

# **'He didn't have to say he was gay': attitudes to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people**

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## **Introduction**

This chapter is going to look at some of the recent developments in libraries, particularly in the UK and in relation to the Government policy agenda around social inclusion/cohesion, but taking the provision of services for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people [LGBTs] as a 'touchstone'<sup>[1]</sup>.

As I started to think more about writing this chapter, I wondered whether, in 2005, discussing the provision of library services for LGBTs really could be described as 'radical' – after all, "Clause 28"<sup>[2]</sup> had been repealed in the UK, and libraries were now signing up to new ways of delivering library services, post *Framework for the future* [DCMS, 2003]. What was 'radical' in all that?

Then, three significant events occurred: firstly, in reporting back to me some comments about a course I had run, a colleague told me that all the feedback had been extremely positive, except for one person who had said that s/he had found my session very interesting, but s/he could not see why I had needed to tell them that I am gay. Secondly, I rang a friend who had recently retired from working in a public library service, and, presumably released from any sense of obligation to 'hold the line', she told me in no uncertain terms that all this equalities training was a waste of time, and got in the way of providing services. And, thirdly, a colleague who attended one of my sessions at the 2005 Umbrella conference<sup>[3]</sup> said that he had not fully realised the extent of opposition that there still is from some library workers to the whole idea of equalities – and particularly extending them to LGBTs – and providing services for everyone.

So, what is all this about? I want to explore some of these themes and look at responses from governmental and professional bodies.

The chapter starts with a brief overview of the Government and library 'scenes' in the UK; these are followed by an assessment of where – and whether – LGBT people fit into all of this; and the chapter ends with some suggestions of what successful provision might look like.

## Social exclusion, social inclusion and community cohesion

### Social exclusion and social inclusion

Social inclusion<sup>[4]</sup> as a concept has been recognised in Europe since at least the 1970s<sup>[5]</sup>, but has been part of the policy agenda in the UK since only 1997.

The UK Government's earliest definition of social exclusion was quite broad and limited (and this is the definition that most organisations are still using):

"a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown."  
[eg in Social Exclusion Unit, 2001]

The importance of this definition is the flagging-up of social exclusion as "a combination of linked problems".

Such definitions were used by the Policy Action Teams [PATs] set up by Government departments to develop their thinking and take forward these policy areas [see, for example, DCMS, 1997; DCMS, 2001].

In their consultation document, *Libraries for all* [1999], DCMS developed their work on social exclusion against a broad background definition:

"Social exclusion takes many forms. It can be direct or indirect, and can embrace both groups and individuals. Exclusion also has a geographical dimension embracing rural, urban and suburban areas alike."

However, by 2001, the Government's definition had broadened considerably:

"Social exclusion is something that *can* happen to anyone. But some people are significantly more at risk than others. Research has found that people with certain backgrounds and experiences are disproportionately likely to suffer social exclusion. The key risk-factors include: low income; family conflict; being in care; school problems; being an ex-prisoner; being from an ethnic minority; living in a deprived neighbourhood in urban and rural areas; mental health problems, age and disability."  
[emphasis theirs]  
[Social Exclusion Unit, 2001, p11]

The most recent definition from the Social Exclusion Unit (in *Breaking the cycle* [SEU, 2004a])<sup>[6]</sup> states:

"While social exclusion is often associated with highly marginalised groups facing extreme forms of multiple disadvantage, our approach is broader. We also include an understanding of how wider social inequality and intergenerational disadvantage can impact on the causes of social exclusion and the risk of becoming excluded."

This is a deliberately pragmatic and flexible definition. One of the characteristics of social exclusion is that problems are linked and mutually reinforcing ..." [p14]

Some people (see, for example, Local Government Association, 2001a) have tended to see social exclusion as being related almost entirely to poverty – certainly, there is an economic element to exclusion, but early work at the University of Bristol identified social exclusion as being "multidimensional" [Room *et al*, 1993], and more recent work by Janie Percy-Smith [2002] and a team at Leeds Metropolitan University has shown that there are at least seven "dimensions":

- Economic (eg long-term unemployment; workless households; income poverty)
- Social (eg homelessness; crime; disaffected youth)
- Political (eg disempowerment; lack of political rights; alienation from/lack of confidence in political processes)
- Neighbourhood (eg decaying housing stock; environmental degradation)
- Individual (eg mental and physical ill health; educational underachievement)
- Spatial (eg concentration/marginalisation of vulnerable groups)
- Group (concentration of above characteristics in particular groups, eg disabled, elderly, ethnic minorities)

In talking about social exclusion, we are focusing on the needs of groups and individuals who can be defined using the "dimensions" listed above and who do not have access to services and facilities, or to society's decision-making and/or power structures. Work by the Local Government Information Unit, based on the Scottish experience shows that:

"There are excluders as well as victims of social exclusion, and these excluders include mainstream public services, such as health, housing and education." [Fitzpatrick, 1999, quoted in Geddes, 2000, p7]

The Network uses the two main Government definitions (supplemented by a fuller list of people who are at risk of or likely to suffer social exclusion), plus Janie Percy-Smith's seven "dimensions", to describe social exclusion.

