:

“Gay sex was never mentioned – it would have made it easier for us by normalising it for the straights so that they could see what things are like for us” (John)

“There was nothing on lesbian and gay stuff but there should have been. It would have stopped it being so hidden so that people wouldn’t find it so amusing and realise that it is real” (Jane)

“It would have helped if they had included lesbian and gay relationships because it would have put the bullies’ homophobic misconceptions and fears at bay and it would also have helped those who were gay or were unsure” (Martin)

“The sex education we had never talked about lesbian or gay lifestyles – I just had stereotypes in my head and didn’t know anything. Lesbian and gay relationships were very taboo” (Ellen)

One young woman described how she had looked in the yellow pages to find help but felt very strongly that the sort of information she was looking for should have been available at school. Another young man felt there was a need for LGBT champions in schools:

“It would be good to have LGBT champions or workers in schools – they wouldn’t have to be gay themselves but they could point you in the right direction so you could find support and groups. They could challenge the way the word gay is used in schools – there’s no excuse for it anymore. We need an anti section 28 type mandate saying that schools must teach these things – the whole class needs it in order to defeat homophobia and help the minority” (Martin)

The lack of support for young LGBT people at school, and the prevalence of homophobia, may contribute to LGBT youth’s vulnerability to homelessness. Some young people identified that homophobic bullying contributed to them running away from home, and contributed to their mental health problems. A recent quantitative study also found a link between homophobic bullying and suicide attempts (McNamee, 2006).

5.2 The relationship between first episode of homelessness and sexual identity

We found, as did O’Connor and Molloy (2001) that not all homeless LGBT youth have had the opportunity to reflect on how their homelessness relates to their sexual identity; in most cases it was the older age group who we interviewed who were more able to articulate the complex ways in which their sexual identity had played a role in their homelessness, unless they had been evicted or threatened with eviction by their parents on the grounds of their sexuality.

As with other studies we found that the sexual identity of a young person was implicated directly or indirectly in the initial cause of homelessness in most

cases. Some young people were evicted from the family home, or chose to leave, because their parents knew about and were intolerant of the young person's sexual identity; others chose to leave because they presumed their parents would have a negative reaction if they did know about the young person's sexual identity. As well as violence and abuse within the home, some young people identified that homophobic bullying and assaults at school and in the neighbourhood contributed to their decision to leave home. Two of the young transgender people also identified that abuse within the home and neighbourhood contributed to their initial episode of homelessness. Some young people chose to leave home because they felt isolated in the place where they lived and wanted to live in a place where LGBT lives were more visible. We discuss our findings about the first episodes of a young person's homelessness in this section and look at subsequent episodes of homelessness next. However, this distinction blurs the complexity of the relationship between sexual identity and homelessness so this is followed by four case-studies to illustrate how sexual identity is implicated in first and subsequent episodes of homelessness. This is followed by a discussion of the transgender young people's accounts of their homelessness to illustrate the relationship between transgender identity and homelessness.

5.2.1 Eviction or being asked to leave

Some young people said they had been evicted from their family home, or asked to leave, when their parents discovered that their son or daughter was gay or lesbian; we found that this happened in both families where there was history of disruption or instability and in those where both birth parents still formed the main family unit. For the young men in our study this direct relationship was clear:

"My parents found out I was gay when I was 17 and they asked me to leave" (Peter)

"My older brother looked through my belongings and found some love letters and he told my mother – she threw me out at 9 'O' clock in the evening without any warning" (Abdul)

"My mother's boyfriend used it as another thing to be nasty about and he made a lot of personal homophobic comments – he became violent towards me and tried to strangle me and then he threw me out" (Simon)

"My father jumped up at me out of the blue and threatened me and then he threw me out – he tried to call me names but I didn't pay attention but he followed me out and called me more names like faggot and cock sucker" (José)

Some of the young men were asked to leave as soon as they had finished school or college; one young man then left before he finished college and another who was in local authority care had to leave as soon as he finished school and was denied further care by his foster family:

“My Dad overheard me talking on the phone and realised I was gay – he said I’d have to leave as soon as I finished college but I left straight away when I was 17” (Matthew)

“My foster parents found out and they were not happy about it – they said it was disgusting but said I could stay until I finished school – I had to stay there or go back into short term placements and lose the only bit of stability I’d ever had, but I had to go when I was 16” (Patrick)

The relationship between parental eviction, or being asked to leave, and sexuality was less clear for young women:

“My mother had a bad reaction about my sexuality and calls me names but I’m not sure if that’s why she has asked me to leave because we argue about other things as well” (Rosa)

5.2.2 “Choosing” to leave

Many of the young people who we interviewed originally left their family home of their own initiative rather than being forced to leave by their parents; we recognise the irony of defining this as a choice given that the young people “chose” to leave because of homophobia in the home, at school and in their neighbourhoods or because they felt isolated. Martin had experienced homophobic bullying and violence at school and he identified that this played a significant part in him initially leaving home:

“Gay people didn’t exist where I grew up and I had to get away and press the re-set button. I needed a fresh start where there was no chance of bumping into someone from school” (Martin)

Martin lived in supported accommodation after first leaving home and then went to live with his father; however his father was homophobic and Martin became homeless again when he found it too difficult to live with his father. Tina also identified that when she first left home, that homophobic bullying at school contributed to this as well as feeling unsafe at home:

“I left because I couldn’t live there – I was too scared to come out and I was worried about how my dad would react – I thought he would disown me but I couldn’t hide it” (Tina)

Heather experienced physical abuse from her parents for many years and felt sure that her parents would be even more abusive should they become aware of her sexual identity:

“I went when I was 16 because of the physical violence from my parents. I was sure it would escalate if they found out about my sexuality as well. In fact they interrogated me about my sexuality when I was 12 and said I wasn’t feminine enough. They made it quite clear that they would kick me out if they found out I was a lesbian. I knew I couldn’t hide it forever and it would have been worse if they just kicked

me out when I was unprepared – at least I was in control by leaving when I did” (Heather)

Another young person described how running away from care was partly related to being isolated:

“I started running away from care when I was 11 – part of the reason I ran away was so I could see my girlfriend who lived in a squat – she couldn’t have come to see me in the children’s home. I also ran away so I could go to gay clubs and find a group I could identify with” (Jenny)

5.3 The relationship between later episodes of homelessness and sexual identity

We can see from the previous section that some young people, particularly young gay men, were evicted or asked to leave by the parents or carers once their sexual identity had become known. Others chose to leave because their parents were intolerant and homophobic or they feared that their parents would be intolerant and homophobic should their sexuality become known; others felt that it was impossible to live in the area where they had grown up with homophobic bullying at school contributing to this. In the previous examples these situations led to immediate homelessness. In other cases the young person left home and was not homeless immediately but became so later:

“My mother told my step-father I was gay – we had never been close but after that his whole attitude changed and he flipped at the slightest thing – one time he broke my nose and I left when I was 16 to a job with live-in accommodation” (Greg)

“I was confused about my sexuality and left home when I was 16 to sort myself out” (Sean)

“I left when I was 16 because it was difficult living in such a rural area and being so isolated from other gay people” (Tracy)

“It was impossible to live in that part of the country and be gay – it was so backward – you would kill yourself if you stayed there” (Nat)

“I would have to hide my sexuality if I returned home – I left to broaden my horizons and be myself” (Bridget)

“My mother was very religious and very authoritarian – when she overheard a telephone conversation and realised I was gay that kicked the whole thing off – I moved out when I was 17 to live with my girlfriend” (Jane)

Sean, Tracy, Bridget and Jane all subsequently became homeless when they lost their employment with live-in accommodation or after the breakdown of a relationship with a partner they were living with. Greg later found a place in

supported accommodation but couldn't afford the rent when he became employed and then spent a period of time sleeping rough whilst working. He then found a place in another hostel but witnessed a violent crime; he was threatened as a witness and advised by the police to leave the city he was living in. He fled to Brighton because of these threats where he ended up sleeping rough before finding a place in a night shelter.

