

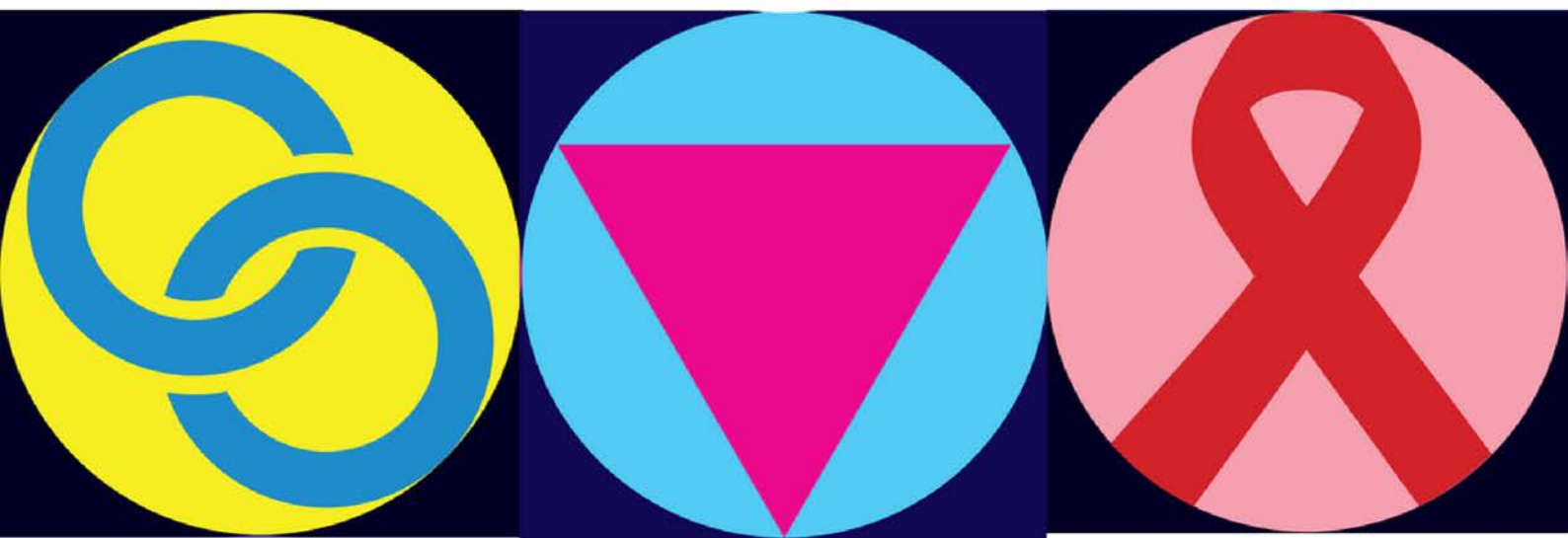


LGBT HOUSING MANIFESTO 2023

switchboard



connecting you to LGBTQ+ support



Executive Summary

Since the 1800's Brighton & Hove's reputation for being Britain's 'Gay Capital' has seen hundreds of thousands of LGBT people arrive in the city as tourists, students and as migrants from other parts of the country and the world. Brighton is seen by many as a place of safety, sanctuary and community for LGBT people. But what does this really mean if they can't find a safe place to call home?

This document shares the mounting national evidence that LGBT individuals are much more likely to become homeless, and to remain homeless due to a lack of culturally appropriate services that feel safe and affirming. This data is notoriously hard to gather, as many LGBT people do not feel safe disclosing their identities to mainstream services. Most importantly, this manifesto is also a response to a call for urgent action around housing and homelessness from local LGBT communities.

When we held our seminal LGBT housing conference in summer of 2022, we invited LGBT community members, charities, academics and housing providers to think about the future of affirmative housing. We found that street homelessness was just one part of a large tapestry of unsafe or insecure housing situations that LGBT people were dealing with across their life - from young people in unsafe homes, to those fleeing domestic abuse, or older people receiving residential care or living in care homes. We found that homelessness was often invisible, and many LGBT people in Brighton & Hove remain in places they are unsafe, unhappy, or unable to be themselves in order to avoid becoming homeless.