### **Social or community cohesion**

During the spring and summer of 2001, there was a number of disturbances in towns and cities in England (including Bradford, Burnley, Oldham and Stoke-on-Trent).

The Government's response was to establish a Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion whose role it was to "examine and consider how national policies might be used to promote better community cohesion, based upon shared values and a celebration of diversity." [Denham, 2001]

At the same time, the Home Secretary also established a Review Team, led by Ted Cante, "to seek the views of local residents and community leaders in the

affected towns and in other parts of England on the issues which need to be addressed to bring about social cohesion and also to identify good practice in the handling of these issues at local level." [Denham, 2001]

As a result of these reviews, the definition of community cohesion shifted, and the working definition now used is:

"Community cohesion incorporates and goes beyond the concept of race equality and social inclusion.

The broad working definition is that a **cohesive community** is one where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods." [emphasis theirs]

[Local Government Association, 2002]

More graphically, the Home Office [2004] described the situation as:

"... it became glaringly apparent that the people living and working in some of our towns and cities were deeply polarised and many communities were in essence living 'parallel lives'." [p5]

For a piece of work to be considered as contributing to community cohesion, it needs to have:

- A focus on the 'bigger picture' (eg countering racism, healing inter-generational rifts)
- The intention to contribute to community cohesion
- A strategic approach with long-term goals
- A change of culture for the service concerned
- The development of strong and healthy partnerships
- Sustainability – longer-term work, not one-off projects (unless these in turn lead to the longer-term)<sup>[21]</sup>.

Relating directly to the themes in this chapter are the findings of a piece of research by Stonewall [2003], published in 2004 [Valentine and McDonald, 2004]. Amongst a range of valuable findings are that groups that challenge majority views on a cultural level include lesbians and gay men, and Asian people.

The report also identifies five different kinds of prejudice – well worth thinking about in the context of reactions to LGBTs from libraries:

- Aggressive
- Banal (mundane examples that may be intentional or unintentional and which pass unnoticed)
- Benevolent (positive views which may still produce negative consequences)
- Cathartic (“a release of views recognised as being less positive about minority groups, and therefore unacceptable, that is justified and therefore rendered acceptable” [p16])
- Unintentional.

This, then, is the broad, national policy context within which libraries are working. In the next section, I want to look briefly at *Framework for the future* [DCMS, 2003] and other major ‘drivers for change’ in library services.

### **‘Drivers’ for change in libraries**

In 2003, DCMS published the milestone report, *Framework for the future*. This report highlighted a number of major issues for public libraries, including “the tendency for libraries to focus on current users rather than non-users [p20], and the idea that “people who find reading difficult and groups in the community most at risk of social exclusion may find libraries distant or even intimidating places rather than seeing them as symbols of community” [p40].

*Framework* then identified the three main themes that should be at the core of the “library’s modern mission”:

- “The promotion of reading and informal learning,
- Access to digital skills and services, including e-government,
- Measures to tackle social exclusion, build community identity and develop citizenship.” [p23]

Specifically, the report stated that:

“All libraries need to work to establish programmes that will engage groups and individuals that are hard to reach by identifying them and establishing what are their particular needs and then by redesigning services where necessary so that there are no barriers to inclusion.” [p41]

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council have produced an Action Plan [MLA, 2004b] in response, which, at the time of writing, is coming towards the end of a three-year phase, and which has led to the a wide range of developments (including the development of good practice in working with young children and their families, teenagers, and adults with basic skills needs; a marketing campaign; workforce development; and a reassessment of the physical state of England’s libraries)<sup>[8]</sup>.

This work is being underpinned by the new Public Library Service Standards<sup>[9]</sup>, launched in 2004, which assess the physical and delivery aspects of public library services; and by the development of a set of Public Library Service Impact Measures<sup>[10]</sup> which, so far, are at a very early stage, but which aim to produce robust measures of the effectiveness of public library provision<sup>[11]</sup>.

The Impact Measures have been developed to fit into the “Shared Priorities” framework [ODPM, 2002]. This framework was agreed between the Government and the Local Government Association in 2002, and sets out the priorities required to make improvements to public services. The key priorities are:

- Raising standards across our schools
- Improving the quality of life of children, young people, families at risk and older people
- Promoting healthier communities by targeting key local services such as health and housing
- Creating safer and stronger communities
- Transforming our local environment
- Meeting transport needs more effectively
- Promoting the economic vitality of localities.