Other young people in our study became homeless initially because they had left or been evicted from homes where their families were abusive but their sexual identity had not apparently played a role in this. These young people were identified as being in priority need and were accommodated in supported housing. Three young women who we interviewed were subsequently made homeless again through leaving or being evicted from supported housing; in each case homophobia within the hostel seemed to play a significant role in the cause of this episode of homelessness:

"I felt safe in the hostel and I met my first girlfriend there. The hostel was great apart from the homophobia – there were four girls in there who did things like write "dirty lesbians" in chocolate on our door and kept kicking at our door – the staff wouldn't do anything as they said there was no proof – a few times we called the police when we were trapped in our room and the staff wouldn't come out of the office when we called them. The police came but the hostel staff sent them away. The hostel staff were discriminating as well – no-one liked two women having a relationship there. We had to leave in the end because we couldn't stand it and the council housed us together as a couple" (Amber)

"I was in a hostel but I got evicted because there was a fight between one of my visitors and another tenant who had been spreading rumours about my girlfriend. There's been other fights like that but they were all straight and they didn't get evicted" (Rachel)

"I had an argument with my girlfriend when I was in a hostel and they said I would have to move on because my support needs were too high - the row caused a disturbance and because it was two women everyone got interested which caused more disturbance – other girls there had rows with their boyfriends but they weren't asked to leave – I thought it was unfair but I didn't see it as being related to being gay at the time – I just thought it was unfair – they don't make it blatantly obvious that it's about that – they make it about something else but you can't prove it. I moved from there to a privately rented bed-sit" (Becky)

5.4 Young transgender people and reasons for homelessness

We interviewed four young people who identified as transgender; all identified as male to female transgender and three identified as lesbian, one as heterosexual. Two were seeking treatment for gender re-assignment and two were not. They are referred to here by gender specific pseudonyms which accord with how they were living/identifying at the time of the interview.

Leon left home and got married; following the breakdown of the marriage he spent periods working in the hotel industry where there was live-in accommodation or spent periods of time traveling and sleeping rough. This was followed by another period of time living in a squat followed by finding rented accommodation with friends from the squat.

Christine was initially homeless because she was evicted at the age of 17 by her step-father; she felt her gender identity may have contributed to conflict at home and she was placed in supported accommodation. She came to Brighton, like many young people we interviewed, expecting it to be an easier place to live as an LGBT person and subsequently became homeless again.

Amina experienced violence within the home and neighbourhood and was then forced into an arranged marriage at the age of 17 and continued to live with her family; her parents were aware of her transgender identity when they arranged the marriage. She ran away from the family home when she was 19 but was found and brought home after a week. After further threats she ran away again and has now been housed by the local authority in temporary accommodation.

Richard spent most of his childhood in local authority care; the relationship between his homelessness and his sexual identity or gender identity is unclear – however, he thinks that his gender atypical behaviour contributed to his mother being abusive to him and the reasons why he was initially taken into care. He has also had some difficulties in supported accommodation which are described in a later section.

5.5 Patterns of homelessness in LGBT youth

We can see from the previous sections how homophobia and isolation played a significant role in initial and subsequent episodes of homelessness. However, these examples do not reveal the full complexity of the relationship especially as some young people experienced several episodes of homelessness, sometimes returning to their family in between, and others became homeless after “choosing” to leave the family home. We could see from young people’s accounts that sexual identity, transgender identity and other vulnerability factors led to repeat episodes of homelessness with some young people disengaging from services and developing a pattern of transient homelessness with long term rough sleeping, squatting and sofa surfing. We describe here some of these patterns and how young people accounted for the relationship between their homelessness, their sexual identity, homophobia, isolation and other vulnerability factors.

The young people who ran away from home or care, or chose to leave home, identified that there were often several factors which contributed to them running away or leaving; these included experiencing general conflict at home; feeling emotionally neglected at home or in care; having very controlling and authoritarian parents; homophobia at home; feeling unsafe to come-out at home; homophobic bullying at school; homophobia in the neighbourhood including violent assaults; sexual abuse at home or in the

neighbourhood; and feeling isolated from other LGBT youth. For some young people only one of these factors seemed to be at play; for instance one young man left home because he felt confused about his sexuality and felt he needed to get away from his family; he did not come from a disrupted family and appeared to have no other vulnerability factors other than feeling unsure and unsafe about “coming-out” However, he lost contact with most of his family who he had been close to, and although he met other gay men on the gay scene, he never disclosed his sexual identity to anyone else. He became homeless after fleeing from domestic violence in a same-sex relationship; his isolation from family and friends meant that he had no support and he ended up sleeping rough. Other young people identified that multiple factors contributed to episodes of homelessness. Some of the young people we spoke to who ran away, returned home or were returned to the care of the local authority several times. Those who returned home became homeless again when they found that the homophobic abuse within their families and neighbourhood continued.

A number of young people in our study spent up to two years in supported housing but continued to be vulnerable to homelessness afterwards. Some of the young women reported feeling unsafe in mixed supported accommodation and had experienced sexual harassment, racial harassment or sexual abuse within supported housing; others also experienced homophobic harassment and some had to leave their supported housing because of this. One of the young people who attended college while living in supported housing experienced further homophobic bullying (sometimes from the same people they had been at school with), and failed to complete her college courses. The lack of safety in some supported housing projects, and in further attempts at education, no doubt contributed to several young people becoming homeless again after a period of time in supported housing.

Some young people found rough sleeping, sofa surfing and squatting preferable to living in hostels or temporary accommodation; some identified that they found hostel rules too strict, others had experienced homophobia in rented accommodation, or in supported housing, and several identified that they felt generally unsafe in temporary accommodation. The other reason for expressing a preference for rough sleeping, squatting and sofa surfing was that young people felt they had more choice and control over who they lived with than they did in supported housing or temporary accommodation. This made them feel safer. Some young people said that they were more able to mix with other LGB homeless people, and people who were more tolerant and accepting, if they slept rough or lived in squats. Several of these young people had disengaged from services, including those who were selling sex.

We saw earlier that two thirds of the young people who were homeless in Brighton and Hove had spent their childhoods outside the immediate area. Nearly all of these young people identified that they migrated to Brighton and Hove because they thought it would be a safer place to live and that they would have the support of a visible LGBT community. This was particularly the case for those who had grown up in rural areas, and other areas without a visible LGBT community. They also identified that, having come to Brighton

and Hove, they had been able to access LGBT support which they felt was helping them towards stability. The other vulnerability factor which we identified, which contributed to episodes of homelessness, was domestic violence. Nearly a quarter of the young people in our study were, or had been, in relationships where there was domestic violence. Relationship breakdown led to homelessness on a number of occasions.

5.6 LGBT youths' experiences of homelessness

In this section we look at young people's experiences once they had become homeless and their subsequent experiences in emergency, temporary, supported and permanent accommodation. We look at their experiences of how their needs were assessed and the role of equal opportunities monitoring in this process. We also look at the effects of homelessness on their mental and sexual health and their experiences of services. We then look at their experiences of LGBT support and their views on whether or not there is a need for a specialist supported housing project for homeless LGBT youth.

5.6.1 LGBT youth's experiences of housing advice and homelessness services

Assessment of homelessness and experiences of monitoring

Of the 33 young people who were interviewed in this study, and the 11 who completed questionnaires, 24 had accessed Brighton and Hove City Council's housing options service to make a homelessness application. Of the 17 who were interviewed, one felt she had been helped and supported and 16 felt that the service was neither helpful nor supportive. Of those completing the questionnaires, 7 had accessed the housing options service and 6 commented on whether it was helpful or supportive; 2 had felt that they were supported and helped, 2 had felt supported but not helped, and 2 had felt neither supported nor helped. Overall then, of the 24 young people who had accessed the service the majority (i.e. 18) had felt neither supported nor helped. The interviews allowed us to explore this in more detail and understand some of the issues facing young LGBT people when they make a homelessness application. Some of these issues would apply to any young person making a homelessness application and some are more specific to the vulnerability of LGBT youth. The young people were also asked in the interviews about their experiences of accessing housing advice through the local Youth Advice Centre (YAC); their housing advice drop-in service was generally perceived to be more helpful and supportive and by comparing young people's accounts of their experiences of these two different services, useful recommendations can be made about how to improve access and ensure adequate assessment of vulnerability and needs.

Assessing vulnerability and priority housing need

Many of the young LGBT people who accessed the local authority homelessness services, felt that the staff who they initially met for an assessment were unfriendly and unhelpful. These young people's experiences may not be dissimilar in some ways from other people at the early stages of a homelessness application. Homeless people without a local

connection will not be entitled to housing unless they are found to be vulnerable through fleeing violence and abuse, and it is likely that many people seeking housing will feel let down and disappointed. However, our findings suggest that this initial reception when LGBT youth make a homelessness application makes it difficult for them to be properly assessed and for vulnerability to be identified:

“They could have been nicer at the council – I was shocked at the rudeness of the people behind the desk – they think everyone is like the drunks that go in there and they were hostile and unfriendly and made snide remarks - it was really hard and it seemed as if they were just trying to find a way not to put me up” (Simon)

“You feel that no-one cares there” (Edward)

Many of the young people were deemed not to be vulnerable or in priority need of housing; some were given some advice and others said they were sent away without any relevant information:

“I was really shocked, that they were so unhelpful and I just went away with some leaflets” (Ellen)

“The council say they can’t help and they don’t refer you anywhere else either - there was no information at the council and they didn’t even tell me where the facilities were” (Sean).