This below is a living document in which we have tried to represent the issues and the ideas from the diverse communities we hear from. In the face of ever-growing local and national evidence and policy that clearly paints a picture of need, we want to remain action focused in our approach to LGBT housing. We are already working on some exciting solutions, but as the saying goes 'it takes a village.'

Brighton & Hove is one of a large network of UK Cities of Sanctuary; a movement committed to building a culture of hospitality and welcome, especially for refugees seeking sanctuary from persecution. How can we extend the idea of sanctuary to other at risk groups like the LGBT community - many of whom arrive in our city vulnerable and in need of services, and to whom our city owes so much of its culture and reputation for inclusion?

I invite all readers to reflect on this question, and to reach out to us at Switchboard if they want to be part of the solution - whether that be training your team in inclusive practice, providing funding, or exploring how we might support eachothers work & find new ways to provide sanctuary for LGBT people at risk of homelessness.



JF Bayliss

Jacob Bayliss
CEO

BACKGROUND

Multiple studies have identified the unacceptable inequalities LGBT communities face across the UK, and the urgent need for LGBT affirmative housing across all life stages.

The high prevalence of LGBT homelessness is often invisible, with few services collecting data about sexual orientation or trans status.

LGBT people (particularly community members who are Black, people of colour, disabled or trans) are less likely to go to local authorities for assistance, fearing discrimination.

Brighton & Hove is the local authority with the largest LGBT population in the country. Population data (National Census 2021), suggests that LGBT people account for 1 in 10 Brighton and Hove residents.

Two previous local housing strategies produced by Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) 2009 and 2015 acknowledged the need for safe inclusive housing and the specific needs of LGBT communities.

These strategies commit to planning and reviewing housing in consultation with LGBT communities, however little progress has been made & LGBT housing insecurity remains a key local issue.



There are many organisations providing excellent intersectional services for young people locally and there is a strong desire to grow current partnerships to share experience, learning, initiatives and data monitoring.



Research has shown that as many as 30% of homeless youth in the UK are LGBT

BACKGROUND



The majority of the 600 respondents to Switchboard's 2021 consultation into the impact of COVID-19 **called for the provision of safe housing for LGBT people** as a priority for Brighton and Hove City Council.

It further highlighted that **older LGBT people are especially vulnerable** to loneliness as they are more likely to be single, live alone, and have lower levels of contact with relatives. In Brighton and Hove they worried about where they could be safe and cared for, with many too afraid to reveal their identity to care staff.

Switchboard spoke to 600 LGBT people in the city



of respondents were experiencing an unsafe living situation

Rising to 60% of those aged 24 or under and 40% of trans or non-binary people



The Pride of Place LGBT Housing summit was held to galvanise action against existing commitments, enable local services and systems to learn from flagship examples of LGBT housing solutions across the UK, and create conversation about inequality & innovation in these areas. **Workshops were held across all life stages.**

Following the summit, people with lived experience, LGBT specific charities, housing and homelessness charities, academics and local authority attendees agreed on the need for **URGENT ACTION**. This manifesto serves as a first step.

THE MANIFESTO AT A GLANCE

01

LGBT specific accommodation for all life stages

LGBT specific housing information & support

02

03

Awareness training for commissioners & a quality standard for inclusive providers

Embedding intersectional needs in future planning

04

05

High quality data monitoring around sexual orientation & trans status



1. LGBT-SPECIFIC ACCOMMODATION FOR ALL LIFE STAGES

LGBT people have specific, unmet housing needs and it is imperative to provide the option of specific accommodation. This should explicitly take into consideration the needs of trans/non-binary people.

People with lived experience share that generic emergency accommodation is avoided by LGBT community members for safety reasons often having experienced homo/bi/transphobia or assault. LGBT homelessness is often invisible with people sofa surfing, using apps, or not disclosing their identities.