Therefore, as a matter of urgency, there is considerable emphasis on establishing ways in which libraries – particularly public libraries – contribute to all these policy agendas, and on accessing the evidence to support this. For example, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council [MLA] have produced *Inspiring learning for all* [MLA, 2004a] which uses Generic Learning Outcomes as a way of assessing the impact libraries (and archives and museums) have on both formal and informal learning; and MLA are in the process of developing parallel Generic Social Outcomes [see, for example, Burns Owen Partnership, 2005].

### **So, where do LGBTs fit into all this?**

#### **In the Government context**

In terms of the national, Government context, the answer is ‘hardly at all’! Very little work has been undertaken so far to look at the LGBT dimensions of social exclusion, and, in the series of reports produced by the Social Exclusion Unit as “Breaking the Cycle” [eg SEU, 2004a], there is almost no mention of LGBT issues at all. This is particularly significant in relation to the “drivers” of social exclusion [SEU, 2004b] which apparently ignores work undertaken to show the effects on young people of homophobic bullying, the links between being LGBT and some health risks, and so on.

There are two key exceptions to this. Firstly, the Employers Organisation and the Local Government Association (in conjunction with Stonewall<sup>[12]</sup>, UNISON<sup>[13]</sup>, and the Association of London Government<sup>[14]</sup>) has produced a guide [Employers Organisation, 2003] for local authorities on how to engage with lesbian, gay and bisexual communities<sup>[15]</sup>, particularly in light of the adoption of the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003<sup>[16]</sup>.

This excellent guide works through what local authorities need to do in relation to:

- Corporate planning
- Service delivery and customer care
- Community development and involvement
- Local authority employees

- Monitoring and evaluation

and we will look at this again in the final part of this chapter.

Second is the review carried out by the UK Gay Men's Health Network [Scott *et al*, 2004], which highlights "sexual exclusion" – the health inequalities experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual people<sup>[17]</sup>.

In terms of building community cohesion, particularly given some of the tensions between cultural/faith groups and LGBTs, there is also scant regard at national, policy level to this as an area for development. The Local Government Association's *Guide* [LGA, 2004] – which is regarded as the guide for local authorities – does not mention LGBT issues at all, even though it includes a range of case studies.

Thankfully, Alison Gilchrist, in her paper on community cohesion for the Community Development Foundation (Gilchrist, 2004), at least includes an example from her own experience at a local community association:

"... the Friday evening slot had been simultaneously (and unknowingly) offered as a 'Caribbean' night and a lesbian social. Neither group wanted to give up this coveted and highly popular time, so our compromise was to turn it into a women-only social evening, organised by the lesbian network and the 'West Indian ladies' group together. It was an amazing success and quite a breakthrough considering prior levels of antipathy and suspicion." [pp24-25]

and a recently-published "toolkit" [Government Office for the South West, 2005] does at least include some useful information in its Glossary, as well as some suggestions of areas to examine (eg recruitment criteria; how to deal with unpaid leave and other benefits; confidentiality), even if it does not mention LGBT issues within the main body of the text!

What has led to the 'invisibility' of LGBT issues in policy/strategy? One key reason has to be "Clause 28" (see below). Another reason may well be the Government's determination not to upset "Middle England", so, although there have been some notable moves towards liberalisation over the last 5 years, these are rarely promoted.

There are also issues about numbers (and about monitoring). Many LGBT people will not wish to be identified, and, if the view is correct that, for many of us, our sexuality changes during our lifetime, then it is going to be almost impossible to determine exact numbers.

As Stonewall state:

"The Government is using the figure of 5-7% of the population which Stonewall feels is a reasonable estimate. However, there is no hard data on the number of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in the UK as no national census has ever asked people to define their sexuality.

Various sociological/commercial surveys have produced a wide range of estimates, but there is no definitive figure available."<sup>[18]</sup>

In addition, very few employers have included specific questions about sexual orientation in staff surveys, so, even at the most basic level, it is hard to know just how many LGBT people there are<sup>[19]</sup>.

### **"Clause 28"**

Although "Clause 28" has now been repealed throughout the UK<sup>[20]</sup>, its effect has been incalculable. Although many people are unaware of the specific terms of the Clause, they are fully aware of its impact; despite the fact that "Clause 28" has been repealed, this is still not widely known. As part of training for library staff – and others – on providing services for LGBTs, I always ask whether people think that "Clause 28" has been repealed or is still in force, and, generally, the majority believes it is still in force – and is therefore still preventing us from providing services for LGBTs.