“They didn’t refer me anywhere – I found out about YAC through the Clock Tower Sanctuary” (Steven)

“I went to the council and explained about my mental health and that I was transgender and finding it hard as a T person to find somewhere to live – they said that transgender people are only vulnerable if they have an open wound after surgery. It was so downgrading to be judged as to whether or not I was vulnerable on the basis of whether or not I’d had the operation. I felt they knew nothing about transgender people and what we have to go through but they write the rules – they need training and new policies. This is supposed to be the gay capital but the council can’t deal with it. They just gave me list of men-only hostels and didn’t recognise my vulnerability at all” (Christine)

The atmosphere created by these staff attitudes, and the general environment, made it difficult for the young people to get an accurate assessment of their needs and vulnerability in relation to their homelessness situation. From the young people’s accounts, many of them were seen very briefly before being told that they were not in priority need of housing. Had they been adequately assessed, it would seem from many of their histories that they would have been found to be eligible to make a homelessness application:

“You can’t communicate when you are stressed – they were inhumane and grinned when they were asking me about my medical history and they are too quick to judge you” (Nat)

“They said that if I had a friend I could stay with that night then I was not homeless - it was such a horrible experience and they were so dismissive and unhelpful that I couldn't really tell them what was going on - I felt defeated by it “(Ellen)

In some cases this added to the young person’s vulnerability and also discouraged them from accessing the service:

“Going there was a traumatic experience anyway because of what had just happened to me and then it was like another kick in the mouth to be spoken to like that. I needed reassurance – I needed someone to say ‘I am sure we can help you’ but they said, ‘I dunno – don’t think there is anything’” (Simon)

“It was really scary because they gave me a list of numbers like rough sleepers, which made me feel like I was going to end up on the streets” (Edward)

“I was really upset on the day that I went to the council - I had no-one with me that day and I wouldn’t want to go there again because they were so unsympathetic – it was as if they heard it all day and didn’t want to hear it again – they just took down the facts and asked me if I had anywhere I could stay that night” (Simon)

In contrast, young LGBT people felt able to describe their vulnerability and the circumstances leading to their homelessness more easily in the housing advice services provided by Hove YMCA’s Youth Advice Centre (YAC). Most of the young LGBT people interviewed in this study had used YAC’s housing advice service and said that they found it helpful and supportive. They said that this was because the atmosphere within that service was generally warmer and more friendly and welcoming. They also felt that the service was more accessible because it was restricted to a younger age group and because information was visible and available for LGBT groups. Another important difference between the service provided by YAC and that provided by the local authority is the way in which sexual and gender identity is routinely monitored. The impact of this and its relationship to being able to assess need and vulnerability is explored further in a later section of this report. The lack of monitoring and assessment of sexual identity and transgender identity when homeless LGBT youth make homelessness applications to the local authority, means that vulnerability is not always recognised. For those without a local connection, their homelessness application may be turned down at an early stage of the assessment process, even though they are vulnerable. As noted earlier the majority of homeless LGBT youth in our study migrated to Brighton and Hove because it was thought to be a safer place for LGBT people. Even though they did not have a local connection and may not have been deemed to be in priority need, these

homeless LGBT youth remained in the city in unsuitable accommodation. Lack of intervention and support means that the needs of this group are not met and in the long term a greater demand for services is created.

Monitoring of sexual identity and gender identity

The findings from a previous research study (O'Connor and Molloy 2001) into the needs of homeless LGB youth led to recommendations that local authorities should monitor sexuality; it was felt that monitoring would raise awareness and understanding of the needs of homeless LGBT young people. Following on from these recommendations, Shelter and Stonewall Housing jointly produced guidelines about how to monitor sexuality in housing and homelessness services (Gold 2005). Such monitoring, if conducted sensitively, will lead to greater disclosure by clients of their sexuality and related causes of homelessness and housing needs. It will also enable providers to get a clearer picture of prevalence of need, patterns of homelessness and repeat homelessness and improve referral information for clients. Furthermore it will help to identify whether or not new services need to be developed, and will help to identify any staff training needs. In this study, most of the young people who were interviewed were recruited through Hove YMCA's Youth Advice Centre (YAC) housing advice sessions. YAC monitors sexuality following the good practice guidelines developed by Stonewall Housing and Shelter. The young people were asked about their experiences of, and views on, monitoring in the research interviews. The young people felt positive about the way that sexuality was monitored at YAC but not in other services.

Young LGBT people who had used the housing advice service at YAC had positive experiences of the monitoring of their sexuality; they felt that the general environment and the way the staff conducted the monitoring made it easier for them to disclose their sexual identity:

*“At YAC when they ask you it feels OK and it just feels like a straightforward question because they are so nice there anyway”
(Simon)*

“It felt OK to be asked about my sexuality at YAC – I thought it must be a gay service anyway because I saw lots of gay information there and it felt like Brighton – I didn't see anything at the council – I came back to use the computer at YAC because it felt comfortable” (José)

Another participant who had experienced monitoring in another service suggested that monitoring made it easier to disclose:

“The Newhaven Foyer had sexuality on the form – everyone else just assumes unless you jump around” (Heather)

As a result of the monitoring at YAC, young LGBT people thought that their needs were assessed more fully with appropriate referrals and information:

“I was asked at YAC which was helpful because they told me about the Albert Kennedy Trust” (Matthew)

“The monitoring at YAC just seemed part of the deal and I thought they were asking in order to give me relevant information and they did do that because they told me about Allsorts and the Albert Kennedy Trust” (Heather)

In other services where monitoring had not taken place, young people had not disclosed and felt their needs had not been assessed so well:

“If CAMHS or NCH had asked about my sexuality I would have told them but I might not have felt comfortable – but it would have been useful because they could have let me know about services and understood my needs more. I got support about managing money and that sort of thing but nothing to do with personal stuff” (Heather)

“I went to the Salvation Army and told them that I was homeless because of conflict at home but I didn’t have the confidence to tell them that I’d been thrown out because I was gay” (Peter)

There was also a degree of acceptance for the principle of monitoring but recognition that it might be easier for those who felt more confident:

“I don’t see its relevance but it’s like ethnic monitoring to see if the service is representing people so that’s fair enough” (Jane)

“I was asked to tick a form and I didn’t think anything of it because I get asked that a lot – it’s become like being asked your race or age– it’s become normal. It feels OK but I suppose if it’s something you are not completely comfortable with because your family are disagreeing with you because of your sexuality then it might be harder” (Ellen)

Young people who went to the local authority were not routinely asked about their sexuality. One client went for advice with her partner and they felt that they were treated in a non-discriminatory way:

“The Council knew because we arrived as a couple and we said we were a couple – they said ‘really’ but they didn’t judge us” (Amber)

Those who were asked, as part of an assessment, felt less comfortable about it and uncertain about its purpose:

“I was asked at the council and I wondered why it mattered but there was a cold feeling there generally – when I was asked at YAC it felt different because the whole atmosphere there is different – it’s relaxed and friendly and people seem happy there - it felt natural when they asked me there and I felt comfortable and proud” (Bridget)

“When I was asked at YAC it felt OK but that is because it is a more friendly environment and a nice peaceful atmosphere – it wouldn’t feel like that at the council” (Paul)

“I was asked about my sexuality at the council but they didn’t do anything with it” (Anna)

Another participant described his experience of monitoring in a hostel; it was not done according to good practice guidelines and led to him questioning the purpose and value of it. He felt they were just asking out of curiosity and the language used was stigmatising:

“They didn’t ask me about my sexuality directly but they were ingenious and crafty getting it out of me. They didn’t want to ask me directly and said ‘do you have a problem with homosexual men?’ and I said ‘no because I am one’ ” (John)

We also found that in one case hostel staff disclosed the sexual identity of one of our research participants to other residents even though he had been assured that monitoring information was confidential.