Trust is required to overcome the perceived and real barriers to LGBT resident engagement. Residents are often afraid to attend a resident involvement meeting

"Our engagement with LGBT communities and experience of the pilot emergency night shelter has demonstrated there is an urgent need for the option of LGBT specific, psychologically informed environments and trauma informed care " - Inclusion & Engagement Manager

A pilot LGBT night shelter in Brighton has evidenced a high level of demand for these services.

Advice and support for communities who wish to establish their own LGBT specific cooperatives was a popular idea, while investment in old local authority assets (buildings) was also suggested. Many felt this should be in a central location in recognition of LGBT community support as a protective factor.

The need has been identified for long term housing options for young LGBT people reaching 25 (where they are no longer deemed a young person in the current housing system)

"I was put into emergency accommodation after deeming my parents' place an unsafe living situation. Living in a damp dark basement with black mould for 4 months did bad things for my mental health" - Young trans person

1. LGBT-SPECIFIC ACCOMMODATION FOR ALL LIFE STAGES

Older LGBT people are often isolated, invisible and are often considered 'unwanted' within the broader community. We heard from older community members who had been 'driven out' of their home because of the homo/bi/transphobia of other residents and staff.

Many older LGBT people both locally and nationally have expressed a wish to live in an LGBT specific environment where they can feel safe and affirmed.

There are successful examples of LGBT specific projects for housing in other parts of the country which also recognise that community is more than just people in buildings.

These include akt Purple Door in London, South Manchester older person's project, Tonic, Pride of Place Leeds in the UK and further examples in Europe.

"I really want there to be understanding about LGBT older people's housing and how inadequate the offer currently is, and how unsafe it feels to many of our service users" - housing service coordinator



2. LGBT SPECIFIC HOUSING INFORMATION & SUPPORT

The lack of understanding of the specific experiences and needs facing LGBT people by mainstream organisations is at the root of many of the housing and support issues our communities face.

This is compounded for people who face intersectional discrimination; including people of colour, trans, disabled people, migrants, those affected by domestic abuse and so called 'conversion therapy' and young people with experience of care.

There is a disproportionate prevalence of neurodivergence in trans, non binary and intersex individuals, therefore specific support might look like a neurodivergent specialist youth housing worker.



"Brighton has a lot to improve when it comes to LGBT specific housing, but the community is ready, united and full of ideas to tackle this issue in the future" - LGBT Community Organisation Lead

A community-led approach is essential to ensure that these issues are addressed effectively and without compounding trauma.

There is a need to engage with community members, targeting both young and older people regularly to explore what LGBT affirmative means to them and what their needs are.

Housing providers need to reflect LGBT people in all aspects of media and communications and be able to signpost community members to LGBT specific support provided by and for community members.

2. COMMUNITY-LED LGBT SPECIFIC HOUSING INFORMATION, SUPPORT & SIGNPOSTING CONTINUED

There is a need to guarantee LGBT input at strategic level in local authorities and housing services. This will ensure that services are responsive to emerging needs.

Provision and ongoing funding of services must be available locally as many LGBT charities are being swamped with requests for housing support and information. This means that there are often waiting lists for people wishing to access LGBT specific support.

Large national funders are currently less likely to fund LGBT organisations in the city, with some suggesting that seed funding should be taken on by local authority commissioning once a strong evidence of impact is established.

"LGBTQ+ communities are trying to support themselves, but they need support of larger systems and resources to do this sustainably" - LGBT Cooperative Member

Many older people worry about the future and are unaware of LGBT affirmative options available to them. They report being afraid they will need to go back 'into the closet'.

Housing providers need to be explicit that LGBT people are welcome and the specific needs of them and their partners or chosen family will be met.

Young LGBT people need a range of 'wraparound' services to support them with family issues, jobs and mental health. These should be codesigned with them.