Where did "Clause 28" come from? Following a spate of anti-LGBT coverage in the media, and high-profile controversy around some children's books (especially *Jenny lives with Eric and Martin* [Bösche, 1983]) which were written about in the media in the context of libraries' 'banning' Enid Blyton and other 'classics', and education (particularly the London Borough of Haringey's work on positive images)<sup>[21]</sup>, "Clause 28" was introduced into the Local Government Act [HMSO, 1988], as:

"28 (1) The following section shall be inserted after section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 (prohibition of political publicity) –

2A – (1) A local authority shall not –

- (a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality;
- (b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship."

The clear intention of the legislation was to prevent 'promotion' of and teaching about LGBT issues, based, presumably, on the ill-informed notion that people – especially young people – could be 'turned into' LGBTs.

However, as a piece of legislation, it was never actually used, but, of course, in many ways it did not need to be – the threat of it was enough.

As Gabrielle Bourn says in her study of museums' provision [Bourn, 1994]:

"Despite the fact that no one has been prosecuted under this clause it is a convenient tool used by certain councillors, who are often already prejudiced against lesbians and gay men."

Unsure of their position, schools back-pedalled in their teaching about sexuality, and the position of LGBT staff and students became extremely difficult – even today, some schools are wary of raising LGBT issues in the classroom<sup>[22]</sup>.

A number of public library services refused to stock the *Pink Paper* [see, for example, *Library Association Record* 1995a and *Library Association Record* 1995b] and other LGBT materials; some withdrew support for Lesbian & Gay Pride; many stopped displaying information and producing booklists and other promotional materials.

In her survey<sup>[23]</sup> of library directors in the UK and in Canada, Ann Curry [1997] concluded that:

“Overall, the British appear to be reluctantly compromising services to gays/lesbians to avoid Section 28 prosecution ...”

but, quoting an UK director, was also clear that personal views might well have a strong effect too:

“Sex, politics and religion are things which one keeps to oneself. I have no objection to homosexuality, provided it is kept quiet and out of sight as that sort of thing should be. I object to it being paraded.” [p224]

Whether the “Clause” was ever used or not is probably quite irrelevant: what matters is the effect it has had, especially in relation to self-censorship<sup>[24]</sup>.

## **LGBTs and libraries?**

### **Historical background**

Before considering key current issues, I thought that it would be appropriate here to look briefly at some historical background, and particularly to investigate what developments have taken place.

In a pioneering article published in 1987, Richard Ashby [Ashby, 1987] argued that public libraries were ignoring LGBT issues, and that, whilst there had been some developments in provision (especially in urban communities), there was a lack of recognition of the isolation of many LGBTs. Richard Ashby called for attention to the following:

- Staff training
- The development of materials selection policies, leading to effective selection practice
- Greater assistance to LGBT users to help them find their way around libraries
- The urgent need to talk to LGBTs and to LGBT community organisations.

A number of important articles in the 1990s [eg Hendry, 1997; Fairbrother, 1998; Warburton, 1998] and pieces of research [eg Brett, 1992; Abbott, 1998] have highlighted the need for better provision for LGBTs by libraries, and, as part of the research project, “Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion”<sup>[25]</sup>, we produced an overview of the then national and international position, and a

summary of the UK library position (together with a list of recommended actions) [Vincent, 1999].

What was clear from all this work was that, whilst there were exciting developments taking place in some libraries, these were sporadic and piecemeal.

Although, in the 1970s and early 1980s, there had been significant developments in provision for LGBTs by a number of library authorities, by the mid-1990s much of this had disappeared, influenced by "Clause 28", but also by budget cuts, national political change, the waning of community librarianship [see Black and Muddiman, 1997], and the fear of being considered 'politically correct'<sup>[26]</sup>.

It is worth remembering too that it was only in 1995 that a group of the then Library Association (now CILIP) organised the first course<sup>[27]</sup> on library services for LGBTs ("Less equal than others", Community Services Group, October 1995) and, even in 1995, some attendees were nervous of being there, in case their employers found out that they were LGBT<sup>[28]</sup>.

### **LGBTs and library policy**

Just as, at a national level in the UK, there is relatively little mention of LGBT issues in policy and strategy documents, so there also little mention in library policy documents.

Whilst looking at the need to tackle social exclusion, *Framework for the future* does not include any mention of LGBTs, nor are they specifically mentioned in the latest Action Plan from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council [MLA, 2004b].

However, CILIP have produced a useful document in their "Equal Opportunities Briefings" series [CILIP, 2004] which outlines policy and practice which library staff can use as a starting point.