Although the young people in this study had a positive experience of monitoring at YAC, many expressed concerns about such monitoring by the local authority:

“The council would put a cross not a tick if you said you were gay” (Jane)

“They shouldn’t ask because you shouldn’t have to disclose it and I don’t feel you should have to lie” (Paul)

“They shouldn’t ask you but should give you a chance to explain it yourself if you trust them” (Steven)

“It would be alright if it was done in a sensitive way but not if it was done in a hasty way” (Peter)

For some young people these concerns made them so wary of monitoring that they felt the local authority should not do it; however, many also felt that ideally it should be done in order to assess needs, make referrals and provide appropriate services:

“I think they should monitor as it can give a detailed picture about housing needs in the community and it can lead to review and improvement” (Anna)

“I would worry about discrimination if they asked me, but then if they did ask they would be able to refer me to lesbian and gay services” (Sean)

“They should ask in case of homophobic experiences and so they can put you in a safe place” (Rachel)

“They need to know so they can place you somewhere where you won’t be beaten up” (Tina)

“It’s OK if there are specific needs about being gay which can be met” (Martin)

“I think they should ask about your sexuality, especially if they can then offer you something” (Simon)

“It would be excellent if they had a transgender box. It would be a big breakthrough for people who are transgender to be able to express themselves on a form” (Amina)

Overall these young LGBT people felt that monitoring was a good idea if it was carried out in a sensitive manner and in an environment where they felt safe.

5.6.2 LGBT youths’ experiences of accommodation

LGBT youths’ experiences of temporary housing and emergency accommodation

Of the young people we interviewed who were assessed as being in priority need for housing by the local authority; most were initially placed in temporary accommodation. Of those placed in temporary accommodation, most described feeling, lonely, isolated, unsupported and unsafe there:

“It was really rank and vile and I never felt safe there – they were out of the way bedsits” (Simon)

There was some evidence that young people may have been able to be placed in more appropriate accommodation if they had been able to take a more pro-active stance before they were evicted from the family home. One young man knew that he was likely to be evicted by his step-father who was homophobic and he had sought advice about this at college. Closer working between the college and local authority may have enabled him to be placed directly into supported accommodation.

Some participants said that the temporary housing was so unpleasant that they chose to sleep rough rather than stay there:

“I went to the council and was given temporary housing in a Bed and Breakfast and then in shared accommodation. There were bed bugs and fleas and mould and I didn’t feel safe especially when one of the places was broken in to. I used to sleep rough because it felt safer and less dirty or mouldy” (Tina)

“The council moved me to a ‘crack den’ near Brighton pavilion – it was really filthy there and full of drug users and I couldn’t cope there - they just toss a card key at you and tell you the rules” (Nat)

Nat went on to describe how he felt that the uncertainty around getting any permanent housing and the conditions in temporary housing had contributed to him becoming a long term rough sleeper:

“I think I’d have a council flat now if I had pursued it but I couldn’t pursue it because it was so awful and there was so much uncertainty” (Nat)

Young LGBT people described how they generally felt unsafe and unsupported in temporary accommodation and also described how they felt unsafe in relation to their sexual identity or as a transgender person:

“I’m in temporary shared accommodation again now – I don’t come out to the other tenants because some of them are homophobic” (Tina)

“The night shelter staff seem to be gay-friendly and some of them are gay – you have to sign a code of conduct about discrimination and if the staff hear someone being homophobic they do something about it but the people that stay there always do it when the staff aren’t about. If the men at the night shelter knew that I was gay they would wind me up but they wouldn’t do anything more serious because they would lose their beds – but they go on about gays and it gets on my nerves – they put gay people down and are always going on about homo this that and the other” (Sean)

“I’m not out at the night shelter because there is a general atmosphere there – the one gay guy who is out gets hassle and the others warned me to stay away from him when I got there – they said ‘be careful of him because he’s gay’” (Paul)

“When I first came to Brighton I stayed in a hostel but I had to go back in the closet - I felt people would be transphobic and wouldn’t understand – I felt chained down” (Christine)

One young person we spoke to did feel supported by an outreach support worker in temporary accommodation who gave her relevant information and support to access transgender support groups.

LGBT youths’ experiences of supported housing

By supported housing we mean accommodation such as the Foyer and other hostels where young people are supported to continue their education or enter employment, rather than short term placements in emergency accommodation. We saw in section 4.3 that some young women left or were evicted from supported housing and that homophobia from other residents and/or staff had played a role in this. We also found that other young LGB people who stayed in supported housing had also experienced homophobia:

“Some of the staff seemed really uncomfortable when two of my friends who were lesbian visited. My visitors were barred all the time and sometimes no lesbian friends were allowed in – I was accused of kissing or holding hands in the hallway or accused of having a go at the security guard – they made excuses for barring your visitors – we’d get our visitors barred just for giving each other a kiss on the cheek at reception but it was OK for the straights to do that” (Tina)

“In the hostel I get called a faggot by other people that live there – I’d rather be in a place where it is known about but it is never accepted. I need a sense of security to concentrate on my life and pick up the pieces” (Dan)

“You get Chavvy straights in hostels who think something of you because you are gay – you get looked at and they are wary and you don’t need it – people get pissed off if you are gay but we are more vulnerable – this is supposed to be the Gay capital but people still make your life hell” (Becky)

“There should be stricter rules about homophobia in hostels – one guy wakes up ranting homophobic comments and he should be kicked out but he isn’t - if they were racist they would get kicked out but if someone calls you a gay bastard no one would really pay much attention to that” (Paul)

Others described how they felt unsafe to come out in hostels or how they would be unsafe for others:

“It was the worst place I ever lived – I was the only black girl there and I got bullied for that and got sexually harassed – there was no way I would have come out there – I wouldn’t have wanted anyone there to know because the whole place was homophobic – it was worse than in care” (Jenny)

“I would be worried about coming out even in a women only place unless there were other lesbians there - people will get an inkling” (Rachel)

“A transgender person could never stay there because they would get really badly picked on” (Simon)

Some went on to describe how feeling unsafe led to isolation:

“I’m in a hostel now but I’m the only Goth which the others don’t understand and they think it’s wrong – no one talks to me there and I can’t make friends” (Tracy)

“They have clubs at the hostel to help you with things like cooking and looking for a job but I haven’t been to any so I stay isolated – there’s so many people there that I worry I might get trouble if any of them are homophobic – I avoid them just in case” (Edward)

“I feel like the odd-ball in the hostel and I think that the other tenants are homophobic under the surface. They don’t know I’m gay and I don’t feel able to socialise with them” (Martin)

As with young people’s experiences of temporary accommodation, some young people did feel supported by particular workers in supported housing. It would appear that in these cases the young person identified that worker as supportive because the worker was themselves gay:

“One of the managers in the home was gay – he helped me and showed me the ropes about being gay and warned me about the danger zones. He also told me about Pride and I went on a float” (Richard)

“I felt safer when there was a gay worker there, because if there was any homophobia it was more likely to be dealt with – now I feel that I would have to deal with it on my own” (Martin)

LGBT youths’ experiences of permanent housing

The young people who were eventually housed permanently by the local authority described being placed in parts of the city where they were vulnerable to and experienced homophobic abuse from neighbours:

“One of the local girls has threatened us and said ‘you’re lesbians and we’re going to beat you up’. For the last four months they’ve been kicking our door in, putting things through the letter box, weeing outside the door and climbing the scaffolding and tapping on the windows – they know that writing something like dykes hurts us because we are” (Amber)

Some young people were re-housed or managed to argue against being housed where it was unsafe with the help of very strong advocacy:

“I told them I was gay but they housed me in on an Estate with my girlfriend where we would get beaten up - the neighbours were very homophobic -we had to keep calling the police and filling in incident forms – eventually we were transferred to Kemp Town” (Jenny)

“I was housed in a safe part of town but only because I was backed by a children’s rights officer and a Social Worker who wasn’t homophobic and understood that I was vulnerable because I was gay and I was a care leaver” (Patrick)

5.6.3 Mental health and homelessness

Research on the mental health of homeless young people and the mental health of LGB youth show an increased prevalence of mental illness in both populations; it would seem likely therefore that LGB homeless youth would be more vulnerable to mental health problems than homeless youth in general.

Given that most studies of homeless youth do not distinguish between heterosexual and non-heterosexual youth, and given that about a third of homeless youth may be LGB, it is difficult to use existing studies to make comparisons. Furthermore, different approaches to sampling and collecting data make comparisons across studies problematic. However, some North American studies have examined the relationship between sexual identity and mental health in homeless youth populations: Noell and Ochs (2001) studied a group of 532 homeless adolescents of whom 25.5% identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or unsure (LGBU); they found that the LGBU sub-sample were significantly more likely to have attempted suicide than the heterosexual sub-group and were more likely to have a recent history of depression. 44.2% of the gay/bisexual males and 52.6% of the lesbian/bisexual females had attempted suicide in contrast with 33% heterosexual males and 41.9% of heterosexual females. Cochran et al. (2002) studied a group of 375 homeless adolescents within which 23% identified as LGBT. They found that the LGBT group had significantly higher levels of depressive symptoms, higher rates of psychopathology and higher rates of substance misuse than the heterosexual comparison group.