3. LGBT AWARENESS TRAINING

***"I would like to know how
I make my older persons'
scheme LGBT friendly"***

Care Home Manager

Training is crucial to improve housing outcomes for LGBT communities.

Housing providers should provide staff, including subcontractors, with training on an ongoing basis and commissioners of services should include this as a requirement.

This should be provided by LGBT organisations. Its aim is to increase knowledge about the specific needs and barriers for LGBT residents, including those people who face further marginalisation (*e.g. trans/non-binary, people of colour, people with no recourse to public funds and people with complex needs*).

To mitigate harm & create safe homes and communities, there needs to be ongoing learning, effective policy, clear reporting mechanisms and pre-emptive safeguarding approaches.

LGBT people often face homo/bi/transphobic abuse, discrimination threats and other serious incidents from neighbours and in shared residential spaces. An external body should investigate complaints of LGBT discrimination to ensure people do not feel vulnerable in their homes.

Many people present at the conference felt there was a need for a 'community of practice'.

There was strong support for developing a quality assurance inclusion kitemark for housing services to support with the above and provide reassurance to communities. There are many examples of these such as Stonewall Housing's Inclusion Standard, or the Allsorts Safer Spaces Award.

4. EMBEDDING INCLUSION & INTERSECTIONAL NEEDS IN FUTURE PLANNING

There was a strong sense of the need for trust-based commissioning with LGBT people and organisations being trusted as custodians of capital in a clear and transparent way.

LGBT housing is an umbrella for many different situations which require diverse options and choice. It was felt at the summit that future solutions need to be intersectional, LGBT led but with institutional support that doesn't put all the stress on individual activists.

For future planning, understanding the inequalities many LGBT people face in relation to work and finances is essential, and the importance of community as a protective factor should be integral to plans. An appreciation of the 'material precarity' of many LGBT people particularly post-COVID19 and in the cost of living crisis is also needed.

It was suggested that ringfencing some housing stock for community-led housing gives some protection against gentrification.

Community advice and consultation is required in future design and planning across all local authority and housing association provision.

Co-operatives can offer affirmative affordable housing (i.e. rent capped at Local Housing Allowance, if not below) and are an example of LGBT community led innovation locally.

Systems are required to expand these and enable them to cater for a more diverse range of people with intersectional needs.

"Housing projects seemed like the best option for me at 15 – when I got there I didn't feel safe, staff and residents were not educated. The squats I had been told were unsafe actually became the safer spaces for me" - Community

Member



4. EMBEDDING INCLUSION & INTERSECTIONAL NEEDS IN FUTURE PLANNING

It was felt that Brighton and Hove should formalise its historic LGBT 'Beacon City' status as this sends a clear message of inclusion.

There is a need to understand what makes a space LGBT friendly and what qualities in the design of a space facilitate safety, a sense of place, acceptance and inclusion for LGBT people is essential.

Recognising LGBT figures in heritage as permanent and publicly commissioned monuments can be a powerful reminder of history and importance. Historical significance of LGBT spaces and people can be invisible outside the queer community and commemoration can support spaces feeling more inclusive.

There are experts in inclusive design who are not just 'rainbow washing' spaces but are considering what meaningful inclusive design looks like. There was a strong sense throughout the day of people being able to see themselves in urban spaces through design, images & provisions.

Many supported the combination of several areas of international community housing innovation in the form of an intergenerational housing project to support the needs of both older and younger LGBT people in Sussex.

"I was totally unaware of the scale of issues and continued discrimination faced by the LGBT community.

We need clearer working pathways with Brighton and Hove as a local authority and see how they link LGBT needs into their housing plans."

Senior Leader - Housing Association

Collaboration needs to be established between LGBT groups, housing organisations and the local authorities to come up with new housing and supporting services.

Young person's charities observe that creative, holistic solutions need to be co-produced with young people. Schools, campuses and the curriculum can be quite gendered, further marginalising trans and non-binary people.