### **LGBTs and libraries today**

So, what does provision for LGBTs in libraries look like in 2005? What do staff think? And how are LGBT staff themselves treated?

As I have noted elsewhere recently [Vincent, 2005b], there may be some sort of liberal consensus regarding LGBTs and the services we provide, but, dig a bit deeper, and there may be a very different range of views! On training courses run over the last five years or so, people have commented for example:

- "Lesbians and gay men don't need library services.
- Lesbians and gay men don't need anything specific – they are just like everyone else really.
- All the stock is porn!
- If it weren't for people like you raising these issues, it would all go away.
- And even: 'John was very nice, but he didn't need to tell us he was gay!'"

In addition, a very few staff have refused to handle or have sent back LGBT stock when it arrives in their libraries.

Is it any wonder that LGBT people do not want to use some public libraries? Or that LGBT staff do not want to come out?

At the same time, however, there are examples of outstanding work by libraries to reach their LGBT communities and to support their LGBT staff.

One public library service that shines out in terms of its commitment to and provision for LGBTs is Brighton & Hove. When he surveyed its use back in 1998, Mark Norman found that Brighton & Hove provided not only successful collections of materials, but also had a high level of user involvement in this provision [Norman, 1998]. These trends have continued, and a brief description of some of the highlights of their work can be found in the CILIP Diversity Group's newsletter [Harvey, 2005].

Some library services (eg Haringey<sup>[29]</sup>) have taken the opportunity of Gay & Lesbian History Month [see below] to launch new collections of LGBT materials; and some (eg Norfolk<sup>[30]</sup>) are developing consultations with LGBT people in the area – library users and non-users.

February 2005 was the first UK Gay & Lesbian History Month, and a much more hopeful sign was the number of public libraries that took part in this. These included<sup>[31]</sup>:

- Barnet – LGBT history displays at three libraries
- Belfast Central Library – exhibition, "Pride and Protest"
- Birmingham – displays of their LGBT stock
- Blackpool Central Library – display of artwork by young people
- Bristol central Library – produced an art exhibition, "Under the Rainbow", featuring the work of LGBT artists over the last 150 years
- Bromley – "Rainbow Reads" book promotion
- Enfield Central Library – display of their LGBT stock
- Haringey – launched a new book collection and booklist
- Harris Library, Lancashire – display of their LGBT stock
- Newham – display of their LGBT stock, an exhibition by local photographer, Phil Maxwell, and a celebration event
- Portsmouth Central Library – "Bi-Textual" book promotion (contemporary paperback fiction from and featuring the LGBT community)
- Southwark – hosted talks by writers Mark Simpson, Stella Duffy and Jake Arnott
- Wandsworth – produced a short booklist, and each library put on a display of their LGBT stock.

There is also an exciting new development, "The Big Gay Read"<sup>[32]</sup>, which is a mix of recommendations for reading (mainly fiction), plus a survey to find Britain's favourite gay reads, and a timely promotion for LGBT materials.

Local authorities also reflect their stance on LGBT issues by the way they state – and implement – their equalities policy statements. Some positive examples include:

**Devon County Council** have a brief, glossy guide, *Justice through equality ...*, [Devon County Council, nd b] which spells out the key messages:

- “Commitment to eliminate homophobic prejudice and discrimination.
- Not assuming everyone is heterosexual during interaction or planning services.
- Acknowledgement of same-sex partners.
- Facilitating a safe environment for LGBT employees.”

and a specific LGBT policy [Devon County Council, nd a] which clearly sets out the authority’s commitments.

**St Helens Council** has a clear statement [St Helens Council, nd] which includes:

“2. The Council will:

2.1 Encourage the organisations it funds to develop and implement lesbian, gay and bisexual equality policies.

2.2 Work towards enabling lesbian, gay and bisexual employees at all levels in the workforce to feel safe in being open about their sexual identity.

2.3 Take positive steps in conditions of service to take accounts of the rights of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees, including recognition of their needs as partners, having partners, and as parents and carers.

2.4 Make provisions for anti-homophobia awareness training in existing training courses. Where necessary, make additional provision for such training in order to address issues, including the impact of homophobia on the organisation, policy and activities of the Council, its employees and others acting on its behalf

2.5 Ensure that all information, publicity and advertising over which the council has control and/or influence is non-homophobic and uses positive images and language to counteract the effects of homophobia and promote equality for lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women.

2.6 Work with partners in the Hate Crime Reduction Group to effectively record and respond to and reduce the number of homophobic incidents within the Borough.

2.7 In policy development, service planning and delivery, the Council will ensure that the people do not receive a different quality of service due to their sexuality or sexual orientation.”