Notwithstanding that comparisons across studies are problematic, given the absence of UK based studies which explore sexual identity within studies of youth homelessness; some attempt at comparison may be illuminating. So, for instance, Craig et al. (1996) found that in their study of 161 homeless young people in London, that 62% had a history of a diagnosable mental illness and/or substance misuse; in our study nearly 90% reported such a history, with medical treatment in most cases, with half describing alcohol or substance misuse. However, the approaches to measuring diagnosable mental illness are not commensurate across the studies and it may be more meaningful to compare rates of self-reported attempted suicide across studies where the data was collected through in-depth interviews. In our study two thirds of those who were interviewed reported a past suicide attempt. Other recent UK based studies of homeless LGBT youth (O'Connor and Molloy, 2001, Dunne et al., 2005, Stonewall Youth Project, 2000) do not report specifically on the incidence of mental health problems. In comparison to our findings, studies of youth homeless where we presume the majority of research participants are heterosexual, report lower rates, Craig et al. (1996) found that a third reported a suicide attempt and Smith et al. (1998) found that 9 out of 56 young homeless people (16%) reported suicide attempts.

Experiences of mental health care

Most of the young people we spoke to had accessed some form of mental health care; in general young people felt they needed support but were wary of counselling and found it difficult to access. Access was difficult because the young person didn't ask for help, referrals were not followed through or changes of address due to homelessness meant that appointments were missed:

"I didn't go to my GP when I felt suicidal because I didn't want a fix because I had no reason to live" (Christine)

“I was overwhelmed – I had no family to support me and all my friends were going off to university and being supported by their parents – I needed emotional support but you can’t rely on your peers and other people’s parents for that all the time. I had to be self-sufficient from a young age so I built a wall around myself – had no parenting figure and had to make my own way and make my own mistakes” (Jane)

“I took an overdose when I was in the hostel and was taken to hospital. I was seen by a psychiatrist who offered me counselling but it wasn’t actually arranged – they left it to the hostel to sort out the counselling and just let me go” (Becky)

“I went to Addaction for an assessment but I never got the letter with my appointments because I’d had to move again” (Ellen)

Access was also problematic because young people were wary of counselling approaches and at attempts to involve their parents:

“There is no point going to counselling – they pick you and ask questions they know the answer for – I see their method as soon as they start” (Jenny)

“I’ve had a lot of counselling but never found it helpful - they probe but don’t give their opinion” (Ellen)

“I spoke to the CPN about all the bullying and being gay and everything but there was no explaining of how to help – just pills – but I needed more support. I’ve had loads of counselling from different places but most of it wasn’t helpful – they don’t listen and don’t give advice like showing you how to do exercises to relax” (Tina)

“They want to drag up the past. I’ve done that for myself and I know how it has affected me – I’ve asked myself those questions. I’ve learnt how to cope by myself and with the support of friends – not from counselling” (Jane)

“My mother took me to CAMHS when I was 11 but it was her that needed help – she was trying to label me as a problem child” (Jane)

“I had one session of counselling but I didn’t continue because they wanted to contact my mother. I didn’t want them to because as far as I was concerned she was the problem” (Martin)

Although young people seemed to be reluctant to have their parents involved in counselling, they did also identify that there was a need for some kind of mediation with, and help for, the parents:

“I feel there is a need for something so that parents and siblings understand about LGBT issues” (Peter)

“I got support and counselling through school and through Connexions but I think my whole family and in particular my step-father needed some help as well but that wasn’t offered” (Greg)

“If you had a mentor they could talk to your parents so they realise you are not an alien – they think it is all underground rampant seediness and everyone getting AIDS– my parents’ generation need a peer to explain it to them – they would take someone of their own age as more of an authority on it” (Jane)

These LGB young people are probably no different from other young people in terms of their attitudes to counselling but it appeared that difficulties in talking about sexuality added to their difficulties in accessing appropriate support:

“I was confused at school because of the bullying and family issues and I couldn’t work out where I fitted in which made me moody – I saw a counsellor at school but he didn’t listen and he didn’t get what I was saying and I wasn’t open about my sexuality – they just didn’t get what was affecting me” (Becky)

“I had counselling at school and through GP but it didn’t work – I felt patronised and I didn’t mention sexuality. I am good at keeping a straight front and I didn’t want then to delve – I don’t see the point of delving” (Steven)

“I went to CAMHS because I was self harming and because of the problems at home. They didn’t ask me about my sexuality and I didn’t bring it up. If they had asked about my sexuality I would have told them but I might not have felt comfortable – but it would have been useful because they could have let me know about services and understood my needs more. I got support about managing money and that sort of thing but nothing to do with personal stuff” (Heather)

Some of the young people did access counselling which they found helpful and this was more likely to be accessed through voluntary sector youth services. It appears that this was more helpful and accessible because young people felt more able to be open about their sexuality and its relationship to their mental health problems in that environment:

“The counselling at the Young Person’s Centre helped me though – they are gay and really helped me out – they helped me with the gay stuff and explained things and I was able to talk to them about the hassle I’d had in my family about being gay. They also helped me explain my illness to my girlfriend – they are not judgemental about mental illness or about being gay” (Tina)

“I saw a counsellor and a drug counsellor at the Young Person’s Centre. They do understand and they are not an authority. You get to know them at a friend level and they don’t broadcast themselves as an

authority – they don't say we are here to look after you and you know they have been there themselves" (Steven)

A further point of concern was that some young people were pathologised because of their sexual identity:

"I tried the college counselling service but it wasn't helpful. I had been sexually abused by a neighbour but it wasn't a big deal – they tried to link my drinking to that and confusion about being gay – but I wasn't confused about being gay. Then I saw a psychiatrist twice but I didn't like him - he was really sleazy and disgusting about the gay thing and kept asking me questions about sex" (Maggie)

One young man was taken to a psychiatrist by his parents because they viewed homosexuality as mental illness. Another young man in care had a similar reaction from his foster parents and the social worker referred him to a clinical psychologist:

"They thought that gay people are paedophiles and I had to be assessed because they thought I would prey on other boys in the foster home. Social workers and foster parents need training so they understand" (Patrick)

5.6.4 Sexual health and homelessness

As noted in the review of the literature, LGB youth report higher rates of unprotected intercourse, earlier age at first intercourse and more lifetime sexual partners than heterosexual youth. There are also reports of unwanted teenage pregnancy in young lesbians and unprotected sex between lesbian and gay youth. We found several reports in our study of young gay men having early heterosexual relationships with partners who subsequently identified as lesbian and a number of reports of teenage pregnancy resulting from these relationships. We also found some young women reporting that they deliberately sought out opposite sex relationships to try to convince themselves that they were heterosexual and that on these occasion they had unprotected sex. These reports suggest an early vulnerability in relation to sexual health prior to homelessness. The lack of appropriate sex education and support at school for all the young people in our study, discussed in section 4.1.2, is very likely to have contributed to this vulnerability.

We saw in the review of the literature that there is a high incidence amongst homeless youth of selling or exchanging sex and that a disproportionate number of these youth identify as LGB. We found in our study that eight of the young men had or were selling sex and at least one of the young women had sold sex. Again under-reporting is likely⁶ and we were unable to recruit research participants from places where young women who sold sex were more likely to be found⁷. Of those who did sell sex, the young woman had

⁶ We are fairly clear that some under-reporting took place amongst the women in our sample on the basis of information from key workers.

⁷ There are obvious recruitment sites for male sex workers locally but not for female sex workers.

had unprotected sex as had some of the young men. The young men also reported that they were offered more money for unprotected sex and there had been attempts to force them to have unprotected sex. These young people sold sex in order to survive on the streets or in order to have money to buy drugs. Two of the young men who we interviewed were not accessing any services in relation to their housing situation and were sleeping rough.

As well as selling sex, some young people exchanged sex in order to have a place to stay and again found themselves under pressure to have unprotected sex; one young man exchanged sex to have somewhere to stay for the night in order to avoid going home because his father was violent and homophobic. One of the young women, who had been evicted from the family home, lived with an older boyfriend until she could get a place in a hostel – during this time she was coerced to have unprotected sex. Another young man went to live with an older boyfriend when he became homeless and was forced into non-consensual and unprotected sex.

Homeless LBG youth are also vulnerable to sexual victimisation and we found that as well as sexual abuse during childhood, some young people also reported being sexually abused once they had become homeless. One of the young women reported that she was raped by another resident in the hostel she was living in and another was raped when visiting family. One of the young men reported that he was raped by his employer.