There were suggestions that a job coach (preferably LGBT identified) in the local Department of Work and Pension offices (DWP), specialising in LGBT individuals seeking employment in the city, would be helpful.

5. HIGH QUALITY SOGI DATA MONITORING ACROSS ALL HOUSING, CARE HOME & HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

There is very little data available on both sexual orientation and trans status across all aspects of housing and homelessness. Many organisations asked do not know if their service users are LGBT.

BHCC and all housing services should be gathering SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) data to ensure LGBT people and their specific needs are counted.

Many people are either not asked or are afraid to disclose their status because of fears for safety and being discriminated against.



It is acknowledged that there are training needs around competence and confidence to ask these questions but also to providing an affirmative environment where people are comfortable to answer honestly.

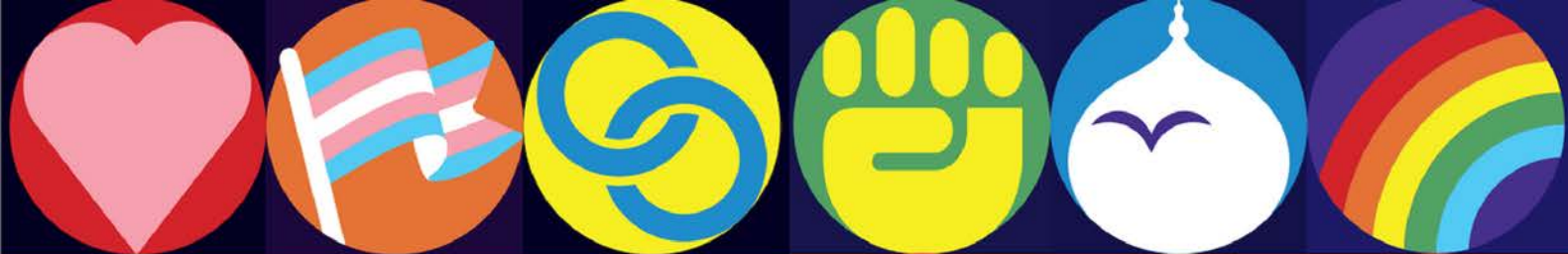
It is also imperative to be clear what the information will be used for, why, who will have access to it and how the data will be protected.

This data capture will provide information about outcomes and experience of LGBTIQ+ people to inform strategy and future planning.



READING LIST

- Healthy homes, healthy lives, healthy city; BHCC Housing Strategy 2009-2014
- LGBT People's Housing Strategy; BHCC - 2009
- BHCC Housing Strategy - 2015
- A Manifesto for London LGBTIQ+ Community Housing; Mayoral Election Campaign - 2020
- Impact of Covid on LGBT Communities in Brighton and Hove; Brighton and Hove LGBT Switchboard - 2021
- The Future of LGBT Living in Leeds: LGBT Housing Report; Pride of Place Leeds
- Housing, Ageing and Care; LGBT Foundation - 2020
- Housing with Pride: A knowledge exchange project to increase LGBT resident inclusivity in the social housing sector; Professor Andrew King, Frances Sanders, John Stevens - 2020
- The LGBT youth homelessness report; akt - 2021
- Building inclusive housing support for LGBT + communities; akt - 2022
- The LGBT youth homelessness briefing; akt - 2022
- Sexuality, gender identity and homelessness: Incidence, experience and evidence of homelessness among LGBT people; Centre For Homeless Impact - 2022
- An Introduction to Psychologically Informed Environments and Trauma Informed Care; Homeless Link - 2017



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connecting you to LGBTQ+ support

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With thanks to everyone who has contributed to this manifesto including
LGBT community members, attendees of the Housing Summit, Switchboard
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Sexuality and Gender at Brighton University, and H Brassil at Sussex
Nightstop.

We offer a variety of specialist LGBT training workshops to develop
your understanding and application of LGBT inclusion.

Our training is informed by our experience of on-the-ground work
with LGBT communities, our community research and our
engagement with mainstream and specialist healthcare providers
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