**Sheffield City Council** has a staff working group on LGBT issues<sup>[33]</sup>, and, at the beginning of 2005, produced a report for the Council’s Scrutiny Board [Sheffield City Council, 2005] which outlined work-to-date (and which also reports that Sheffield will be asking questions about sexual orientation in their staff survey).

## So, what would successful provision for LGBT people look like?

To some extent, it could be simplistic to produce a 'picture' of what success might be like, but these pointers may be of help – some of the general, non-libraries suggestions are drawn from the Employers Organisation guide [2003] (and the guide also includes much more detail on local authority work in this area in general):

### Getting started

- Find out about the national context – eg via Stonewall, Trade Unions, Government and other organisations
- Find out about local LGBT communities – eg are there local political, support or community groups? Think about other organisations – with many of which we will already have strong links – via which we can consult (eg Age Concern, Mind)
- Find out what kinds of services local LGBT people would like from libraries – users and non-users – and develop open and responsive consultative methods<sup>[34]</sup>
- Find out what other library services are providing
- Ensure that both mainstream and specific needs are met
- Build active partnerships and joint ownership of provision, involving LGBT representatives in service planning and evaluation
- Avoid establishing an hierarchy, whereby some equality issues are seen as more important than others

### Staffing issues

- Provide training for all staff, and incorporate sexuality awareness into other training (eg induction, recruitment & selection, harassment, and customer care training)
- Create a supportive environment for staff – eg set up or support LGBT employees' groups, and/or work through Trade Unions
- Tackle workplace discrimination by colleagues, managers and service users by developing policies on homophobic harassment
- Consider targeted recruitment in LGBT press (eg *Pink Paper*<sup>[35]</sup>) – and ensure that the recruitment & selection process do not discriminate on grounds of sexuality
- Ensure that social events are LGBT-friendly (and, for example, that LGBT staff are not isolated in the staffroom<sup>[36]</sup>)

### Stock

- A wide range of fiction, nonfiction, reference and information material (including magazines and directories) which will be of direct appeal to LGBTs (and which, of course, will also appeal to everyone else!)
- LGBT people have the same interests and needs as everyone else, so access to the full range of library services is important.
- Stock arrangement is still a thorny topic! Some libraries have separate LGBT sections, others shelve LGBT titles in the main fiction and nonfiction sequences. Which any library does will depend, to some extent, on the results of consultation – although, of course, it is important to assess

views received to see if they are likely to be representative. The most satisfactory solution for many people seems to be to have the stock interfiled, but highlighted via booklists (which must be regularly updated, perhaps via the online catalogue or intranet) and special displays (eg to mark Pride and Lesbian & Gay History Month), as well as ensuring that there is a LGBT dimension to everything else – for example, within any Black History Month or disability displays.

- When writing tender documents for suppliers of library materials, there must be a specific set of targets for suppliers to reach in relation to LGBT titles
- If possible, ensure that a part of the stockfund is still set aside for purchasing from small, independent suppliers (such as Gay's The Word<sup>[37]</sup>, Bookscan<sup>[38]</sup>, Libertas lesbian online bookshop<sup>[39]</sup>, and Silver Moon women's bookshop<sup>[40]</sup>).

### Access to ICT

- Beware filters! Some organisations' filters do not allow access to anything with the word 'sex' in it, others block words such as 'lesbian', 'sexuality'

### Monitoring and evaluation

As noted above, monitoring is going to be more complicated than for other equalities areas, if employers wish to respect confidentiality. However, we can at the very least look at the following:

- Establish benchmarks for service provision
- Assess service provision against benchmarks and identify improvements that need to be made
- Use the Equality Standard for Local Government<sup>[41]</sup> as a way of assessing the current position and determining progress to be made
- Integrate targets on sexual orientation into all equalities action plans and service policies and plans
- Work with local LGBT groups and individuals to assess and improve service delivery
- Talk to staff about the possibility of including questions about sexual orientation in surveys
- "Be transparent ... [especially about] what processes you will adopt and what you will do with the information you gain" [p66].

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2005

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## **Appendix 1: The Network – tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries**

The Network was formed in 1999, growing out of the research project, “Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion”.

A key feature of this project was that we held regular seminars to discuss preliminary findings with practitioners, and, at one of these seminars in February 1999, the participants asked if a network of some sort could be formed, in order for them to share good practice and to prevent ‘reinventing the wheel’.

The Network was formed in 1999, starting primarily with library authorities in London and the South East – however, by October 1999, we had over 20 organisational members.

Since then, we have broadened our remit to include museums, archives and other organisations (including the Heritage Lottery Fund, Manchester Metropolitan University, the House of Lords Record Office, the Petrie Museum, the British Museum, the British Library, and the National Library of Wales), and, today we have 120 members (plus some 15 individuals). Once one part of a local authority joins The Network, this confers membership on the whole authority, and some of our members have used this to take advantage of reduced training course rates.