Most of the young people we interviewed used the local sexual health clinic and found it accessible.

5.7 LGBT youths' identified need for specialist support

We can see from the previous sections that young LGBT people experienced homophobia within provision for young homeless people and some did not feel safe to be open about their sexual identity or transgender identity. As a consequence they suffered from further episodes of homelessness or became isolated. We asked the young people if they felt there was a need for specialist accommodation to support homeless LGBT youth. Many of the young people had reservations about this on the grounds that it might be unfair to homeless heterosexual youth and also because they felt strongly that mainstream services should be more egalitarian. However, they also clearly identified that they felt they would benefit from a specialist supported housing project where they would feel safer and less isolated. Nearly all of the young people who we interviewed who had grown up outside Brighton and Hove had deliberately come to the area because they thought it would be a place where LGBT people found it easier to live within the community.

Young people identified that they had particularly needed support when they were younger. Not all young people had been able to access LGB youth support because they didn't know about it, there wasn't any where they lived or they felt they wouldn't fit in – however amongst those who had accessed such groups the benefits were clear:

“I go to Allsorts⁸ – it’s nice and friendly there and gives me somewhere to go” (Matthew)

“I’ve been to Allsorts – it is important to have lesbian and gay friends who you have something in common with” (Tina)

“It feels like there isn’t much for me and it’s been difficult to find anything. The LGBT youth groups are good. It’s nice to know that no-one will assume you are straight and no one will say anything or get at you but it feels like that’s all there is. There should be more – there should be more visibility and safe places to go and different places – not just one night a week” (Heather)

“I’ve been going to Allsorts for a year now and do voluntary work there. It has become a part of my life and gives me a sense of belonging” (Martin)

Those young people who had been unable to access this kind of support when they were younger identified that they would have benefited from such support:

“You need help and support when you are younger otherwise you grow up confused – I was confused, especially coming from a black environment where that sort of thing was wrong – I didn’t know how to express it or get battered” (Jenny)

The young people we interviewed identified how they had benefited from being able to access LGB adult workers, in youth services and in supported housing, who could act as positive role models and who appeared to be more understanding, approachable and supportive than other workers:

“There’s not many people you can talk to - young lesbian and gay people need older lesbian and gay people around them to show you the ropes and show you how to be yourself and not to have to put on a front – I never used to act myself and that contributed to the depression” (Tina)

“There’s one gay member of staff in the hostel where I am now – you feel they are understanding and know what is going on for you – it’s reassuring and you get more understanding and support from gay workers - it’s easier to ask and you trust their responses more – straight workers might be more dismissive of your worries because they don’t know” (Simon)

Again those who had been unable to access such support were clear about how they would have benefited from it at an earlier age and that they would benefit from it now in their current situation:

⁸ Allsorts is the name of the local LGBU youth group.

“Some sort of mentoring would have helped – an adult to talk to and someone to give encouragement. I did want someone to talk to about my sexuality but there was no-one to talk to. It’s so confusing when you are 13 and you suddenly realise you are gay and you’ve had no chance to think about it or find out about it. I needed someone to bounce off ideas with – if what I was feeling was right or wrong compared to other gay people. I was too young to go to pubs and there was nothing at school so I went on internet chat rooms but you never know who you are really talking to there. It’s very isolating when you first realise – it’s like starting a new school and not knowing what’s cool – you feel like a newcomer and that you don’t belong and it is a horrible feeling. A mentor would have helped” (Jane)

“When you are younger it is more important – like when you are 16 it feels more important to talk to gay workers and then it gets easier as you get more comfortable with yourself so long as people aren’t homophobic. It would help now to have an identifiable number of gay workers – not just the odd one or two – you would feel safer to air problems about homophobia to gay staff – heterosexual staff might not understand” (Martin)

“LGBT staff are going to be understanding because they have been through it themselves – more so perhaps than if you went to a straight person in a hostel. It’s always good to know if you are talking to someone about sexuality that you are talking to someone who has first hand experience of it – if nothing else just the problems of just being different” (Ellen)

Many of the young people we interviewed also felt that they would have benefited from housing provision that was exclusively for LGBT homeless youth:

“A hostel that was LGBT only would be really cool – people would be nicer and everyone would be the same and it would feel more comfortable– it would be OK when you were walking through the corridors – everyone would be gay and sorting themselves out and it would give stability. You need somewhere to get support and where there are people you can talk to about it and who can relate to you. If I’d had the kind of stability it would have helped me change my life much sooner” (Jenny)

“There is a need for longer term lesbian and gay hostel – you would be able to sort yourself out there and then move on – you would feel more comfortable if it was lesbian and gay only – you would know that you would be understood and not have to worry about any trouble or snide remarks – it would take away the pressure so you could get sorted and move on” (Becky)

“I want to be able to be myself –an LGBT only hostel would be good because I would be able to talk about my own experience” (Abdul)

“A gay hostel would be good because then you would know you wouldn’t get any trouble – I do worry about homophobic violence and you get more trouble if you are insecure. Ideally I’d share with other gay people because they would be more predictable” (Edward)
“If I could get a flat share with gay-friendly people it would help me get on my feet” (Sean)

“It is important to be with people you can trust and feel safe with and get support if you need it” (Rosa)

“There should be a Foyer or something like that for LGBT young people – that would be fantastic – even just to provide some temporary relief with people that are trained to understand the issues for young LGBT people” (Patrick)

“It would be good to have something that was LGBT only because you’d be able to relax and everyone would know the score” (Heather)

“LGBT specific accommodation would be beneficial because young gay people’s needs are neglected and in some cases have not even been recognised and they are certainly overlooked. We need help with things like coming out and dealing with homophobia and not feeling so alone – I always thought I’d be restricted because of being gay and that I’d never be good at anything” (Martin)

“An LGBT hostel would be better - it would feel safer because LGB people are less transphobic” (Christine)

“I’d be secure that I wouldn’t be discriminated against and I’d be more inclined to use something like that than a normal hostel” (Ellen)

Those young people who had reservations about segregation nevertheless felt that in any mixed accommodation there was a need to have a critical mass of visible LGBT residents:

“Segregation wouldn’t be good because it would be like saying we are better than you – everyone should be equal in the same place together but we need a separate dorm because some straight people are homophobes” (Paul)

“You would need a good fair amount of LGBT people – not three people hiding in the corner” (Heather)

5.8 Findings from the interviews with service providers

Local service providers were also interviewed as part of this study; questions about their experiences of, and views on, monitoring the sexual identity of clients were included. They were also asked about their perception of the needs of LGBT homeless youth, and whether they felt there was a need for

either LGBT specialist accommodation and/or support workers. We spoke to 21 service providers who worked in local housing and homelessness services; although we asked mainly about their experiences of working in local services, some also related their experience of working in other parts of the country and there was some useful comparative data particularly in relation to monitoring of sexual identity.

5.8.1 Monitoring of sexual identity and transgender identity

Some, but not all, local services were monitoring the sexual identity of service users; most of the organisations providing supported housing were monitoring sexual identity and the Youth Advice Centre (YAC) was monitoring sexual identity and transgender identity. The local authority had carried out monitoring in the past but did not seem to be currently conducting it at the early stages of a homelessness application. However, this practice was currently under review. Those currently conducting the monitoring of sexual identity gave young people the option of defining themselves as heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual and a further option indicating that they preferred not to answer the question. In one women-only service these questions were phrased differently as many young people did not appear to understand the terms used, and in particular many young women were unfamiliar with the term heterosexual. That service therefore asked young women if they preferred girls or boys or both and translated these into lesbian and bisexual categories for monitoring purposes. Other than at YAC, options of being unsure about, or questioning, one's sexual identity were not included by any of the services currently carrying out monitoring of sexual identity. Confidentiality of monitoring information was assured.

We saw in section 4.6.1 that young people had variable experiences of monitoring, they did not always feel comfortable about being asked and in one case staff breached confidentiality and informed other service users that a new resident identified as gay. However, in other services, and in particular in the voluntary sector youth services, young people felt much more comfortable about being asked and felt that it was useful. By looking at our interviews with young people and those with service providers, it would seem that young people felt more comfortable giving monitoring information in services where the staff were clear about the purpose and value of monitoring and felt confident about carrying it out. We asked service providers to describe to us how they carried out monitoring of sexual identity; some staff lacked confidence and found it awkward to ask the question conveying their own discomfort, which our interviews with young people suggests makes it harder to disclose. We also observed that services where staff felt more comfortable about monitoring tended to get higher disclosure rates and therefore a better understanding of who and how many of their client base identified as LGB, giving a clearer understanding of their needs. Some frontline staff, especially those conducting assessments of homelessness applications to the local authority, received homophobic abuse from clients when they asked for monitoring information about sexual identity.

Service providers recognised that monitoring of sexual identity at an initial assessment interview would lead to under-reporting, due to non-disclosure,

and therefore probably an under-estimate of what proportion of their clients identified as LGB. None of the service providers in our study officially monitored sexual identity at a later stage of housing support. However, service providers that we interviewed were able to tell us how many of their client base identified as LGB when monitoring was conducted and also gave us an estimate of how many of their service users disclosed their LGB identity later on. At the Youth Advice Centre housing advice drop-in service, 13% identify as LGB, and under 1% as transgender, at first point of contact. The advice staff estimated that, when conducting further work with clients, at least 20% identified as LGB. At one of the women only hostels, 9% of young women disclosed that they were bisexual at first interview and a further 10% preferred not to answer. The hostel staff were of the opinion that young women were shy about answering this question at first interview and estimated that about 20% of the young women in the hostel identify as lesbian or bisexual. Another mixed supported housing project found that 6.5% of residents identified as LGB when asked for monitoring information at first interview but estimated that 25-30% of their service users identify as LGB.

Monitoring of sexual identity is part of equal opportunities monitoring; in itself it can help to create a safer climate for young people to disclose their sexual identity to service providers and can give a clear signal about the intentions of the organisation to provide a safe and accessible service. It is not however, a substitute for assessment and the service providers we interviewed varied on how important they thought it was to ask about sexual identity as part of an assessment of a young person's needs. Those who had an understanding of the relationship between vulnerability and sexual identity were more likely to ask young people about their sexual identity as part of an on-going process of assessment. One focus group member noted that many staff in youth services, although generally inclusive, seemed to be uncomfortable about asking young people about their sexual identity. One of the managers, in a service where sexual identity was not included in equal opportunities monitoring, felt that asking about sexual identity could be intrusive and that clients may not disclose because they might worry that disclosure would prejudice their application for housing. However, they tried to create a safe environment for disclosure by explaining their equal opportunities policy.

These findings suggest that the level of skills, knowledge and confidence which local providers have about including sexual identity in monitoring and assessment processes is variable and that some staff would benefit from further training in this area. Some local service providers would also benefit from further training or resources to help create a safer space for LGBT youth.

5.8.2 Service providers' views on specialist support

In the same way that service providers varied in their approaches to assessing young people, there was also considerable variation in how much service providers were able to identify the specific support needs of LGBT homeless youth. On the whole those who had worked with clearly identified LGBT youth had a better understanding of their specific needs. Most service providers understood that young LGBT people may present as homeless because of homophobia or transphobia and recognised that young LGBT

people may be subjected to further unfair treatment in temporary and supported housing. However, some service providers did not see that homeless LGBT youth differed from other homeless youth in terms of their initial reasons for homelessness or subsequent needs.

All the service providers were working in services which had clear policies designed to prevent or stop any unfair treatment or homophobic harassment. The staff we interviewed were confident about implementing these policies although, as we saw from the interviews with young people, episodes of homophobic harassment in local hostels did not always seem to be resolved satisfactorily. However, the service providers we spoke to had less understanding of LGBT homeless youths' needs beyond the implementation of anti-harassment policies. In particular, there was less understanding of how isolation affects LGBT youth in terms of its effects prior to and subsequent to an episode of homelessness. Those service providers who had worked with LGBT youth had more understanding of young people's needs in relation to this. However, service providers did recognise that LGBT youth who lacked confidence and had low self-esteem were more likely to be isolated and less likely to disclose their sexual or transgender identity. They realised that this made it more difficult to provide support or make appropriate referrals to those who might be most vulnerable. Service providers also identified that if a young person was isolated and lacking in confidence to participate in the activities provided, that it would be difficult to provide the extra support they needed with their current resources. In recognition of this, there was agreement that LGBT specific accommodation, or specialist support workers, would be needed to overcome such isolation.

As with service providers, it was clear from our interviews with LGBT homeless youth that LGBT specialist accommodation was identified as potentially beneficial because it would help young people to access peer and adult support that would mitigate the effects of isolation. Young people and service providers were not in favour of specialist accommodation as a solution to dealing with homophobia or transphobia in current homelessness and housing provision; both felt strongly that integration was the best long term solution. However, both young people and service providers were clear that current provision for homeless LGBT youth did not always feel safe, and that lack of safety meant that young LGBT people did not feel safe to "come-out" or fully participate and therefore access available support. LGBT specific accommodation was identified as a solution to overcoming isolation with LGBT specialist support workers within existing provision being seen as a possible interim solution.

6. Discussion

The findings from this study show that LGBT youth are vulnerable to homelessness and that their sexual identity or transgender identity is often implicated in the cause of homelessness; this relationship may be clear and direct or it may be complex with other factors interacting which make young people vulnerable to homelessness. Early life experiences also have a negative and long term impact on the mental and sexual health of LGBT youth. Earlier assessment, support and intervention could potentially reduce the incidence of homelessness and associated problems in this group. In particular, work in schools to prevent and respond to bullying, make sex and relationships education more inclusive, mentoring, and educational support for LGBT youth who are under-achieving because of homophobia in schools, could help to reduce homelessness and negative impacts on mental health and well being. Work with families to provide mediation and support, could also prevent homelessness, as could more inclusive training for foster parents who may be fostering LGBT youth. There is also some evidence that social workers and mental health care professionals could benefit from training to make their services more accessible and appropriate for LGBT youth.

Once LGBT youth have become homeless, they are subjected to further homophobia and transphobia, or may be isolated in existing services, leading to a risk of future episodes of homelessness and patterns of long term homelessness. Lack of monitoring and assessment of sexual identity and transgender identity may mean that the vulnerability and need for supported housing of LGBT homeless youth is not identified. Although existing services have sound policies to prevent or deal with homophobic harassment, these are not always effective. Furthermore, many young LGBT people do not feel safe to disclose their sexual or transgender identity in existing services. This means that LGBT youth become isolated and are unable to develop their skills and social networks. Further work needs to be done to improve the implementation of existing anti-harassment policies and further work needs to be done to make services feel safer for LGBT young people in order to make mainstream services more accessible. There is also a clear need for a specialist supported housing project for homeless LGBT youth which would help young people to recover from the effects of early experiences of homophobia and isolation which contributed to their homelessness; this would also help them to develop strong and effective peer support networks and develop the skills to live independently.

References

- Bagley, C. and D'Augelli, A. R. (2000) Suicidal behaviour in gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth, *British Medical Journal*, **320**, 1617-1618.
- Bagley, C. and Tremblay, P. (1997) Suicidal Behaviors in Homosexual and Bisexual Males, *Crisis*, **18**, 24-34.
- Bagley, C. and Tremblay, P. (1998) On the Prevalence of Homosexuality and Bisexuality, in a Random Community Survey of 750 Men Aged 18 to 27, *Journal of Homosexuality*, **36**, 1-18.
- Beyond Barriers and FMR (2002) *first out. report of the findings of the Beyond Barriers survey of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Scotland*, Glasgow. www.beyondbarriers.org.uk
- Bradford, J. R., Ryan, C. and Rothblum, E. (1994) National lesbian health care survey: implications for mental health care Special section: Mental health of lesbians and gay men, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, **62**, 228-242.
- Calandrino, M. (1999) *Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the UK Labour Market*, St Anthony's College, University of Oxford.
- Cannon, L. W., Higginbotham, E. and Leung, M. L. A. (1991) Race and class bias in qualitative research on women in *The Social Construction of Gender* (Eds, Lorber, J. and Farrell, S. J.) Sage, London, pp. 237-248.
- Carolan, F. and Redmond, S. (2003) *Research into the needs of young people in Northern Ireland who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender*, Youthnet, Belfast.
<http://www.equality.nisra.gov.uk/archive/Publications/Sexual%20Orientation/Needs%20of%20LGB%20Young%20People%20in%20NI.doc>
- Cochran, B. N., Stewart, A. J., Ginzler, J. A. and Cauce, A. M. (2002) Challenges faced by homeless sexual minorities: comparison of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender homeless adolescents with their heterosexual counterparts, *American Journal of Public Health*, **92**, 773-777.
- Cohen, K. M. and Savin-Williams, R. C. (1996) Developmental perspectives on coming out to self and others in *The Lives of Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals* (Eds, Savin-Williams, R. C. and Cohen, K. M.) Harcourt Brace Publishers, Fort Worth, Texas, pp. 113- 151.
- Copas, A. J., Wellings, K., Erens, B., Mercer, C. H., McManus, S., Fenton, K. A., Korovessis, C., Macdowall, W., Nanchahal, K. and Johnson, A. M. (2002) The accuracy of reported sensitive sexual behaviour in Britain: exploring the extent of change 1990–2000, *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, **78**, 26-30.
- Craig, T., Hodson, S., Woodward, S. and Richardson, S. (1996) *Off to a Bad Start: a longitudinal study of homeless young people in London*, The Mental Health Foundation, London.
- D'Augelli, A. R. and Hershberger, S. L. (1993) Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth in community settings: personal challenges and mental health problems, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, **21**, 421-448.
- Davies, P. M., Hickson, F., Weatherburn, P., Hunt, A. J., (with Broderick, P. J., Coxon, T. P. M., McManus, T. and Stephens, M. J. (1993) *Sex, Gay Men and AIDS*, Falmer Press, London.

- Dowsett, G. W., Davies, M. D. and Connell, R. W. (1992) 'Working-class homosexuality and HIV/AIDS prevention: some recent research from Sydney, Australia, *Psychology and Health*, **6**, 313-324.
- Dunne, G., Morrow, V. and Prendergast, S. (2005) *ESRC Project report R000237995*.
- Dunne, G. A., Prendergast, S. and Telford, D. (2002) Young, gay, homeless and invisible: a growing population? *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, **4**, 103-115.
- Fenton, K. A., Johnson, A. M., McManus, S. and Erens, B. (2001) Measuring sexual behaviour: methodological challenges in survey research, *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, **77**, 84-92.
- Flowers, P. and Buston, K. (2001) "I was terrified of being different": exploring gay men's accounts of growing-up in a heterosexist society, *Journal of Adolescence*, **24**, 51-65.
- Flowers, P., Duncan, B. and Frankis, J. (2000) Community, Responsibility and Culpability: HIV risk-management amongst Scottish gay men, *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, **10**, 285 - 300.
- GALOP (1998) *telling it like it is. Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Speak out on Homophobic Violence*, London.
- Garofalo, R., Wolf, R. C., Kessel, S., Palfrey, S. J. and DuRant, R. H. (1998) The association between health risk behaviors and sexual orientation among a school-based sample of adolescents, *Pediatrics*, **101**, 895-902.
- Hershberger, S. L. and D'Augelli, A. R. (1995) The impact of victimisation on the mental health and suicidality of lesbian, gay and bisexual youths, *Developmental Psychology*, **31**, 65-73.
- Hetrick, E. S. and Martin, A. D. (1987) Developmental issues and their resolution for gay and lesbian adolescents, *Journal of Homosexuality*, **14**, 25-43.
- Hunter, J. (1990) Violence against lesbian and gay male youths, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, **5**, 295-300.
- King, M., McKeown, E., Warner, J., Ramsay, A., Johnson, K., Cort, C., Wright, L., Blizzard, R. and Davidson, O. (2003a) Mental health and quality of life of gay men and lesbians in England and Wales: Controlled, cross-sectional study, *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **183**, 552-558.
- King, M., McKeown, E., with, Warner, J., Ramsay, A., Johnson, K., Cort, C., Davidson, O. and Wright, L. (2003b) *Mental health and social well being of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals in England and Wales*, Mind, London.
- Kruks, G. (1991) Gay and lesbian homeless/street youth: special issues and concerns, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, **12**, 515-518.
- Martin, A. D. and Hetrick, E. S. (1988) The stigmatisation of the gay and lesbian adolescent, *Journal of Homosexuality*, **15**, 163-183.
- Martin, J. L. and Dean, L. (1993) Developing a community sample of gay men for an epidemiological study of AIDS in *Researching Sensitive Topics* (Eds, Renzetti, C. M. and Lee, R. M.) Sage, London, pp. 82-100.
- Mason, A. and Palmer, A. (1996) *Queerbashing: a national survey of hate crimes against lesbians and gay men*, Stonewall, London.

- McNamee, H. (2006) *Out on your own: An examination of the mental health of young same-sex attracted men*, The Rainbow Project, Belfast.
<http://www.rainbow-project.org/documents/OutonYourOwn.pdf>
- Noell, J. W. and Ochs, L. M. (2001) Relationship of Sexual Orientation to Substance Use, Suicidal Ideation, Suicide Attempts, and Other Factors in a Population of Homeless Adolescents, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, **29**, 31-36.
- O'Connor, W. and Molloy, D. (2001) *'Hidden in Plain Sight': Homelessness amongst Lesbian and Gay Youth*, National Centre for Social Research, London.
- Palmer, A. (1993) *Less Equal than Others: A Survey of Lesbians and Gay Men at Work*, Stonewall, London.
- Prendergast, S., Dunne, G. A. and Telford, D. (2001) A Story of "difference," A Different Story: Young Homeless Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People, *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, **21**, 64-91.
- Randall, G. and Brown, S. (2001) *Trouble at Home, Family conflict, young people and homelessness*, Crisis, London.
- Rivers, I. (1997) Violence Against Lesbian and Gay Youth and its Impact in *Pride and Prejudice: Working with Lesbian and Gay and Bisexual Youth* (Ed, Schneider, M.) Central Toronto Youth Services, Toronto, pp. 31-47.
- Rivers, I. (2000) Social exclusion, absenteeism and sexual minority youth, *Support for Learning*, **15**, 13-18.
- Rivers, I. (2002) Developmental issues for lesbian and gay youth in *Lesbian and Gay Psychology: New Perspectives* (Eds, Coyle, A. and Kitzinger, C.) Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 30-44.
- Rotherum-Borus, M. J. and Fernandez, I. (1995) Sexual orientation and developmental challenges experienced by gay and lesbian youths, *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behaviour*, **25(Suppl)**, 26-34.
- Rotherum-Borus, M. J., Hunter, J. and Rosario, M. (1994) Suicidal behaviour and gay-related stress among gay and bisexual male adolescents, *Journal of Adolescent Research*, **9**, 498-508.
- Rotherum-Borus, M. J., Meyer-Bahlburg, H. F. L., Nat, R., Rosario, M., Koopman, C., Haignere, C. S., Exner, T. M., Matthieu, M., Henderson, R. and Gruen, R. S. (1992) Lifetime Sexual Behaviors Among Predominantly Minority Male Runaways and Gay/Bisexual Adolescents In New York City, *AIDS Education and Prevention*, **Supplement**, 34-42.
- Rotherum-Borus, M. J., Rosario, M., Van Rossem, R., Reid, H. and Gillis, R. (1995) Prevalence, course and predictors of multiple problem behaviours among gay and bisexual male adolescents, *Developmental Psychology*, **31**, 75-85.
- Roy, É., Haley, N., Leclerc, P., Lemire, N., Boivin, J. F., Frappier, J. Y. and Claessnes, C. (2000) Prevalence of HIV infection and risk behaviours among Montreal street youth, *International Journal of STD and IDS*, **11**, 241-247.
- Schneider, S. G., Farberow, N. L. and Kruks, G. N. (1989) Suicidal behaviour in adolescent and young adult gay men, *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behaviour*, **19**, 381-394.

- Smith, J., Gilford, S. and O'Sullivan, A. (1998) *The family background of homeless young people*, Family Policy Studies Centre (supported by Joseph Rowntree Foundation), London.
- Snape, D., Thomson, K. and Chetwynd, M. (1995) *Discrimination against lesbians and gay men: A study of the nature and extent of discrimination against homosexual men and women in Britain today*, Social and Community Planning Research, London.
- Stonewall Youth Project (2000) *OUT in the Cold*, Stonewall Youth Project, Edinburgh.
- The Gender Trust. <http://www.gendertrust.org.uk/html/index1.htm>
- Vincke, J. B., Bolton, R., Mak, R. and Blank, S. (1993) Coming out and AIDS-related high-risk behavior, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, **22**, 559-586.
- Weatherburn, P., Reid, D. S., Beardsell, S., Davies, P. M., Stephens, M., Broderick, P., Keogh, P. and Hickson, F. (1996) Health Education Authority, Sigma Research.
- Webb, D. and Wright, D. (2001) *Count Me In: Findings from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community needs assessment 2000*, Brighton and Hove.
- Weber, A., Boivin, J. F., Blais, L., Haley, N. and Roy, É. (2002) HIV risk profile and prostitution among female street youths, *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, **79**, 525-535.
- Weber, A., Boivin, J. F., Blais, L., Haley, N. and Roy, É. (2004) Predictors of initiation into prostitution among female street youths, *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, **81**, 584-595.