Its activities include:

### **Running training courses and conferences**

These are a mix of open courses (which anyone can attend) and in-house training courses which are developed to meet specific needs of local authorities.

Topics covered include:

- An introduction to tackling social exclusion
- Working with socially excluded children
- Working with looked-after children and young people
- Providing services for lesbians and gay men
- Working with refugees and asylum-seekers.

Some courses have also been provided for staff outside the libraries/museums/archives fields: for example, the introductory course has been run for the whole senior management team of a borough council; and the services for lesbians and gay men course has been provided for a London Borough’s Children’s Play staff, and a county authority’s HR and Equalities managers.

## Specific projects

The Network is also involved in delivering specific projects, including developing a training kit for library staff working with looked-after young people (funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation); developing service provision for refugees and asylum-seekers (firstly, with Kent Arts & Libraries as part of a DCMS/Wolfson project; and now as a partner with the London Library Development Agency in a Paul Hamlyn Foundation project to develop a model for service delivery across the UK).

In addition to this, we produce a monthly newsletter, drawing together news, good practice, reviews of key documents, updates of work at national/ Government level, and manage a number of email discussion lists for members to share good practice and make enquiries of each other.

We also maintain a website which gives access to a wealth of information in these fields ([www.seapn.org.uk](http://www.seapn.org.uk)).

<sup>[1]</sup> Looking at recent developments in the US, it is also clear why LGBT issues are still seen as radical. In its announcement of the 2005 Banned books Week, the American Library Association stated:

“Almost 25 years after its initiation, Banned Books Week (September 24–October 1) has special resonance as gay and lesbian-themed books come under attack.

Three of the 10 books on the “Ten Most Challenged Books of 2004,” compiled by the American Library Association (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom, were cited for homosexual themes—which is the highest number in a decade. These titles include:

“The Perks of Being a Wallflower” by Stephen Chbosky [Simon & Schuster, 1999]  
“King & King” by Linda de Haan and Stern Nijland [Tricycle Press, 2002]  
“I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” by Maya Angelou [eg Virago, 1993]

In the wake of proposed legislation and resolutions in several states this year to restrict or prohibit access to materials related to sexual orientation, the ALA Council passed a resolution in June affirming the inclusion of materials that reflect the diversity of our society and encouraging libraries to acquire and make available materials representative of all people.

“The voices and stories of gays and lesbians cannot be silenced in our culture or on our bookshelves,” said ALA President Michael Gorman. “Banning books is an extreme disservice to our readers. Not only does it hinder tolerance and acceptance, it also limits the information exchange Americans hold dear.”

[taken from:  
[www.ala.org/ala/pio/piopresskits/bannedbooksweek2005/bbooks2005.htm](http://www.ala.org/ala/pio/piopresskits/bannedbooksweek2005/bbooks2005.htm)].

And, earlier in 2005, Tulsa (Oklahoma) libraries moved books written for children about gay families out of the children's library, after Oklahoma lawmakers passed a resolution telling publicly-funded libraries that such books should be placed in "Adults Only" sections ["Library moves kids books on gay families from children's section",

[www.365gay.com/newscon05/05/051305books.htm](http://www.365gay.com/newscon05/05/051305books.htm), accessed 11 October 2005].

<sup>[2]</sup> Further information about Clause 28 is included in the section on where LGBTs fit into all the policy development.

<sup>[3]</sup> A biennial conference organised by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals [CILIP], which brings together all the groups and branches of CILIP under one roof.

<sup>[4]</sup> This section has been adapted from guidance notes on the MLA Website [Vincent, 2003].

<sup>[5]</sup> There is a useful paper by Rob Atkinson [Atkinson, 2000], which looks at some of this background.

<sup>[6]</sup> *Breaking the cycle* is one of a series of reports from the SEU, published in 2004, and assessing progress-to-date in tackling social exclusion – they also indicate work that needs to be undertaken next to make services less hard-to-reach. For further information, see [www.socialexclusion.gov.uk](http://www.socialexclusion.gov.uk).

<sup>[7]</sup> In developing a paper for the South East Museums, Libraries and Archives Council [Vincent, 2005a], I discussed community cohesion with a number of people working in this area, and these points were drawn from their comments.

<sup>[8]</sup> Further information and updates are available at: [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk).

<sup>[9]</sup> See:

[www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive\\_2004/library\\_standards.htm](http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2004/library_standards.htm).

<sup>[10]</sup> Further information available at:

[www.mla.gov.uk/action/framework/framework\\_04a.asp](http://www.mla.gov.uk/action/framework/framework_04a.asp).

<sup>[11]</sup> To support these, every public library service in England also has to carry out a community profile, which will give a good opportunity for assessing the needs of LGBT people in the area.

<sup>[12]</sup> Stonewall is an organisation campaigning on behalf of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals – see: [www.stonewall.org.uk/](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/).

<sup>[13]</sup> The public service union – see: [www.unison.org.uk/](http://www.unison.org.uk/).

<sup>[14]</sup> See: [www.alg.gov.uk/](http://www.alg.gov.uk/).

<sup>[15]</sup> This document updated and replaced earlier work by the Local Government Association [2001b].

<sup>[16]</sup> The European Union established a general framework for equality of treatment in employment and vocational training via Directive 2000/78/EC. This is being enacted in the UK via the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 which came into force on 2 December 2003. These Regulations – and other legislative developments – make it necessary for all local authorities to develop and implement policies concerning equality for lesbians, gay and bisexual employees. It also means that there is an obligation on the employer not to discriminate, and the Employers Organisation document [2003] suggests that, "[b]ecause of the interface between local authority staff and service users, it will also be necessary to consider the implications for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the community." [p13]

<sup>[17]</sup> If anyone is unsure of the extent to which lesbians, gay men and bisexual people are discriminated against, this is required reading!

<sup>[18]</sup> Taken from: [www.stonewall.org.uk/information\\_bank/faq/79.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/information_bank/faq/79.asp), accessed 11 October 2005.

[19] One library service received regular complaints from a disgruntled user about their provision of LGBT materials, because, he argued, they did not even know how many people they were providing for.

[20] "Clause 28" was repealed first in Scotland in 2002, and then in England and Wales in 2003.

[21] For further information about this, as well as a critique of attempts by local authorities to deal with LGBT issues, see Davina Cooper [1994].

[22] The DfES have published two valuable documents recently: a review of the effects of homophobia in schools, with "implications for action" [Warwick *et al*, 2004]; and a guide to assist schools in challenging homophobia [Jennett, 2004].

[23] The survey included the views of 30 UK and 30 Canadian library directors.

[24] In a workshop at the Arts Council Conference, "Reading for Life", April 1998, one of the key points to emerge was that "Clause 28" had become an alibi for self-censorship and inactivity [Arts Council, 1998].

[25] This was a research project funded by the then Library and Information Commission. The final report was published in 3 volumes by Resource [Muddiman *et al*, 2000a-c].

[26] For further discussion of the way in which the term 'political correctness' has been distorted and used to block liberal developments, see Vincent, 2000.

[27] Previously, the then Association of Assistant Librarians (now the Career Development Group), South-East Division had organised sexuality awareness training for their committee [Montgomery and Behr, 1988], and Alison Behr had also organised a course for the AAL, South-East Division in 1990 on "Section 28: 2 years on" [Behr, 1990].

[28] This contrasts with, for example, the US, where there has been a LGBT body within the American Library Association since the 1970s – now the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Round Table ([www.ala.org/ala/glbtrt/welcomeglbtround.htm](http://www.ala.org/ala/glbtrt/welcomeglbtround.htm)).

[29] See: [www.haringey.gov.uk/gaybookcollection.htm](http://www.haringey.gov.uk/gaybookcollection.htm).

[30] See *The Network Newsletter ...*, 2005.

[31] Information taken from The Network website at: [www.seapn.org.uk/lgbt.html](http://www.seapn.org.uk/lgbt.html) (accessed 17 August 2005).

[32] See: [www.biggayread.com](http://www.biggayread.com).

[33] For further information on the Council's work in this area, see: [www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/equality-and-diversity/sexual-orientation-transgender](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/equality-and-diversity/sexual-orientation-transgender).

[34] As the Employers Organisation guide says, "Recognise the challenges of 'representatives'. Ask the lesbian, gay and bisexual people that you are working with to clarify whether they are sharing personal opinions or whether they can consult with a wider constituency." [p10]

[35] [www.pinkpaper.com/](http://www.pinkpaper.com/).

[36] It is normal for staff to discuss their out-of-work activities – but we need to ensure that LGBT staff are not made to feel that they cannot talk about what they have been doing at the weekend.

[37] <http://freespace.virgin.net/gays.theword/>.

[38] [www.bookscan.ukgateway.net/](http://www.bookscan.ukgateway.net/).

[39] [www.libertas.co.uk/](http://www.libertas.co.uk/).

[40] [www.foyles.co.uk/foyles/sm/default.asp](http://www.foyles.co.uk/foyles/sm/default.asp).

[41] For further information, see: [www.lg-employers.gov.uk](http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk).