

# Opening Doors

## Working with Older Lesbians and Gay Men

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## Foreword

My first involvement in gay rights issues was in the mid-1960s in the campaign which led to the legalisation of male homosexuality in 1967. For a decade after that, I was involved in initiatives to address the social, cultural, everyday implications of continuing prejudice and discrimination. I am delighted to welcome this pack which takes forward that commitment in the Age Concern context.

Age Concern's vision of later life is inclusive: our starting point is the needs, the preferences and the priorities of individual older people. That means that 'we start from where people are'. We build on their experience and self-definition. Sexuality and sexual preference are a crucially important part of self.

Lesbians and gay men now in their seventies have spent at least half their lives in varying degrees of secrecy, anguish, anxiety, fear, confusion, deceit, shame, excitement, fun, joy and love. Some have coped better than others.

Opinion polls demonstrate that society's attitudes have changed very much during the last 40 years. There is much greater acceptance of gay lifestyles; lesbian and gay life is becoming ordinary. As one result, the legal framework is now changing gradually but decisively for the better.

Lesbian and gay partnerships have won recognition in immigration, housing, legal aid and criminal injuries compensation. The new Greater London Authority has committed itself to establish a formal registration process for lesbian and gay partnerships.

Broadly, the situation for most lesbian and gay people at the beginning of the 21st century is more positive, secure and affirming than ever before.

However, the majority of older people have lived a large part of their lives in less liberal times and their experience has made them understandably wary and cautious. It is also true that prejudice, inappropriate discrimination and even violence remain a threat for many and a reality for some.

The effects of this caution are particularly important when people are most vulnerable, when they are likely to need help from social, health and voluntary bodies.

In practice, it means that gay and lesbian older people will be less likely to access services and will do so on limited terms.

This Resource Pack aims to turn increasingly positive attitudes into equally positive action. I welcome the work which has already been done by the organisations mentioned in this pack and by others, including local Age Concerns.

The challenge facing organisations which set out to meet the needs of *all* older people is to create an environment of positive acceptance and welcome for lesbian and gay clients and for lesbian and gay staff and volunteers.

The publication of this pack gives a clear message to agencies working with and for older people, to the lesbian and gay movement, and to older lesbians and gay men: Age Concern is committed to the promotion of good practice and to taking positive initiatives.

We also recognise that co-operation with other organisations is an essential component of success. Age Concerns work with other bodies in partnerships at every level. In this field as in others, we want to collaborate and to share our experience and approach.

Please read this pack and apply it to your work. Please keep Age Concern England in touch with your work so that we can share it with others.

**Gordon Lishman**  
**Director General**  
**Age Concern England**

**July 2001**

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**Opening Doors**

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# I Introduction

## I.1 Who is the Resource Pack for?

*Opening Doors* is intended for any individual or organisation interested in developing services for, or working with, older lesbians and gay men. As the Resource Pack is produced by Age Concern England, it regularly refers to Age Concern, the federation and its Members (Age Concern Organisations and Groups) which will provide its largest readership. The guidance it provides, however, is applicable to a far wider readership, including those whose work is primarily in the lesbian and gay field. *Opening Doors* is part of a wider and still developing strategy which also includes training, networking and international work, both within Europe and further afield.

The pack does not offer a moral argument for the acceptability of homosexuality. The authors assume that readers acknowledge the existence of homosexual women and men (no less, **older** lesbians and gay men) without prejudice. It would be inaccurate, however, to disregard the fact that ignorance and disapproval exist and that they are serious stumbling blocks to the development of work.

This Resource Pack gives equal weight, therefore, to equipping the reader with tools to challenge negative attitudes and to giving practical guidance on developing services, most of which can be implemented at little or no cost.

The first part of the pack sets the scene, providing the reader with a context. It suggests steps towards change that individuals and organisations can undertake, and offers examples of existing good practice.

## I.2 How to use this Resource Pack

The material presented here will be used by readers in a variety of ways according to experience, local needs, and personal interests. The following pointers may help:

- The Resource Pack aims to give readers new to the field an understanding of the client group, and especially of issues relating to prejudice and how these manifest themselves.

- It is vital to know something about the cultural and historical background of the people with whom one is working. However, lesbian and gay history and culture are little known or understood because of social censure and cultural taboos, plus the fact that, all too often for gay men, the illegality of sexual orientation resulted in its being covert.

*Those who feel unfamiliar with lesbian and gay history and society may wish to pause and head for Section 5, a **Timeline** highlighting key historical events which have contributed to the formation of what it is to be homosexual in today's society.*

- The Key Issues section provides guidance and ideas on how to get started; how to begin 'opening doors'. It sets out the basic principles of good practice in working with older lesbians and gay men and looks at how to develop an *inclusive* organisation into a lesbian and gay *affirming* one through specific and/or adapted services, training and consultation.
- As in all Resource Packs, we point to resources available to those wishing to go further. Sections 4 to 9 are full of practical information on other useful publications, organisations, potential funders, other relevant resources and the Timeline.

The language of this Resource Pack has had to make compromises. One issue with which we have struggled concerns the assumptions we may seem to make regarding the sexual orientation of our readership. We do not assume sexual orientation but acknowledge that much of what is written may appear directed at a heterosexual readership. This compromise was reached solely to avoid clumsy, complex structuring. In preparing this document we also had to make a similar decision regarding the use of the term 'lesbian and gay older people' to encapsulate lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older people.

## 2 Key Issues

### 2.1 Setting the scene - behind closed doors

If you are reading this Resource Pack, it is likely to be because you want your services to be accessible to *all* older men and women, and want to consider whether you are achieving that for lesbians and gay men. Perhaps you are the Chief Executive of an organisation or possibly a member of staff who has been given this responsibility.

Lesbians and gay men have many things in common with older heterosexual people in respect of ageing – (i) reduced income following retirement, (ii) concerns about their health, and (iii) the losses of friends and family members. But there are differences. Often there is no legal recognition of their relationships (pension provision, life insurance, social security), there can be lack of acknowledgement by family members and friends (next of kin, funeral arrangements, guardianship) and there is little specialised provision (housing, residential care, social services or groups).

During their lives, many lesbians and gay men are victims of harassment and verbal and physical attacks, solely because of their sexuality. Older gay men and lesbians may have spent much of their lives concealing their sexuality, passing themselves off as heterosexual – some to the point of getting married and having children. As a result of this it is hardly surprising that many older lesbians and gay men find it difficult being open about their sexual orientation. Some end up feeling isolated, unwelcome, marginalised and unacceptable; they do not feel safe in the world, are unable to trust people and be proudly visible. Hiding their sexuality was, and still is for some people, an important strategy for survival and personal safety.

Of course older gay men and lesbians also face ageism. Those from ethnic minorities face racism. Lesbians may suffer from sexism. Just as your organisation is seeking to avoid discriminating against anyone on the grounds of race, ethnicity and so on, it should also be looking towards extending its services towards people who are different because of their sexual orientation.

Section 3.2, '*Getting Started*', looks specifically at what individuals and organisations can do to ensure that they are providing the best possible service for all their clients, including older lesbian women and gay men.

## 2.2 Understanding discrimination and oppression

Making an organisation accessible to minority groups can be challenging, but getting it right is very rewarding. Getting it right requires knowledge about needs and the commitment to develop or adjust services to meet them.

Much oppression comes from lack of awareness rather than deliberate intent. People who are unaware of how oppression works can sometimes themselves perpetuate oppression unwittingly and in subtle ways.

An example would be a voluntary organisation which claims to welcome everybody, whilst holding its annual conference in a venue which is not wheelchair accessible, with no provision made for people with hearing difficulties and with all conference materials written in English. Although the intention of the organisation is to be inclusive, in reality it will probably exclude many people.

Gay men and lesbians can experience the same lack of consideration, which might not appear as obvious. For example, forms requesting name of spouse and social occasions targeting heterosexual couples serve, probably unintentionally, to exclude older gay men and lesbians.

Many people feel uncomfortable discussing sex – it is a very personal thing. Many of us have grown up in a society which reinforced the images of a heterosexual lifestyle and the nuclear family, partly by sending negative messages about 'living in sin', 'illegitimacy', 'perversion' and 'deviancy'.

Society has become more tolerant over the past few decades. Even so, for those who intellectually accept the need to be inclusive, the fact that this involves a taboo subject – sex – may make them feel uncomfortable. Perhaps the best way to start is to put the 'sex thing' to the side for a moment.

### 2.2 1 Difference and diversity

Lesbians and gay men are members of many other communities, some of them also facing problems as minorities. Older lesbians and gay men from minority ethnic communities, for example, face the triple oppression caused by ageist, homophobic and racist attitudes. Age Concern already produces information and support materials for work with many other communities of older people, and these may prove useful when used in conjunction with this document to address specific issues. Some examples are summarised below.

#### 2.2.2 Rural areas

Older people living in rural areas can face greater isolation than those in urban areas. There is a higher level of poverty and disadvantage and a poorer level of services and facilities. Many bus routes, shops, post offices and pubs have disappeared and, along with them, the opportunities for older people to meet and maintain independence. For an older lesbian or gay man that sense of isolation can be increased, especially as the majority of lesbian and gay services are centred in urban areas, making it harder to identify, reach and inform them.

Age Concern England has produced a Resource Pack, *Developing Rural Services for Older People*, which highlights and signals solutions to some of the additional difficulties faced by these older lesbians and gay men.

#### 2.2.3 Minority ethnic older people

As well as the additional difficulties older lesbians and gay men from minority ethnic groups face, there can be different cultural and spiritual attitudes towards homosexuality. These are sensitive issues, with the potential to exert a significant influence on a lesbian's or gay man's wellbeing in later life. It is important to recognise that such beliefs range from the punitive (such as some traditional Christian and Islamic teaching) to the accepting (e.g. Buddhism and North American traditions). *'Beyond Rhetoric'* is a *Good Practice Guide* produced by Age Concern England (ACE), aimed at providing a starting point for those who need to know about key issues involved in working with older people from ethnic minorities. A Resource Pack highlighting working examples, and signposting useful contacts and other resources, is also available (see *ACE contact details in section 7* of this Resource Pack).

#### 2.2.4 Disabled people

Many people with disabilities experience discrimination, sometimes resulting in low income and isolation exacerbated by lack of appropriate transport and access. For an older lesbian or gay man, the choice of safe and welcoming venues is likely to be limited and that choice is further reduced if they face physical access problems.

*Regard* is an organisation set up to provide information on physical access to lesbian-and gay-friendly venues, to put disabled lesbians and gay men in touch with each other and to provide general advice and information to help meet their needs. Contact details for *Regard* can be found in *Section 7* of this pack.

#### 2.2.5 Differences between older lesbians and older gay men

In terms of life experiences, it is also possible to highlight variations between older lesbians and older gay men. For example, women are more likely to have experienced fluidity in their sexual orientation in adult life, and are more likely to have been married, and to have children of their own. They are also more likely to be living in long-term relationships than older gay men.

Financially, while gay men are sometimes seen as economically powerful, older lesbians count amongst the poorest groups in society, despite greater participation in the workforce than older heterosexual women. This may be partly the result of the greater likelihood of private pension income for men and the absence of financial support based on a husband's usually higher earnings. Older lesbians who have had successful careers, however, may be in a relatively strong financial position in retirement.

Such differences need not necessarily suggest distinct or separate services for women and men, though it may emerge from discussion and consultation that this is desired. There is often in practice, for example, a tradition that 'women do – men organise', especially within this age group (a fact to which many lesbians involved in the early days of campaigning groups attest). However, what is consistent in all research to date is the *inconsistency* of responses. Older lesbians and gay men differ in their preferences for *lesbian* and *gay* - lesbian only, gay only or generic provision in old age - and they will no doubt continue to differ.

It is, therefore, important to recognise such differences when getting to know and understand your client group and when planning approaches. Such differences point again to the importance of having a choice of services in old age.

### **2.2.6 Needs in common**

At the same time as recognising and respecting diversity, it is equally fair to ask whether the needs of older lesbians and gay men are the same as those of other older people. There are, of course, many issues which are common to all older people. These include such topics as independence, security, companionship, concerns about finances and general health. To a large extent, the services provided by Age Concern and others are aimed at all older people with these issues and concerns in mind.

It is important that services are welcoming and appropriate to all. Such services might include, but not be restricted to:

- Income and pensions advice
- Housing needs
- Transport information
- Practical help in and around the home
- Health and physical wellbeing
- Recreation
- Arts and culture
- Education
- Elder abuse
- Relationships and sexual issues

## **2.3 Myths and misinterpretations**

You may find that arguments are raised. Just as there are myths about what lesbians and gay men are supposed to look like and about the way they conduct their relationships, there are equally unhelpful myths and false assumptions about the need for work in this field in the first place.

Often these are more pervasive because they result from benign unawareness. For example:

### **Myth 1: ‘There aren’t any round here’**

How could anyone know that? What are they expecting to see? Lesbians and gay men are as diverse as any other section of society. They are black, they are white, they are working-class, middle-class and upper-class, they are disabled and they are able-bodied; they are rich, they are poor, they are dependent and independent; and so on.

Lesbian and gay culture has given us lesbian and gay stereotypes. Effeminate gay men and masculine lesbians have always existed and have always been more noticeable. The majority of older lesbians and gay men – those who do not conform to the stereotypes and who have often made lifelong efforts to pass as heterosexual – simply blend into the background.

“Persons with homosexual histories are to be found in every age group, in every social level, in every conceivable occupation – in cities, on farms and in the most remote areas of the country” wrote Alfred Kinsey in the 1950s, as a result of his research. If we take the statistical formulae that do exist, such as the widely accepted figures of 3 -10% by researchers such as Kinsey, we can at least begin to make some educated estimates.<sup>1</sup>

Put most simply, we can use the average of Kinsey’s figures, 6.5%, to suggest that every fifteenth user of Age Concern is a lesbian or a gay man. Such a calculation can only provide a rough and ready starting point. In common with many other minority groups, lesbians and gay men often live in areas where they know others. By no means all have chosen or have had the means to choose this option. In addition, some move to smaller towns and more rural areas, in common with many older people in their retirement.

### **Myth 2: ‘They can look after their own’**

There is a long tradition of lesbian and gay caring, from a significant presence in the caring professions, through to the establishment of care organisations, such as the Terrence Higgins Trust.

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<sup>1</sup> Kinsey, Alfred Charles - *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* (1953). Kinsey’s findings suggest 10% of males and 2-3% of females are exclusively homosexual. More recent data support the Kinsey findings and indicate that the figures have remained constant since the 1950s.

Despite the absence of children in many cases, individual acts of care and support of older lesbians and gay men take place every day throughout the country by more able lesbians and gay men. Lesbians and gay men have worked hard at creating extended families and social networks, sometimes to replace the biological families with whom they have been forced to sever ties. But it is a fact that carers, many of whom can become isolated and depressed, also need support.

However, the scale of the expertise, knowledge and resources acquired by Age Concern takes many years to achieve and it will remain the first port of call for those needing help in old age. Given that organisations providing such a range of care and support for older lesbians and gay men do not exist, it remains crucial that current service providers respond to minority interests.

### **Myth 3: ‘We’re open to everyone anyway’**

It may be relatively straightforward to apply the equivalent of a benign ‘colour-blind’ open-door approach to services when considering sexual orientation. However, an organisation may simply not see the need to make provision for a minority group or even to address it directly or differently, if it does not understand the nature and needs of that group. No matter how inclusive an organisation’s policies or how appropriate it *believes* its services to be, it is essential to understand a little about minority groups in order to engage them in the first place.

Equally important is the need for an organisation to *demonstrate* its inclusiveness. After the centuries of intolerance displayed towards lesbians and gay men, it is entirely reasonable that they might assume an organisation to be indifferent or even hostile until it proves itself otherwise.

### **Myth 4: ‘No-one’s ever asked so there’s obviously no need’**

Older lesbians and gay men do not have a collective voice to represent them and it is unrealistic to expect them to take any initiative which might bring to light their sexual orientation until an agency has shown it is ready to listen sympathetically. That generation has lived a large part of its life outside what society has deemed acceptable and even sometimes outside the law.

We are beginning to see the first wave of lesbians and gay men approaching pensionable age who have been ‘out’ for most of their lives and who will expect appropriate services. That is, however, a wave yet to come and, though it is essential to prepare for it, our prime consideration is the many older lesbians and gay men who need appropriate and effective services now.

**Myth 5: ‘We already have lesbian and gay clients – they just don’t flaunt it’**

No doubt this is true to a greater or lesser extent and there are considerable arguments for maintaining the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ status quo with regard to people’s right to privacy. There is probably no need, for example, to know whether a client is lesbian or gay if they request information on meals on wheels.

No other group of people is expected to leave a significant part of their identity outside the front door in order to feel comfortable gaining access to services. There is a big difference between ‘flaunting’ one’s traits and habits, and feeling comfortable enough to be oneself.

Lesbians and gay men may have particular needs in old age which cannot be met, or even recognised, if they are not given the opportunity to express them.

**Myth 6: ‘They keep themselves to themselves’**

Whether older lesbians and gay men will want to mix with heterosexuals is a vexed question. The answer will sometimes be yes, sometimes no, but the reasons will be many and complex. It need not, for example, be a simple case of ‘reverse prejudice’ – it is entirely understandable that many older lesbians and gay men have no wish to spend time with people whom they feel may disapprove or at best merely tolerate them. Perhaps they have spent an exhausting lifetime ‘passing’ as heterosexual and wish to spend the rest of their time with people with whom they can relax.

On the other hand, most of today’s older lesbians and gay men have lived their lives in largely heterosexual communities and can often view today’s gay ‘villages’ as an undesirable form of ghetto. In the longer term, there will be provision for older lesbians and gay men through both special and integrated services.

In the meantime, a non-lesbian or non-gay organisation embarking on this kind of work can at least expect to satisfy some of the people some of the time.

**Myth 7: ‘We will offend other clients/staff/trustees/funders’**

"I am not prejudiced, but other people are and we cannot risk offending them" is the most common plea of those considering work with minorities.

How such prejudices might be tackled is addressed later but it is essential for an organisation to be prepared not simply to reflect public or majority opinion but to accept responsibility for providing services and encouraging representation in response to need.

It is equally important to address the question of assumed opinions. We may *assume* clients and/or colleagues to be disapproving – we may even assume them to be so because they are of a certain generation – but without addressing the issue it is possible that we are mistaken.

**Myth 8: ‘It’s wrong to have a vested interest’**

If you are a lesbian or gay man undertaking this work, it is possible that you will be accused at some point of having a vested interest. *There is nothing wrong with a vested interest.* People often perform at their best when they have a personal stake in the work they are undertaking. Minorities the world over set up their own support agencies out of vested interest, often with official funding and backing. In fact, those with a vested interest in other minority issues – race, religion, gender – are generally considered the ones best equipped to undertake the work. Having a ‘vested interest’ contributes positively to the work.

**Myth 9: ‘It’s all about sex’**

Discussion of sexuality in old age might be sensitive and difficult. It is important to remember that an older lesbian’s or gay man’s needs of Age Concern may well not concern their sexuality.

Being a gay man or a lesbian is not just about sex. Many, if not most, of their needs and questions are the same as any other older person’s and they are no more likely than any other older person to bring sexual problems to your organisation.

### **Myth 10: 'We'll do it wrong'**

It is understandable that you might worry that you could handle a situation clumsily, say the wrong thing or embarrass someone. Nobody can be an expert in everything, but everyone can learn the skills and knowledge to do a job well. This Resource Pack should help you to do that. At the same time, get to know those organisations with the appropriate expertise to which you can turn when necessary. Just as importantly, seize the opportunity to break new ground, to lead the way and to *throw open new doors*.

## **2.4 The use and abuse of language**

The words and terms we use in communicating have a powerful impact on the message. Terminology has implications for the way in which groups view themselves and live their lives.

Age Concern has campaigned for the use of 'older people' rather than other terms in common use, many of which are used, intentionally or not, in patronising or demeaning ways. Although this may seem trivial, it shows that we recognise the strong impact which appropriate language can have on wider culture.

Words used to describe gay men and lesbians throughout history have often been derogatory and used to convey negative attitudes towards this group. They describe homosexuality in euphemisms or pejorative terms that imply 'deviant' 'unnatural' acts which are 'perverted', 'against nature', 'a sin' and a 'crime'.

The differences in the terms used to describe lesbians and gay men over time have been indicative of changes in social attitudes and reactions to them. The most significant has been the adoption of the term 'gay' in the 1960s as an alternative to 'homosexual'.

The majority of gay men and lesbians did not use any of these words to describe themselves. The words most commonly used by gay men and lesbians between the wars were 'queer' for gay men and 'sapphists' for lesbians (after the lesbian poet Sappho). Interestingly, the term 'queer' became an often used form of derogatory language although this has more recently been re-challenged by gay men.

The word 'gay' has been used with both meanings since the nineteenth century. By the late 1960s, it became a commonly used word of self-description by homosexual men and women. The use of the word is an attempt to distance homosexual people from the suggestions of abnormality and illness.

Although the term 'gay' is used to describe both homosexual men and women, it seems to be more directly associated with men. Nowadays, 'gay women' are usually described as 'lesbian' (derived from Lesbos, the name of the Greek island on which the poet Sappho lived). 'Homosexual' is less commonly used as it still holds negative and clinical connotations. 'Lesbian' and 'gay' are more positive choices for most people.

How to refer to other people can sometimes cause anxiety, as we don't know the 'right' word. Similarly, people describing themselves might not know whether a term is 'acceptable' within their peer group.

It is important to remember that gay and lesbian people are of different cultures and ages and have different attitudes and expectations. This means that there is *no definitive language*. Of course, this is difficult for people who are not up to date with who is using what terms. It means that a person's preference for how they wish to be addressed needs to be checked and respected.

Using the terms **lesbian** and **gay** in the first instance is likely to be the most acceptable for the majority of people.

## 2.5 Visibility

### 2.5.1 Secrecy

Most of lesbians' and gay men's history has been about having to conceal identity, meet in secret places and deny feelings of love for others.

Because of the need for secrecy, a coded language *Polari* was developed to enable lesbians and gay men to communicate among themselves. People could talk about being gay or advertise for a gay roommate and only people 'in the know' would understand the meaning.

The experiences of Lesbians and gay men are filled with incidents of not being accepted by individuals and society as a whole. Attitudes as well as legislation conspired to create an environment in which to openly identify oneself as lesbian or gay was a risky business. As a response to this hostility, some lesbians and gay men have gathered together and created 'ghettos' where they live or socialise, and where they feel 'safe' to be themselves.

Over the last 50 years, both awareness and legislation have changed considerably. Lesbians and gay men are becoming more visible in the media and on the streets. For example, the Gay Pride celebration in London attracted over 250,000 people in 1999. However, this has not necessarily corresponded with a complete change in attitude towards gay men or lesbians, or led to increased safety for them.

Against this background it can be a challenge for any organisation to create an environment which appears welcoming and accepting of lesbian and gay staff and volunteers, as well as clients. There will be additional difficulties for organisations providing services for older people because these older people are likely to have grown up when intolerance and antipathy towards lesbians and gay men was at its height.

### **2.5.2 Coming out**

'Coming out' can be described as being open and visible about your sexual orientation to yourself and disclosing this to others ('coming out of the closet'). Coming out is an experience unique to gay men and lesbians. Heterosexuality is assumed whereas lesbians and gay men discover their sexual orientation through a growing awareness.

This is often an individual process which happens over a long period. Coming out to oneself may be experienced as a relief and joy about the possibilities for love and relationships. It might also evoke fears of exclusion and isolation or even feelings of self-hatred; fears that may have been reinforced by the bigoted and prejudicial behaviour of relatives, friends, teachers and others.

Some people choose to remain 'in the closet' or to 'pass' as heterosexual because they cannot see a viable future for themselves as openly gay or lesbian. This choice needs to be respected.

Equally, there are people who are aware and accepting of their sexual orientation but uncomfortable about the 'labelling' or stereotyping that accompanies coming-out. Their position should also warrant respect.

Coming out to others involves a number of other considerations, in particular, the issue of trust. How much can one trust one's friends and acquaintances to go on responding to the person they know rather than to their newly revealed sexual identity? Will old friends feel they have been deceived? Once someone has come out to one person they have no control as to where and to whom the information might be passed.

'Passing' is a strategy of survival in a hostile environment. Only when attitudes change substantively and legislation does not discriminate against lesbian and gay people will there be no need for gay and lesbian people to 'pass'.

### **2.5.3 Seeking acceptance**

Being respectful and understanding of a person's choice to disclose their sexual orientation helps an organisation create an environment which reflects awareness, tolerance and acceptance.

Organisations need not offer exclusive services to older lesbians and gay men. Many lesbians and gay men might not choose to support exclusive services from a generalist provider (although that might come at a later stage or in some areas, if there is a need).

Nevertheless, organisations can create environments and provide services which reflect awareness, tolerance, acceptance and understanding of lesbian and gay issues. When this is achieved, it is more likely to lead to the employment of lesbian and gay staff and the self-identification of some clients. This will increase the credibility of the organisation with respect to its claim to apply equality of opportunity regarding sexual orientation. Organisations need to demonstrate that there is sufficient safety for staff and volunteers to be open about their sexual orientation.

It is the organisation which needs to come out as gay and lesbian friendly rather than depending upon clients to come out in order to get their needs met.



## 3 Needs and Responses

### 3.1 Opening Doors

We now look at needs and services which are specific or unique to older lesbians and gay men – from social support to social events, legal issues to housing provision, and from dealing with queer bashing to sexual health, HIV and AIDS.

It is important to emphasise when discussing special services that older lesbians and gay men do not necessarily see themselves as victims. In common with other minority groups, a lifetime of survival in a hostile environment has often given rise to an impressive resilience and capacity for self-deprecating good humour. This positive aspect of their lives should not obscure the fact that hardship and difference can create specific needs that can only be met by specific services.

All these services require a certain amount of specialist knowledge, some additional resources and a commitment to develop beyond an ‘open door’ policy. None of these is particularly onerous. Basic knowledge can be acquired. Those with expert knowledge can be used as referral agencies and funds can be raised (see especially the reference for lesbian and gay friendly funders in *Section 8*). In common with everyone else, lesbians and gay men have the need to be with others who share their background and experience. Once your agency has gained their confidence, the time will be right to act on this need and to provide appropriate services.

#### **Local Initiative**

Age Concern Gloucestershire has taken part in training sessions and is expanding services to older lesbians and gay men.

Its leaflets and promotional material state that the Organisation recognises the needs of older lesbians and gay people, without singling them out.

## 3.2 Getting Started

The basic principles of good practice in working with older lesbians and gay men are common to all work with older people:

- establishing and maintaining confidence
- communicating effectively
- working in a demonstrably non-discriminatory way
- recognising individual rights and needs
- respecting privacy and confidentiality
- providing the right information
- consulting potential service users.

These principles can only bring about fair, equal and inclusive services if an agency is correspondingly fair, equal and inclusive as an employer. In this context, organisations are urged to take the time to review employment practices in relation to lesbian and gay staff, volunteers and trustees. To assist in this the Resource Pack offers practical advice on:

- how to introduce lesbian and gay issues to your organisation and its agenda,
- and
- how to reach and engage older lesbians and gay men.

The majority of these ideas for change can be implemented at little or no additional cost. Where costs are involved, such as the procurement of appropriate visual images, for example, these might be done *as and when* a new leaflet, poster campaign or newsletter is produced and be absorbed into existing or allocated expenditure.

**Be sure to follow the advice regarding the use of images as given on page 25 of this document.**

Remember that the actions of individuals can have as profound an impact as the actions of organisations and that it is essential for the two to go hand in hand. Also, expect and be prepared for a certain level of criticism or even, occasionally, hostility. Expect this and ensure that all staff and volunteers feel supported and able to deal with it.

It will take time for older lesbians and gay men to begin to be seen to use services. A service advertised as available does not automatically result in its being used immediately, or used by large numbers. Service users need to develop trust of you as a provider. They may seek to test you (through phone calls or visits, perhaps) and they may not have any particular needs at a given time. Perseverance pays off as those who are working successfully will confirm.

### **3.3 Respecting privacy and the necessity for discretion**

The majority of older lesbians and gay men have lived their lives discreetly and inconspicuously. Tomorrow's baby-boomer lesbian and gay pensioners may well happily attend an open meeting on lesbian and gay issues, but many of today's will emphatically *not*.

This is not the case for all older lesbians and gay men, some of whom have been proudly *out* for most of their lives or have felt able to come out in their old age because of changing attitudes. It is to be expected and respected that though older lesbians or gay men may wish to access services on behalf of a same-sex partner they may only feel safe to do so in private and on a one-to-one basis, and sometimes only with another lesbian or gay man.

The key to this stage of the process is to be clear and public about the issue, to make it known to lesbians and gay men that they are welcome and that their needs will be respected. It is not necessary at first to offer services with a lesbian or gay label.

### **3.4 What can be done quickly, easily and inexpensively**

#### **3.4.1 Getting your message across**

*State your intentions:*

Begin by being clear and open about your intentions. Include sexual orientation, or, even better, the words *lesbian* and *gay*, in all equal opportunities statements relating to both services and employment. Refer to and remind staff, volunteers and service users of them regularly.

*Make your policies and programmes known:*

Staff, trustees and other volunteers, especially those who act as spokespersons, should make strong, clear and public statements stating your commitment to lesbian and gay issues and services, to ending inappropriate discrimination and to welcoming diversity.

*Use the media:*

Work with older lesbians and gay men is still ground-breaking and sometimes newsworthy. Both the lesbian and gay press (see *Section 7*) and the regular press may be interested, especially if there is a human interest story.

*Review your premises:*

Be aware of the visual imagery you use throughout your organisation and its premises, and the image your organisation presents to the lesbian or gay potential service user, visitor, volunteer or staff member.

### **3.4.2 Introducing lesbian and gay issues and changing organisational culture**

*Introduce homosexuality as a discussion topic:*

One of the greatest hurdles for anyone wishing to undertake work in this field is introducing the issue into discussions. Simply using the words can be difficult, even frightening or threatening, in an organisation where the assumed or over-whelming culture is heterosexual. In order to inform and gauge the views of colleagues and, where appropriate, other clients, the subject might be formally or informally introduced at staff meetings, board meetings, steering groups, AGMs or user group meetings. It will be invaluable to establish an ally within your organisation to support you when the subject is first raised, rather than bravely going it alone!

#### **Local Initiative**

Age Concern Waltham Forest liaised with a local group, Lesbian and Gay Action (LaGA), resulting in an in-house workshop in 2000. The working relationship with LaGA will continue and a report on local needs is planned.

*Invite lesbian and/or gay speakers:*

Lesbian and/or gay speakers could be invited to address meetings, especially if you need extra help and support in making the case for action. Effective speakers from the lesbian and gay communities, especially those who are active in campaigning and lobbying groups, are experienced in presenting lesbian and gay issues succinctly and persuasively.

*Appoint openly lesbian and/or gay people to your Board or advisory groups:*

The contribution of a lesbian or gay man can help ensure lesbian and gay issues are considered in all areas of organisational policy and strategy. It is, of course, essential that lesbian and gay trustees are appropriately experienced and are not token appointments. Those who already sit on the Boards of lesbian and gay groups in your area can provide a good starting point.

*Use in-house newsletters and publications:*

In-house newsletters, bulletins and other publications should give adequate, fair and appropriate coverage of lesbian and gay issues, ideally with a regular column. Coverage should include, not only organisational plans and practice, but also news of any related issues, for example developments in the formal - legal - recognition of same-sex partnerships.

*Offer your meeting space to older lesbian and gay groups:*

Affordable meeting space that is physically and emotionally safe and secure is both important and hard to find for minority groups. Once you have made contact with lesbian and gay groups you can develop your relationship by offering such space for meetings of older lesbians and gay men. Quite apart from cementing friendly relations this can have the effect of introducing 'out' lesbians and gay men to your Age Concern and vice versa.

*Invite lesbian and gay groups to appropriate events:*

There are many ways to build bridges between communities; social events can be amongst the most enjoyable and effective.

Lesbian and gay support and social organisations often have groups specifically for young people, whom you might consider inviting to share or help on occasions. Schoolchildren and youth club members often make visits to older people's clubs and residential homes at

Christmas or other celebratory times. There are also lesbian and gay performance groups – choirs or theatre groups, for example – some of which may perform free of charge. *Section 7* has details of information services that can supply contacts for such groups.

*Network with other colleagues and organisations involved in the work:*

*Section 9* of this pack lists some Age Concern Organisations and Groups involved in, embarking on or considering lesbian and gay work. In addition, Age Concern England has set up an Older Lesbian and Gay Working Group which includes networking opportunities among its objectives. (For details, see *Section 7*).

### **Local Initiative**

Age Concern Blackpool and District and Age Concern Preston and South Ribble have had discussions with North West Lancashire Health Authority to discuss what can be done for older lesbians and gay men in the area as there are currently no specialist services for them.

*Do not use openly or obviously homophobic service providers:*

Ideally, service providers should be chosen as much for their commitment to fairness and equality as for their ability to provide value for money. You can check whether key providers you use have written policies against discrimination. In any case, an overtly homophobic organisation will soon gain a reputation, at least amongst lesbian and gay people!

### **Employment practice**

*‘Couples’ and lesbian and gay partnership benefits:*

Have a clear, inclusive and written definition of couples that is non-discriminatory to same-sex partners. Explicitly include them in any domestic partnership benefits, such as insurance coverage or special couple rates.

*Dealing with homophobia:*

Have clear policies and procedures in place for dealing with homophobic harassment, and apply them rigorously, as you would in relation to any other discrimination.

*Hiring staff:*

Advertise for staff in appropriate lesbian and gay journals. The *Pink Paper* (see *Section 7*), for example, carries a regular Appointments section with advertisements. Of course, most lesbians and gay men will also look in other appropriate journals for job vacancies, but advertising additionally in a lesbian and gay publication sends a clear message of inclusivity and commitment to equality. Advertising in the lesbian and gay press is relatively inexpensive.

An alternative approach and, again, one that is used effectively in the *Pink Paper*, is to publish an occasional statement in a lesbian and gay journal along the lines of:

‘We do not have the resources to advertise every vacancy in the lesbian and gay press but wish to make it known that we positively welcome applications from all sections of the community, including lesbians and gay men. We have regular vacancies for staff and invite you to contact us on the number below for details of current vacancies.’

*Job shadowing, placements and secondments:*

Direct experience of working with and for lesbians and gay men can be gained through placing staff in lesbian and gay community organisations, helplines and support services or lesbian and gay businesses, if they are identifiable in your locality. Reciprocal arrangements can have an equally positive effect on lesbian and gay organisations, which can experience similar difficulties in engaging and understanding the needs of older people.

### **3.5 The importance of a gentle approach**

The grand gesture can achieve more harm than good when used with individuals. A typical example might be introducing a new member to a day centre as a lesbian, without first asking her permission or preparing the ground. This illustration is based on experience which caused immeasurable distress.

### 3.6 Asking older lesbians and gay men

A responsible organisation will know that the ultimate key to success is genuine and honest consultation with potential users. This Resource Pack is not suggesting a lengthy and costly consultation exercise before embarking on the work. The Pack provides details of a small number of consultation documents (see *Section 6*) and is partly the product of this research. It is hoped that this will provide sufficient understanding, confidence and resources to begin the necessary processes towards positive change, both in your culture and in your relationships with lesbians and gay men and their organisations, before going on to consultation.

### 3.7 Reaching and engaging older lesbians and gay men

*Use inclusive or neutral language when referring to relationships:*

This is one of the easiest, most far-reaching and cost effective ways to make lesbians and gay men feel included. It may take time to review your organisation's literature but, as materials come up for reprinting and new ones are produced, check all appropriate sections against the following list, or encourage the authors to use it when undertaking the writing:

- Marital status – include the option *living with a partner*
- Spouse – include *or partner* every time spouse is used
- Gender – do not assume a partner will be of the opposite sex by always using *her/him, she/he, her/his* etc.
- Couples – explicitly include same sex partners wherever married couples are mentioned

*Use the words 'lesbian' and 'gay' in positive ways:*

The next stage is to be specific as well as neutral. The more the words lesbian and gay are used, the more normal and less shocking they become to other colleagues and clients. It is more inclusive, for example, to state that your services welcome older people who are lesbian or gay than simply to say *all older people*. Even the seemingly unequivocal 'all' can be seen by older lesbians and gay men to exclude them if they do not then see themselves reflected in an organisation's language or visual imagery.

However, beware of labelling *services* as specifically lesbian and/or gay too soon and too publicly. Remember the importance of a discreet and gentle approach and, once you have established relationships, gauge the feelings and wishes of your lesbian and gay clients.

*Use appropriate visual images:*

Wherever you use images of older people, it should be possible to include some of lesbians and/or gay men. If older lesbians and gay men are so invisible, however, you may well ask how to portray them without resorting to stereotypes? There are many ways of portraying sexual orientation without stereotyping and without inappropriately shocking a conservative viewer:

- An older person might be portrayed wearing a pink triangle badge or T-shirt.
- A same-sex couple could be included – there are many subtle ways in which intimacy between two people can be portrayed.
- Mixed intergenerational and lesbian/gay/heterosexual group images can be very appealing and give a message of solidarity and inclusivity.

To find or acquire images:

- Next time you are organising a photo shoot, contact a local lesbian and gay group to ask for models.
- Use image banks, libraries and directories – some charge but some provide copyright-free images.
- Contact large lesbian and gay organisations, such as the Pride Festival and Mardi Gras organisers, who produce sophisticated publicity and may lend or sell their images.
- Ask other organisations involved in this work if they have appropriate images for loan, and, if Age Concern has such images for use, publicise the fact to others.

*It is important that you comply with the Data Protection Act when using images, just as when writing about people in a way that clearly identifies them. Always be sure to obtain **written permission** from anyone whose image you might use. This may not be necessary if you select images from a photo library that can assure (preferably in writing) that the people featured in their photos have previously agreed that their images may be used in connection with all topics, including those that may be considered 'sensitive' or 'controversial'.*

*Establish contact with lesbian and gay services and groups:*

Develop friends and allies in lesbian and gay groups – organisers and members. Lesbian and gay communities can be tight-knit so word of mouth can help your message reach those who do not attend such groups but who have friends who do.

### **Local Initiative**

Age Concern Nottingham and Nottinghamshire forged working links with a local organisation called OUTHOUSE in 1999. OUTHOUSE will eventually be a community centre for older lesbian and gay people. It will include rooms that Age Concern can use; e.g. for information and advice sessions. Meanwhile, Age Concern and OUTHOUSE are maintaining close relations and cross referring users as appropriate.

*Produce a leaflet or information sheet:*

This could be anything from a colour leaflet with photographs to a simple photocopied sheet. The critical issue is getting your message across to the people who matter and the most effective means is to address them directly. If you need assistance, lesbian and gay groups can help you make sure you get it right in terms of language and tone.

*Place your promotional materials in appropriate lesbian and gay venues:*

The presence of any of your literature in lesbian and gay venues gives a strong and clear positive message.

If you do not have the resources to produce material aimed specifically at lesbians and gay men, you might consider printing a sticker to place on your regular materials inviting older lesbians and gay men to contact you.

*Use lesbian and gay events:*

There are now many local and national lesbian and gay days of celebration and campaigning, such as the Pride and Mardi Gras festivals in London, Brighton, Manchester, Birmingham and other cities. They often include a march or parade, a festival event with information stands in a park or exhibition venue and a festival guide or booklet.



All provide an opportunity to advertise to lesbians and gay men and to make a positive statement. You could place an advert, perhaps combined with a greeting, in the event guide, set up an information stand or even organise a float in the parade, appropriate to the level of service your organisation can offer.

### Local Initiative

Age Concern Metropolitan Salford has spent the last two years gradually forging links with local lesbian and gay groups. They appeared in the year 2000 Mardi Gras, and were delighted with the reception they received. This year they are planning a float in what is now called Gayfest. Other Age Concerns in Greater Manchester have joined in this effort (and also Age Concern East Cheshire). In addition to the float, there will also be an Age Concern 'calm space' at Gayfest, where individuals may meet staff and volunteers, indicate needs and generally get to know that Age Concern is there for them as much as for anyone else.

*Extend 'couple' rates to same sex partners:*

Married couple rates, whether for insurance services or membership of a club, should be extended to include unmarried partners and explicitly include same-sex partners.  
(*N.B. This is the case with Age Concern Insurance Services' products.*)

*Include appropriate lesbian and gay reading matter:*

Places where people go specifically for information, such as libraries and information stands, and areas where people pick up reading matter to pass the time, such as reception areas, should include lesbian and gay publications. *The Pink Paper* is the main national lesbian and gay newspaper, issued weekly free of charge. Specialist bookshops (see [Section 7](#)) will provide the most authoritative source of resource and reference materials, but almost all the large bookstore chains now include a gay and lesbian section.

NB – [Section 7](#) contains details of many organisations that can provide advice, help or guidance in relation to the ideas and suggestions introduced in this Resource Pack.

## **3.8 Consulting older lesbians and gay men**

The most effective services and care are based on individual need. There will always be older lesbians and gay men who prefer not to be 'out' and who will not use services with a lesbian or gay label. For them, it is crucial to have generic services which demonstrate lesbian and gay friendliness and understanding. For others, it will be extremely important to have a full range of specific and safe lesbian and/or gay services; the alternative being that they would not use a service at all.

This section of the Resource Pack looks briefly at ways of consulting as wide a range of older lesbians and gay men as possible, in order that appropriately diverse and responsive services might be developed.

### **3.8.1 Open meetings**

A first step towards consultation might be an open meeting for older lesbians and gay men. The participants will only represent that proportion of the older lesbian and gay population that is comfortable being 'out' to a greater or lesser degree, and it is likely to take several different approaches before successfully bringing a diverse enough group together. Those older lesbians and gay men who already attend lesbian and gay venues – pubs, clubs or social groups – may initially be happiest attending a meeting in a venue they already know and in which they feel safe.

Those who are not comfortable visiting a lesbian and gay venue, but who still wish to gain access to specialist services, may prefer to attend a meeting on more neutral territory – for example, an older people's venue, church hall, social club or local arts centre.

### **3.8.2 Steering group**

As a second step, consider setting up a regular steering group of older lesbians and gay men to look specifically at developing lesbian and gay issues. In the longer term, participants in such a group might be encouraged to become trustees or to join other advisory groups within your organisation, to help ensure lesbian and gay issues are considered across the board.

### 3.8.3 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are likely to be the most effective means of reaching and gauging the views of older lesbians and gay men who do not wish to identify themselves publicly as lesbian or gay, especially if the appropriate questions can be inserted into a more generic survey. Whilst the opportunity to reply anonymously will be essential, the option to include contact details, with the promise of confidentiality, should also be given so that those who are willing to be consulted further can be approached. Such a questionnaire originating from a *non*-lesbian or -gay organisation is likely to be viewed as less threatening or intrusive and thus to elicit a greater response.

### 3.8.4 Interviews

Finally, personal interviews with older lesbians and gay men provide the opportunity to discuss needs and aspirations in the greatest depth. Existing research, such as that undertaken by the University of Brighton in association with Age Concern Brighton, Hove and Portslade, (resulting in - *Meeting the needs of older lesbians and gay men* - see *Section 6*), already gives invaluable insights and some of the personal testimony we need to validate the facts and figures about work in this field. However, a report on the experiences and expectations of older lesbians and gay men in an urban area, with a relatively large lesbian and gay population where there may be a realistic expectation of some specific provision, provides only a beginning. It remains essential to undertake research into the lives and needs of those who live in different environments and circumstances.

## 3.9 Trustee/staff/volunteer training

Training and development go hand in hand. Training offers participants an opportunity to gather new information, to acquire fresh insights and skills, and/or to extend, enliven or rekindle old ones. It is also a time and/or place where ideas may be tested, and mistakes made, safely with no harm coming to those involved nor to those who might otherwise have been on the receiving end. If an organisation is to develop an awareness and acceptance of the needs of lesbian and gay older people, along with practical ideas for meeting those needs, training is likely to be a significant factor.

Trustees, staff, and volunteers may wish to have specific training on working with older lesbians and gay men, exploring some of the issues identified in this Resource Pack. Subsidised training courses on specific aspects of working with older lesbians and gay men are available for Members of Age Concern the federation from Age Concern England (see *Section 6* for details).

### **3.10 What individuals can do quickly and easily**

#### **3.10.1 Being an Ally**

It is important to understand that, as an individual, you **can** make a difference both to other individuals and to the greater societal picture. It might be helpful to think for a moment about a time when someone showed you support or stood up for you in some way. You might remember from childhood your best friend sticking up for you in a difficult playground incident. As an adult, you might recall a challenging meeting during which a work colleague supported your ideas or decision.

We tend to remember these times because they do make a difference to us. When we are supported by others, it helps us feel more confident about ourselves and encourages us to pursue our individual pathways.

The main barriers to supporting others (in the playground or the boardroom) are the *fear of attack* and the *fear of being assumed lesbian or gay*. For example, how close (emotionally and physically) do we allow ourselves to get to friends of the same gender before we are concerned about what people assume about the nature of our friendships? There are a number of ways in which you can move towards being a friend and ally.

#### **3.10.2 Increasing your awareness**

*Assume that there are gay and lesbian people all around you, in your family, among your friends and your work colleagues*

This is really about mutual care and respect, regardless (in this context) of sexual orientation or preferences. Not only should we avoid making assumptions - e.g. about who is 'straight' and who is 'gay' etc. - but we should be aware that some people have a need to be discrete about such things.

*Read lesbian and gay novels, biographies, research*

There are a number of bookshops (see [Section 7](#)) with extensive lesbian and gay collections. Most libraries now have a lesbian and gay section and will often have publications such as *The Pink Paper* available to read. The internet is another valuable source of information, entertainment and reading material. (See [Section 6](#) for details and suggestions.)

*Think about the language you use:*

Use inclusive, affirming or gender neutral language when referring to intimate relationships and sexuality, both in the spoken and the written word. Use the terms *lesbian* and *gay* when appropriate.

### 3.10.3 Taking positive action

- *Don't collude with gossip about other people's sexuality*
- *Don't sanction homophobic jokes and stories any more than you would if they were sexist or racist*
- *Attend training courses on the issues of sexuality, homophobia etc.*

Workplace/office 'gossip' in itself may not be harmful, but it can sometimes become just that. Often, it is not so much the fact of gossip that is damaging, but the careless assumptions made and the general tone adopted. On these occasions, it may be necessary to interrupt and point out that the conversation is unacceptable and/or in bad taste. It is important to keep reminding yourself, when feelings of powerlessness threaten to stop you from taking positive action, that individuals *can* and *do* make a difference.

## 3.11 Some specific concerns of older lesbian and gay people

### 3.11.1 Couples and partnership rights

The absence of the right to marry places lesbians and gay men in a unique position when it comes to some of the most fundamental worries and problems faced in old age. While same-sex partnership *benefits* are relatively easy to implement at an organisational level, same-sex partnership *rights* are, at the time of writing, more or less non-existent in the UK, though current laws are being challenged and in some cases changed.

Because of that changing position, the key at this stage is to understand where the problems lie, to demonstrate that awareness to lesbian and gay clients, and to know where to find the latest relevant information, or where to refer the client.

The main legal issues related to partnership rights for older lesbians and gay men are set out in the following paragraphs.

### **3.11.2 Tenancy rights**

If a lesbian or gay couple lives in rented accommodation and one partner dies, the surviving partner currently has no right under UK law to succeed to the tenancy. If there is no will, a same-sex partner can make no claim under the rules of intestacy. The entirety of the deceased partner's estate would pass to his or her family. If they jointly own their home, the surviving partner, unlike a spouse, would still be liable to pay inheritance tax on the value of their deceased partner's half of the home.

### **3.11.3 Pensions and survivor rights**

Few public sector pension schemes make any provision for survivor's benefits for same-sex partners. Same-sex partners are often not deemed next of kin so they are not necessarily consulted if one partner is ill. However, the new 'Stakeholder Pension schemes' which came into being from April 2001, allow savers to nominate their partners regardless of marital status. Trustees of such schemes do not have the option of choosing whether or not to pay out to the nominated person.

### **3.11.4 Medical and end-of-life decisions**

Lesbians and gay men are not automatically entitled to make crucial medical and end-of-life decisions for their partner in the way a spouse can, unless there is specific planned instruction and power of attorney. In a worst case scenario, they may even have difficulty gaining access to their partner's bedside because the relationship is not recognised.

### **3.11.5 Wills and estate planning**

The current laws make it imperative for lesbian and gay couples to prepare for their final years and eventual deaths – by understanding the legal situation and by drawing up advance directives and a will.

Armed with even the basic outline information listed above, an organisation seeking to serve older lesbians and gay men can help raise their awareness of these crucial issues and, if equipped, can then go on to help them plan accordingly, or otherwise refer them to an appropriate agency.

Age Concern England and many Age Concern Organisations and Groups offer factsheets and/or guidance on will writing. Details are available from Age Concern England.

### **3.11.6 Housing**

People need a choice which includes the opportunity for them to live their lives openly and without fear of discrimination.

There are currently no examples of specialised housing for older lesbians or gay men in the UK or, indeed, regular accommodation that takes account of their sexual orientation. The matter is not necessarily driven by issues of sexuality (though the right of same-sex partners to share a room in such accommodation is important) but more a case of spending one's last years with people with whom *one can be oneself*, and without the very real fear of suffering discrimination.

Recent research carried out by the North British Housing Association amongst older lesbians and gay men in the North East (see *Sections 6 and 7*) found two thirds of respondents in favour of accommodation which is mixed lesbian and gay, or mixed lesbian/gay/heterosexual. One third would prefer single sex accommodation.

An American study found a majority of older lesbians to be strongly in favour of lesbian-only accommodation, while older gay men were more in favour of gay and lesbian mixed housing. A significant minority of both lesbians and gay men wanted mixed lesbian/gay/heterosexual housing.

Europe provides one example of lesbian and gay sheltered housing, established by the LA Ries Foundation in Amsterdam, a description of which can be found in *Section 4*.

### 3.11.7 Health care

There can be some fear amongst older lesbians and gay men of how doctors and other health care workers will treat them as patients.

The result is sometimes that older lesbians and gay men seek medical care less often, especially where, for example, the conditions are unique to being lesbian or gay, such as some sexually related ailments. Lesbian and gay partners may have difficulty in obtaining information on patients because they are not regarded as next of kin. Also, there may be anxieties about completing hospital documents which require a statement of relationship to the patient. Lesbian and gay information services, such as London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard can provide details of lesbian, gay and lesbian-and-gay friendly doctors, medical practices and other health-related services. (See *Section 7* for details of Gay Switchboard.)

### 3.11.8 'Queer bashing' and elder abuse

The increasing physical, and sometimes psychological, dependency that can accompany the ageing process can make any older person feel vulnerable. Older people are particularly alert to the possibility of physical attack, even though statistics place them below young people as actual victims. However, if we look at the figures for violence directed at lesbians and gay men – some 45% suffering physical abuse and 75% verbal abuse at some point in their lives – both a heightened sense of vulnerability and the possibility of attack in old age become much greater.

The organisation called **Gay London Policing (GALOP)**, a lesbian and gay anti-violence and police monitoring project, can offer specific guidance and help on dealing with and preventing abuse directed at lesbians and gay men.

**Action on Elder Abuse** runs a confidential helpline offering information and emotional support to anyone concerned about abuse of an older person occurring in '... any relationship where there is an expectation of trust'. (For information on both organisations see *Section 7*.)

### 3.11.9 Sexual health, HIV and AIDS

Although it is important not to equate sexual orientation only with sexual activity, it is true that many older people have active sex lives, and older lesbians and gay men are no different.

Nearly 11% of people with AIDS are aged 50 or over. Most are men who contracted HIV via sex with other men. (Older lesbians have a lower risk of contracting HIV/AIDS than older heterosexual women). Older people are as much in need of safer sex information as young people, yet the overwhelming majority of such materials are aimed exclusively at the young.

Older people can have very specific needs in relation to information and treatment, care and support, such as the fact that they tend to progress from infection with HIV to developing AIDS more rapidly than the young. It should also be noted that fear of age-discrimination in health care may act as a deterrent to seeking medical care.

The language used in safer sex materials can be alienating or even embarrassing to an older person or may make the issue seem irrelevant to them. Older people's organisations' understanding of their client group makes them well placed to help draw up and distribute appropriate materials. In the early 1990's a few Age Concerns produced safer sex leaflets aimed specifically at older gay men. Although these are now out of date (and currently out of print), examples are retained by Age Concern England (within the Research & Development Unit) and may be used as the basis for future leaflets should others wish to use them.

Many older people are likely to be more comfortable making an initial enquiry to an older people's organisation rather than to a specialist HIV/AIDS group, or they may not know how and where to contact the latter. Armed with the basic information, older people's organisations have a crucial role in making appropriate and informed referrals and in providing general support.

## **3.12 Ideas for services for older lesbians and gay men**

### **3.12.1 Social support**

#### ***Drop-in/advice centre***

A regular or occasional drop-in advice service, tackling issues of particular interest to older lesbian and gay people, could be established. This might grow out of an existing service to include lesbian and gay issues or might be offered as a separate service. You may be able to equip your own staff with the basic information needed or call in experts from lesbian and gay services.

***Local initiative***

Age Concern Stockport developed a leaflet to ensure that older people know its services are open to all. It attended the Greater Manchester Mardi Gras to help deliver this message. They arranged for a drop-in tent for older lesbians and gay men taking part in the Mardi Gras.

***Workshops***

As a development of information and advice, you might wish to consider issue-led workshops to develop a particular theme or problem. This gives older lesbians and gay men the chance to explore issues with each other and with workers and experts. Specialists from lesbian and gay services can be called in to help lead workshops.

***Helpline***

For older lesbians and gay men who do not wish to identify themselves publicly, a telephone service is likely to be their only option for confidential help and advice on lesbian and gay issues. Though many local and national lesbian and gay helplines exist, they are unlikely to be equipped with information on, for example, pension and survivor rights or wills and estate planning. Older people in this group may not know how and where to gain access to such services. For other older lesbians and gay men, physical incapacity may make it impossible to attend meetings or advice sessions.

A telephone helpline can take different forms, dependent on demand and the resources available. For example, most straightforwardly, as an information facility as part of existing generic services, or as a more developed service with appropriately experienced staff or volunteers who can respond to issues on the spot.

***Home visits***

Visits by trained volunteers can help maintain vital links to the outside world for housebound older people. Volunteers can run errands, chat, play cards or board games, share hobbies and establish friendships. Lesbian and gay volunteers can be recruited through the lesbian and gay press, through local lesbian and gay groups or perhaps through a local volunteer recruitment agency.

### ***Advocacy***

Representing older lesbian's and gay men's needs, wishes and concerns to other providers can be a crucial service both for 'out' lesbians and gay men who may not have the resources or authority of an established organisation, and for those who do not wish to be publicly identified as lesbian or gay. In the latter case, it is especially important to remember that, just because an older lesbian or gay man has revealed their sexuality to one worker, this does not necessarily mean they wish anyone else to know.

#### **Local Initiative**

Age Concern Enfield made a successful bid for a grant to enable it to expand its Advocacy Service. One additional full time and one part time worker have joined the team, which aims to work positively with lesbian and gay older people as part of a broader remit. This will specifically include the sexual needs of people in residential and nursing homes, where sexuality tends to be dismissed.

### ***Post-code groups***

An initiative being developed by SAGE in New York (see *Sections 4 and 7*), called 'Zip Code' meetings, involves the setting up of neighbourhood support groups in areas known to have a significant lesbian and/or gay population. There are monthly meetings for neighbours to socialise, network and get to know each other, and to create and strengthen a sense of community. Once the scheme is established, neighbourhood support teams are formed to help other local older lesbians and gay men who may need assistance due to illness, injury or discharge from hospital.

### **3.12.2 Social events**

#### ***Socials***

There has been an increase in lesbian and gay venues, not only in large urban areas but, today, also in smaller towns and more rural areas. For the most part, however, they are based on a club and pub culture of which older people may not feel a welcome part.

Older lesbians and gay men need social time with other lesbians and gay men (though not necessarily exclusively) as much as any age group, and some are more likely to take up such opportunities when provided by non-lesbian or -gay groups. Alternatives, organised at appropriate times, could include lunch and supper clubs, discussion groups, rambles and excursions.

### ***Reminiscence***

A look at our lesbian and gay timeline (see *Section 5*) gives an indication of the extraordinary experiences and massive changes through which today's older lesbians and gay men have lived. In common with most older people, older lesbians and gay men enjoy the opportunity of sharing their experiences in a safe environment with like-minded others. Reminiscence can also be of value in exposing lesbian or gay individuals to shared values, which can help counter the negative social attitudes they have been used to. It may even give participants the inspiration and support they need to come out to others.

### ***Pen friends***

Putting older lesbians and gay men in touch with each other, or linking them with younger lesbians and gay men, can provide contact with the outside world for those who are housebound or live in isolated and rural areas. Other older people's organisations working in this field, lesbian and gay groups and the lesbian and gay press can provide contacts.

### ***Create a single contact point***

Although it is crucial that this work is valued and shared by all stakeholders – staff, volunteers, trustees and other clients - it is equally important that there is a clear route to information and advice. It may be beyond the resources of most organisations to create a specific post for lesbian and gay development, but it will be within the means of many to give a member of staff or a volunteer responsibility for acting as first point of contact and to publicise these details.

Who should be given this role, whether they should be lesbian or gay and how they should be identified will be dependent on each organisation's size, culture and position on the road to addressing and serving lesbian and gay issues and needs.

## 4 Practical Examples

This section describes in more detail a small selection of groups, projects and organisations working in the field from Britain, mainland Europe and the USA. They show a variety of approaches from a range of countries with different statutory and voluntary sector provision and vary in size from a handful of self-helping participants to large teams of professional staff. All are happy to provide further information on request.

Information on these and many other groups can also be found in 'Older Lesbians and Gay Men – European Directory of Groups and Services' produced by Age Concern England in association with Eurolink Age, available from Age Concern England's Mail Order Department.

### **Age Concern England (ACE) Older Lesbian and Gay Working Group – UK**

The ACE working group is an ad hoc group of representatives of Age Concern Organisations and Groups which has been developing since spring 1997. The group meets on an occasional basis to look at specific issues or areas of work. Its aims are to:

- Develop ways of making the work and services of Age Concern Organisations and Groups appropriate and accessible to older lesbians and gay men;
- Support research into the needs of older lesbians and gay men and develop innovative ways of meeting those needs;
- To develop appropriate and effective partnerships with organisations working with and for lesbian and gay people;
- Develop networks and enable the exchange of information between voluntary and statutory organisations about older lesbians and gay men.

The project has organised meetings and workshops with staff in local organisations that work with older people.

Meetings to date have focused on:

- Exchanging information about services and good practice
- Circulating research information and resources
- Designing training courses for staff already working with older people about the needs of lesbian and gay clients and how these can be met appropriately.

In addition, the project has worked with people making television and radio programmes to enable older lesbians and gay men to make their voices and experiences heard by a wider audience.

The project is involved in joint work with other voluntary groups to investigate the setting up of a national organisation for older lesbians and gay men. It is difficult to assess what older gay men and lesbians who have no collective representative voice, would wish such an organisation to provide. Discovering the answer to that, at the same time as working with existing providers of services to older people, such as local authorities, is the main challenge for the future.

*For further information, contact: Liz Barker, Age Concern England, Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER.*

*Tel: 020 8765 7200. Fax: 020 8765 7211.*

*Email: [barkerl@ace.org.uk](mailto:barkerl@ace.org.uk)*

*Website: [www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk)*

## **Aging Initiative of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)**

The NGLTF is an American association that campaigns vigorously at national, state and local levels for the rights and services required for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT). The Aging Initiative seeks to focus specifically on the needs of older lesbian and gay people by implementing a strategy that includes:

- Engaging the National Institutes of Health, and especially its Institute on Aging and Institute on Mental Health, to support funding for research on medical issues affecting LGBT elders.
- Working with LGBT elder and civil rights organisations at State level.

- Ensure that the state long-term care accreditation agencies include the needs of LGBT elders in their accreditation process.
- Work to see that more colleges and universities, with schools of gerontology and social work, include LGBT research and education.

## **The Pimpernel Group – UK**

The Pimpernels are a long-established social support group of older gay men founded thirteen years ago by Age Concern Lambeth, which still provides moral and occasional financial support. Though the group began for those of traditional pensionable age, membership has expanded to include gay men who are early retired or who have faced enforced redundancy in their fifties or late forties. The Pimpernels meet in the early evening once a week to chat, discuss, listen to occasional visiting speakers, take a trip to the theatre or the coast, enjoy a meal together or party. In addition, they can make visits to gay men within the borough who may be experiencing isolation or loneliness. The group also welcomes members from other neighbouring boroughs as not all parts of London can offer a similar facility.

*For further information contact: Peter Robins, 11 Sheldon Street, Croydon CR0 1SS. Tel: 020 8680 0564.*

## **SAGE (Senior Action in a Gay Environment) – USA**

SAGE was established to make sure that high quality, professional help is available for gay and lesbian seniors. Since 1978, SAGE's staff and volunteers have provided services at little or no cost to thousands of older gay men and lesbians in their homes, in medical institutions, over the phone and in SAGE offices. Intergenerational and culturally diverse, SAGE works to ensure the future of the lesbian and gay community.

SAGE has pioneered the creation of a remarkable service for lesbians and gay men of all religious, racial, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, which is a model for the country and, indeed, the rest of the world.

Its very extensive range of services includes:

- professional social work
- counselling, volunteer visiting
- individual, family and group therapy
- women's support services
- social activities
- education programmes for older people
- training for health and social care professionals
- advocacy and campaigning

*For further information contact: SAGE, 305 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10001, USA.*

*Tel: 00 1 212 741 2247. Fax: 00 1 212 366 1947.*

*Email: [sageusa@aol.com](mailto:sageusa@aol.com)*

*Website: [www.sageusa.org](http://www.sageusa.org)*

## **Stonewall Citizen 21 Project**

In May 2001 Stonewall officially launched Citizenship 21 Project, a three year initiative to work for equal rights and responsibilities as citizens for lesbians and gay men. Citizenship 21 will challenge prejudice and homophobia, foster more inclusive attitudes, and build links between different communities at local and at national levels. As well as dispensing information, and publishing examples of good practice, Citizenship 21 will award small grants for collaborative community-based projects. These could include research, education, community action and development, anti-hate initiatives, campaigns and conferences.

*For information and details of how to access the grants, contact: Stonewall, 46-48 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0EB.*

*Tel: 020 7881 9440. Fax: 020 7881 9444.*

*Email: [info@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:info@stonewall.org.uk)*

*Website: [www.stonewall.org.uk/](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/)*

## **Stichting L A Ries (The L A Ries Foundation) Sheltered Housing Project – The Netherlands**

Europe's first sheltered housing scheme for older lesbians and gay men opened its doors in Amsterdam in 1998. The accommodation comprises seven two-room apartments in a new building in the centre of Amsterdam. The apartments are designed for independent living and for ease of use by mobility-impaired and disabled people. They are attached to a nearby nursing home which can provide extra care and facilities if and when necessary. Residents may be single or living as couples, so the project can accommodate up to fourteen people.

Integration in older people's accommodation generally is still a long way off and the instigators of the project felt it important to begin making provision for older lesbians and gay men. Their experience tells them that older lesbians and gay men can be harassed and ignored in regular nursing homes. Furthermore, the research behind the project indicated no plans in the care sector to make any special provision for older lesbians and gay men – one cause cited being a desire not to 'force' the issue upon heterosexual older people.

The project's pioneers believe that in ten years time it will no longer be necessary to create special facilities for older lesbians and gay men, since homosexuality is no longer taboo among younger generations, especially in Amsterdam. A new generation of gay men and lesbians is maturing, and they will be confident enough to speak for themselves.

*For further information contact: Stichting L A Ries, PO Box 3386, 1001 AD Amsterdam, The Netherlands.*

*Tel/Fax: 00 31 20 620 16 11. Email: [LA\\_Ries@yahoo.com](mailto:LA_Ries@yahoo.com)*

## **Waldschlößchen seminar house Courses for older gay men and lesbians - Germany**

The Waldschlößchen, founded by the gay movement in 1981, is the only European seminar house offering a wide spectrum of seminars and courses aimed primarily, though not exclusively, at gay men.

Those courses specifically for older gay men (40 plus) have been on offer since 1991. They grew out of other events, attended by older men, where it became clear that they have needs and experiences which can differ from those of younger men.

The weekend seminars are advertised in the Waldschlößchen programme leaflets, which are distributed throughout Germany. Participants show in their profile of experiences and problems that many gay men are afraid of getting old. This may take the form of a particular kind of gay mid-life crisis, actually influenced by the coming-out process, which often took place long ago. Often, participants need to take a new, tougher look at their homosexuality, in which the ageing process is a difficult and conflicting factor.

Main topics of the seminars include:

- Loss of physical and sexual activity and attractiveness
- Re-orientation of sexual preferences
- Loss of quality of life through physical decline and illness
- Fear of loneliness and getting older
- Loss of partners and friends through AIDS
- Initiatives for setting up self-help groups.

Participants become more aware of their status as greying gay men. They succeed in reflecting on and strengthening damaged self-esteem. Solutions for their own inner conflicts can be explored and tested. Often, participants decide to start supporting local self-help groups, or get involved with setting them up.

The Waldschlößchen recently began to offer similar courses for older lesbians.

*For further information contact: Wolfgang Vorhagen & Dieter Zeidler,  
Freies Tagungshaus Waldschlößchen, 37130 Reinhausen, Germany.  
Tel: 00 49 5592 382. Fax: 00 49 5592 17 92.*

## 5 A Lesbian and Gay Timeline

The impression can be that homosexuality began with the ‘sexual revolution’ of the sixties. To the extent that there can ever be a single lesbian and gay culture, it has existed for centuries. On the surface, it has been subtle and discreet, given that the vast majority of lesbians and gay men sought to pass as heterosexual in their everyday lives. Especially in private, it could be much more distinct and recognisable – the adherence to strict masculine/feminine roles and mannerisms, for example – because of its enforced complete separation from the rest of society.

This timeline gives a flavour of lesbian and gay culture in the late 19th and 20th centuries, and an understanding of the social and political climate in which today’s older lesbians and gay men have lived a large part of their lives. This is not a definitive outline history, but it is an important reminder of just how recent much of the positive change has actually been.

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>1869</b>          | The word ‘homosexual’ was coined by Hungarian physician Karoly Maria Benkert (who also used the pseudonym ‘Kertbeny’), though it took several decades for the term to become more widely used.   |
| <b>1885</b>          | Criminal Law Amendment Act made sexual acts between men illegal in the UK.   |
| <b>1895</b>          | Oscar Wilde sentenced to 2 years hard labour.  |
| <b>1918</b>          | ‘Homosexuality’ began to gain currency so, for the first time, being lesbian or gay began to be expressed descriptively rather than euphemistically or pejoratively. It marked the beginning of a change in attitude towards homosexuality as a ‘disease’ rather than a vice or weakness of character. |
| <i>Living memory</i> | The end of the First World War marks the beginning of ‘living memory’ for many of those lesbians and gay men who are today in their old age and is the starting point for our lesbian and gay timeline.  |

<b>1920s and 30s</b>	The era gave rise to famous (and infamous) lesbians and gay men such as Noël Coward, Tallulah Bankhead, Cecil Beaton, Gertrude Stein, Vita Sackville-West and her lover Violet Trefusis, Harold Nicolson, Radclyffe Hall and Quentin Crisp.
<i>Lesbianism and the law</i>	In 1921, an attempt to include sexual acts between women within the law, for the first time, was rejected on the grounds that even to mention that such activity occurred would corrupt.
<i>Cross-dressing</i>	Cross-dressing was both a largely expected outward expression and display of homosexuality and a kind of militant demonstration. Although most cross-dressing men could only do so in private or on stage, for women it was much easier to cross-dress in public.
<i>Discretion the key</i>	The key to lesbian and gay survival during this period was discretion, at least about one's private life. Society was willing to accept flamboyance, camp humour, even radical cross-dressing, so long as there was a facade of heterosexuality or, at the very least, sexual neutrality.
<i>Well of Loneliness</i>	In 1928, Radclyffe Hall published <i>The Well of Loneliness</i> , breaking the unwritten rule of discretion and silence. The book was banned, though copies still circulated, becoming for many lesbians an affirmation of their existence and a source of inspiration.
<i>Butch/femme</i>	Quentin Crisp, considered outrageous even by his own set, hit the Soho scene in the thirties. He dressed and acted in an effeminate manner and considered himself one of the 'bitches', his counterparts being the 'roughs' – gay men pretending to be more masculine, in some ways parodying heterosexuality.

<b>The Second World War</b>	A general relaxation of sexual mores paradoxically made the war an immensely liberating time for many lesbians and gay men.
<i>Sexual experimentation</i>	In the absence of wives and girlfriends, it was not that uncommon for otherwise heterosexual men to have a degree of sexual contact with other men.
<i>Courts martial</i>	The number of courts martial for ‘indecent between males’ between 1939 and 1945 was greater than for any other kind of offence.
<i>Bravery not cowardice</i>	There was great bravery on the part of many lesbians and gay men during the war, some of whom were decorated for their war efforts. The irony is that the accepted wisdom of the time was that homosexuals were cowards who would let you down in a fight.
<i>Homosexuality under the Nazis</i>	Under the Nazis, known homosexuals were forced to wear a pink triangle in the same way Jews wore a yellow Star of David. Some 50,000 gay men perished in Nazi concentration camps. Today, the pink triangle is universally recognised as a badge of gay pride – the visual equivalent of words such as ‘queer’, a reclaiming of what was once used to hurt and oppress.
 <b>1950s</b>	
<i>Sexual studies</i>	The American, Alfred Kinsey, published his two studies – <i>Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male</i> (1948) and <i>Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female</i> (1953). His most significant finding regarding homosexuality was that lesbians and gay men are in every walk of life and not just a tiny minority that could be easily identified. Attempts (ultimately unsuccessful) were made to ban the reports on the grounds of obscenity.
<i>Paranoia and the ‘Red’ scare</i>	The defection of two gay spies – Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean – to the Soviet Union in 1951 forged a link between communism, betrayal and homosexuality in the minds of both the establishment and the general public.

<i>Arrests on the up</i>	<p>The number of arrests for homosexual ‘offences’ shot up – from 956 in 1938 to 3,757 in 1952. The Home Secretary of the time, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, told the Commons: "Homosexuals . . . are exhibitionists and proselytisers and a danger to others . . . so long as I hold the office of Home Secretary, I shall give no countenance to the view that they should not be prevented from being such a danger." The police were left in no doubt as to their duty.</p>
<i>The Wolfenden Committee</i>	<p>The Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution was set up, chaired by John Wolfenden. In September 1957, its report recommended that homosexual behaviour in private between consenting male adults (21 and over) should be decriminalised. However, the public was still divided on the issue, Parliament was not prepared to take the lead and it was another decade before the recommendations were implemented.</p>
<i>The ‘cures’</i>	<p>Homosexuality was officially classified as a disease (and remained so until 1973 when it was finally removed from the register of psychiatric disorders) and was thus considered to have a cure. Two forms of aversion therapy were widely used. Lobotomies were also performed in some cases, and sometimes chemical castration in the form of hormone therapy was applied.</p>
<b>1960s</b>	<p>Between the Wolfenden Committee’s first recommendations in 1957 and the final change in the law in 1967, the issue was raised in Parliament several times without success.</p>
<i>‘Victim’</i>	<p>In the meantime, public and media attitudes slowly began to change. The British film, <i>Victim</i>, starring Dirk Bogarde and Sylvia Syms, marked a genuine breakthrough and was the first such film to deal with homosexuality as a contemporary subject.</p>

It was the first film in which a man said ‘I love you’ to another. It also provided a sympathetic case study of an inevitable consequence of the existing law – the vulnerability of gay men to blackmail.

*1967 –  
law reform*

In April 1966, the bill for homosexual law reform was finally approved in the Commons - 244 votes for, 100 against. It was given royal assent on 27 July 1967. The new law applied only to England and Wales, and its definition of ‘in private’ left many situations in which prosecutions could still be made.

*The Stonewall  
riots*

It was an incident in a New York bar in 1969 that sent a signal around the world that the time was ripe for lesbians and gay men to take their future into their own hands.

On the night of Judy Garland’s funeral, the New York police were on their customary round of gay bars, arresting homosexuals. At the Stonewall Inn, the gay men, many of them drag queens, decided they had had enough of being beaten up, humiliated and dragged before the courts, so for the first time they fought back. The gay liberation movement was born and, to this day, Gay Pride events across the world are timed to coincide with the anniversary of this event.

**1970s**

Although the Seventies started with an air of despondency in lesbian and gay circles because the reformed law still left many in the shadows fearing exposure, it was a decade during which many found the confidence to ‘come out of the closet’ and be open about their sexuality. Younger lesbian and gay people, who had not experienced the sexual taboos of pre 1966, were free to create an openly gay culture that had not existed previously, and which paralleled, but was distinct from, the heterosexual disco and night-club culture of their peers.

Gay newspapers and magazines sprang up, and mainstream periodicals were not ‘cool’ unless they had gay features, gay writers and gay ads. The Seventies and Eighties shaped the lesbian and gay culture we recognise today.

*The birth of ‘Gay’*

In the US, the term ‘gay’ had already become common currency as early as the 50s, serving much the same purpose as Polari terminology in this country. Its adoption in Britain in the early seventies marked a radical shift in emphasis - it was the first time lesbians and gay men had a word *they* chose to describe *themselves*.

*Gay Liberation Front*

The Gay Liberation Front (GLF) offered an alternative, and more militant, way of living and campaigning than the already established *Homosexual Law Reform Society* (later to become the *Campaign for Homosexual Equality* - CHE). GLF aimed to shift perspectives so that lesbians and gay men could be proud rather than apologetic, and it confronted hypocrisy and prejudice in imaginative and often entertainingly newsworthy ways.

*Gay Pride*

Three years after the Stonewall riots, Britain’s first Gay Pride parade took place, on 1 July 1972. Started off by GLF, Gay Pride events have taken place continuously ever since. First numbered in hundreds, those attending Gay Pride today can now be counted in the hundreds of thousands.

*Gay News*

Britain’s first national gay newspaper, *Gay News*, was also begun in a joint initiative by CHE and GLF. Within four years, it became the largest circulation gay news-paper in the world.

*Gay Switchboard*

GLF also helped establish the Gay Switchboard, the lesbian and gay help and information line. Now known as London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, it remains the world’s only 24 hour lesbian and gay helpline and information service. The Switchboard took its millionth call in 1982, handles some 50,000 calls a year today and is run by around 150 volunteers.

## 1980s

### *Law reform in Scotland*

Because of Scotland's separate legal system, the 1967 Act did not apply. Although there was agreement by the mid-seventies that the Scottish police would not make any prosecutions that would not be made by their English and Welsh counterparts, the legal situation remained unacceptable for gay men. The government of the time was in no mood to act, however, and, in the end, law reform was only realised by challenging its position in the European Court. Scottish law reform was finally enacted in 1980.

### *Law reform in N. Ireland*

Northern Ireland had to wait longer. The 1977 attempt to liberalise the law was defeated by the 'Save Ulster from Sodomy' campaign and it was the action of a gay activist in taking the government to the European Court in 1982 that finally forced it to act.

### *HIV and AIDS*

On 4 July 1982, a thirty-seven year old man called Terrence Higgins died. It was not until five months later that it became generally known that Britain's first case of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) had occurred.

By March of the following year, there were six reported cases of AIDS in Britain. The number of recorded deaths had risen to 241 by October 1985. Although the number of people *infected* was hard to gauge, the widely held assumption was at least 20,000.

### *Clause 28*

Though the response of those most affected was positive and supportive, the British Social Attitudes Survey of 1987 found 74% of respondents disapproving of homosexual relationships. There was an alarming increase in 'queer bashing' and anti-gay violence.

In response to public opinion, and in order to limit the scope of the efforts that were made by many councils to support lesbian and gay causes, the government initiated Clause 28 to the Local Government Bill which stated:

*‘A local authority shall not: a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality and b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.’*

For the first time, lesbians were legislated against in the UK. Clause 28 (now correctly known as Section 28) was repealed in Scotland by the Scottish Parliament in 2000, but remains on the statute books for the rest of the UK at the time of writing.

## 1990s

- Age of consent* In February 1994, the age of consent for gay men was lowered from 21 to 18 – the first piece of positive legislation for nearly 30 years. This still did not give gay men equality with heterosexuals.
- The armed forces* On 27 September 1999, the European Court of Human Rights announced that the UK policy banning gay and lesbian personnel from the Armed Forces was illegal, unjust and unfair. All investigations and discharges were suspended, effectively ending the ban, but the policy remains until a final announcement is made and the ban is lifted permanently.
- Rights still to be won* Legal recognition of same-sex partnerships, adoption rights and the UK-wide repeal of discriminatory laws such as Section 28 remain among the rights still to be won for lesbians and gay men at the dawn of the 21st century. Homophobic violence clearly remains a threat. However, lesbian and gay visibility has never been greater - in public life, personalities of stage, screen, pop and the arts generally, TV, film and stage fictional characters, and ordinary lesbians and gay men in London, Manchester, Edinburgh and elsewhere.

*Celebrating  
Celebrity*

Finally, it is worth reminding ourselves that many lesbians and gay men have made important contributions to society. Their contributions, some widely acknowledged, acclaimed and honoured, others quiet, unobtrusive and unnoticed, have helped mould, change, care for, reflect and entertain the society in which they live. Many, both famous and less well known, have paid a price for who they are sexually, instead of who they have been and what they have contributed. As they grow older, those entrusted to care for them, through acceptance and understanding, have an opportunity to enhance their lives.

An extensive reference site called 'Gay History and Literature' can be found on the Internet at: [www.infopt.demon.co.uk/gayhist.htm](http://www.infopt.demon.co.uk/gayhist.htm)



## 6 Books and Other Resources

### Books

#### **Colours of the rainbow: exploring issues of sexuality and difference**

*Sandra Mole, Health Promotion Service – Camden and Islington Community Health Services NHS Trust.*

This Resource Pack provides materials and gives guidance to teachers to develop ideas and activities which address homophobia and heterosexism.

#### **A crisis of silence: HIV, AIDS and older people**

*Age Concern London, 1995 (2nd edition). ISBN 1-870709-15-2.*

*Available from:*

*Age Concern London, 54 Knatchbull Road, London SE5 9QY.*

*Tel: 020 7737 3456. Fax: 020 7274 6014.*

*Email: [vduncan@aclondon.org.uk](mailto:vduncan@aclondon.org.uk)*

The impact of AIDS and HIV on older people, both as people living with the virus and as family, friends and carers of people with HIV/AIDS.

#### **The housing needs of older lesbians & gay men in the North East**

*Gay Employees Forum and Equality Team, North British Housing Association, 1999.*

*Available from:*

*North British Housing Association, 4 The Pavilions, Portway,*

*Preston PR2 2YB. Tel: 01772 897 200. Fax: 01772 202 436.*

Research focusing on the housing options and needs in particular of older lesbians and gay men in the North East of England.

#### **It's not unusual: a history of lesbian and gay Britain in the twentieth century**

*Alkarim Jivani, 1997. ISBN 1-85479-279-2. Michael O'Mara Books Ltd by arrangement with the BBC.*

This book charts the experiences of gay men and lesbians through testimonies from the people who lived through this period.

An historical perspective and personal accounts.

**Meeting the needs of older lesbians and gay men**

*Jackie Langley, 1997. University of Brighton, Health and Social Policy Research Centre.*

*Available from:*

*Age Concern Brighton, Hove and Portslade, 57 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 4SD. Tel: 01273 570732. Fax: 01273 624196.*

*Email: [acbrighton@cwcom.net](mailto:acbrighton@cwcom.net)*

Researches the future needs of middle-aged lesbians and gay men and includes valuable in-depth interviews.

**Older lesbians and gay men: European directory of groups and services**

*Age Concern England in association with Eurolink Age, 1999.*

*Available from:*

*Mail Order Department, Age Concern England, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER. Tel: 020 8765 7200. Fax: 020 8765 7211.*

Covers most European countries and includes case studies.

**Ourselves, growing older: women ageing with knowledge and power**

*Jean Shapiro (British Edition), Fontana Paperbacks.*

This book discusses women's health and ageing issues not only by drawing on the work of experts but also by including personal accounts.

**Someone to talk to: HIV, AIDS and people over 50**

*Deborah Youdell, Ian Warwick and Geoff Whitty, Health and Education Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London and Age Concern Lewisham. ISBN 1-870709-19-5.*

*Available from:*

*Age Concern London, 54 Knatchbull Road, London SE5 9QY. Tel: 020 7737 3456. Fax: 020 7274 6014.*

*Email: [vduncan@aclondon.org.uk](mailto:vduncan@aclondon.org.uk)*

Researches the needs of older people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS in six south London boroughs.

**The Alyson Almanac: a treasury of information for the gay and lesbian community**

*Alyson Publications, Inc., Boston, 1990. ISBN 1-55583-019-6.*

Gives American information on people, history, groups and publications, health etc.

## Internet Resources

### Equality Alliance News

Website: [www.diversity.org.uk/eanews/](http://www.diversity.org.uk/eanews/)

An impartial Internet news relaying service for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender news stories.

### Gay.com

Website: [www.uk.gay.com/](http://www.uk.gay.com/)

Connecting the UK lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.

### Outword Online

Website: [www.asaging.org/lgain.html](http://www.asaging.org/lgain.html)

Monthly newsletter providing brief announcements and occasional timely articles.

### Planet Out

Website: [www.planetout.com/pno/](http://www.planetout.com/pno/)

Comprehensive international lesbian and gay news, views and current affairs service on the Internet.

### Precious Thing

Website: [www.preciousthing.net/](http://www.preciousthing.net/)

Interactive Internet site focusing on the lives and experiences of older lesbians and gay men.

### Queer Resources Directory

Website: [www.qrd.org/](http://www.qrd.org/)

Internet directory containing 25,000+ files about everything 'queer'.

### Village CAB

Website: [www.thevillage.org.uk](http://www.thevillage.org.uk)

Internet-based Citizens Advice Bureau giving free advice by email to lesbians and gay men.

## Training

Subsidised training on specific aspects of working with older lesbians and gay men is available for Members of Age Concern from the Training and Development Team, Research and Development Unit of Age Concern England. Non-members should contact Age Concern Training, a separate division of Age Concern England.

Courses are targeted at trustees, senior managers, or those providing services. This approach is designed to enable an Age Concern Organisation or Group to consider issues at a broad, strategic policy level, or in the context of service delivery.

Training courses are tailor-made and are run experientially to encourage the participation of the group. They are designed collaboratively with the purchaser to ensure that specific needs and requests are catered for. The courses could include some of the following content, which is explored more fully in this publication:

- Understanding difference
- Defining terms
- The nature of oppression
- Exploring assumptions
- Historical perspective
- Myths and misinterpretations
- Facts and figures
- Service provision
- What is good practice?
- Getting started.

In line with Age Concern’s Mission ‘To promote the well-being of **all** older people and to help make later life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience’, the basic course aims to raise awareness of the issues faced by older lesbians and gay men, promote more positive attitudes, review current service provision and support practical and affirmative action which can be taken by organisations and individuals. In doing this, Age Concern will be working towards ensuring that services are more inclusive. Relevant training is also provided by some of the Useful Contacts listed in *section 7*.

### Training and Development Team

*Research & Development Unit, Age Concern England. Tel: 01604 234151.*

### Age Concern Training

*A division of Age Concern England. Tel: 01543 503660.*

## 7 Useful Contacts

### General – older people and/or lesbian & gay

#### Age Concern England (ACE) Older Lesbian and Gay Working Group

*Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER.*

*Tel: 020 8765 7200. Fax: 020 8765 7211.*

*Email: [barkerl@ace.org.uk](mailto:barkerl@ace.org.uk) Website: [www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk)*

#### ARP/O50 (Association of Retired and Persons Over 50)

*PR Dept., Greencoat House, Francis Street, London SW1P 1DZ.*

*Tel: 020 7828 0500. Fax: 020 7233 7132.*

*Email: [101632.1056@compuserve.com](mailto:101632.1056@compuserve.com) Website: [www.arp.org.uk](http://www.arp.org.uk)*

ARP/O50 is Britain's premier campaigning and social organisation for older people and has expressed its keenness to work with and for people of all races, creeds and sexual orientations.

#### Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE)

*PO Box 342, London WC1X 0DU. Tel: 07702 326 151.*

*Fax: 020 8743 6252. Email: [the\\_secretary@c-h-e.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:the_secretary@c-h-e.fsnet.co.uk)*

Long established campaigning group.

#### Kenric

*BM Kenric, London WC1N 3XX. Website: [www.kenric.co.uk](http://www.kenric.co.uk)*

Nationwide organisation for lesbians of *all* ages.

#### Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Voluntary Sector Consortium (LGBVSC)

*322 Upper Street, London N1 2XQ. Tel: 020 7354 8848.*

#### Liberty

*21 Tabard Street, London SE1 4LA. Tel: 020 7403 3888.*

The National Council for Civil Liberties.

### **London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard (LLGS)**

*PO Box 7324, London N1 9QS.*

*Tel: 020 7837 7324. Fax: 020 7837 7300.*

*Email: [admin@llgs.org.uk](mailto:admin@llgs.org.uk) Website: [www.llgs.org.uk/](http://www.llgs.org.uk/)*

National 24 hours a day, 365 days a year information, support and referral service for lesbians and gay men.

### **National Friend**

*The Custard Factory, 216 Gibb Street, Birmingham B9 4AA.*

*Tel: 0121 684 1261. Fax: 0121 684 1262.*

Social contact, information service and help-lines throughout the country for lesbians and gay men.

### **Older Lesbians' and Gay Men's Forum**

*Age Concern Brighton, Hove and Portslade, 53-57 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 4SD. Tel: 01273 625963.*

Set up by Age Concern Brighton to provide social contact, an information service and helpline, and to act as a campaigning group for older lesbians and gay men.

### **Outrage!**

*PO Box 17816, London SW14 8WT. Tel: 020 8240 0222.*

*Email: [outrage@cygnet.co.uk](mailto:outrage@cygnet.co.uk) Website: [www.outrage.cygnet.co.uk](http://www.outrage.cygnet.co.uk)*

Direct-action political group fighting homophobia.

### **Polari**

*6 Electric Avenue, London SW9 6JX. Tel/fax: 020 7346 6807.*

Working towards social contact and an information network for older lesbians and gay men.

### **SAGE (Senior Action in a Gay Environment)**

*305 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10001, USA.*

*Tel: 00 1 212 741 2247. Fax: 00 1 212 366 1947.*

*Email: [sageusa@aol.com](mailto:sageusa@aol.com) Website: [www.sageusa.org](http://www.sageusa.org)*

The world's first (established 1978) and largest social and care services provider for older lesbians and gay men.

## **Stonewall**

*Stonewall, 46-48 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0EB.*

*Tel: 020 7881 9440 Fax: 020 7881 9444.*

*Email: [info@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:info@stonewall.org.uk) Website: [www.stonewall.org.uk/](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/)*

The national civil rights group working for legal equality and social justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

## **Specialist Organisations – by issue**

### **ABUSE**

#### **Action on Elder Abuse**

*Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER.*

*Tel: 020 8808 8141 (Response helpline - Mon to Fri, 10am to 4.30pm).*

*Tel: 020 8764 7648 (admin). Fax: 020 8679 4074.*

*Email: [aea@ace.org.uk](mailto:aea@ace.org.uk) Website: [www.elderabuse.org](http://www.elderabuse.org)*

Information and emotional support to anyone concerned about abuse of an older person occurring in ‘... any relationship where there is an expectation of trust’.

### **GALOP**

*Unit 2G, Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP.*

*Tel: 020 7704 6767. Fax: 020 7704 6707.*

Lesbian, gay and bisexual anti-violence and police monitoring project.

### **AIDS/HIV**

#### **Terrence Higgins Trust (THT)**

*52 - 54 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8JU.*

*Tel: 020 7831 0330.*

*Email: [info@ttht.org.uk](mailto:info@ttht.org.uk) Website: [www.ttht.org.uk](http://www.ttht.org.uk)*

Europe’s leading HIV/AIDS charity, with centres in Bath, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Coventry, Leeds, London and Oxford.

## **BEREAVEMENT AND FUNERALS**

*People who seek help with bereavement and related issues are advised to contact the Terence Higgins Trust (details above)*

For those affected by the loss of a lesbian or gay man.

### **National Gay Funeral Advice Helpline**

*Tel: 0800 281345.*

## **BOOKSHOPS**

### **Gay's the Word Bookshop**

*66 Marchmont Street, London WC1N 1AB. Tel: 020 7278 7654.*

The biggest range of lesbian- and gay-related reading matter in the UK.

### **Silver Moon Bookshop**

*64 - 68 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0BB. Tel: 020 7836 7906.*

UK's foremost women's bookshop.

## **BUSINESSES**

### **Gay Business Association (GBA)**

*BCM-GBA, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 0700 225 5422.*

*Fax: 0700 232 9422. Email: [hello@gba.org.uk](mailto:hello@gba.org.uk) Website: [www.gba.org.uk](http://www.gba.org.uk)*

Members of the GBA agree to abide by a code of practice which ensures customers can count on a non-discriminatory manner, and which encourages best business practice.

### **GAYtoZ**

*GAYtoZ Directories Ltd, 41 Cooks Road, London SE17 3NG.*

*Website: [www.gaytoz.com](http://www.gaytoz.com)*

National directory of gay and lesbian businesses and services.

### **Gaze International**

*39 - 41 North Road, London N7 9PD. Tel: 020 7697 8333.*

*Fax: 020 7697 8334. Email: [info@gaze.co.uk](mailto:info@gaze.co.uk)*

Commercial lesbian and gay photographers and photo library.

## **COUNSELLING AND OTHER SUPPORT**

### **Alzheimer's Society Gay Carers' Network**

*Gordon House, 10 Greencoat Place, London SW19 1PH.*

*Tel: 01843 220932/0845 300 0336 (enquiries)*

*Email: [info@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:info@alzheimers.org.uk) - also - [gaycarers@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:gaycarers@alzheimers.org.uk)*

*Website: [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)*

Volunteer helpline for gay men caring for someone with dementia.

### **FFLAG (Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)**

*Tel: 01928 787249.*

### **PACE (Project for Advice, Counselling and Education)**

*Tel: 020 7697 0016.*

For lesbians and gay men who are experiencing difficulties or mental health problems.

### **PASTELS**

*Stringer House, 34 Lupton Street, Leeds LS10 2QW.*

*Tel: 0113 267 4627.*

For heterosexual spouses and partners.

### **Self Help Nottingham**

*Ormiston House, 32-36 Pelham Street, Nottingham NG1 2EG.*

*Tel: 0115 911 1661. Fax: 0115 911 1660.*

*Email: [selfhelp@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:selfhelp@globalnet.co.uk) Website: [www.selfhelp.org.uk](http://www.selfhelp.org.uk)*

For information about self help and mutual aid groups and how to link up with individuals in similar situations, throughout the UK.

## **DISABILITY**

### **Gemma**

*BM Box 5700, London WC1N 3XX.*

National self-help group for disabled and non-disabled lesbians and bisexual women.

## **Regard**

*Unit 2f, Leroy House, London N1 3QP. Tel: 020 7688 4111.*

*Fax: 020 7688 4114. Email: [regard@dircon.co.uk](mailto:regard@dircon.co.uk)*

*Website: [www.regard.dircon.co.uk/](http://www.regard.dircon.co.uk/)*

Campaigns for an equal social and sexual life for disabled lesbians and gay men to enable full participation in every aspect of life.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

### **Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights (LAGER)**

*Unit 1G, Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP.*

*Tel: 020 7704 2205. Fax: 020 7704 6067.*

*Email: [lager@dircon.co.uk](mailto:lager@dircon.co.uk) Website: [www.lager.dircon.co.uk](http://www.lager.dircon.co.uk)*

Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights.

## **HISTORY**

### **Hall-Carpenter Archives (HCA)**

*BM ARCHIVES, London WC1N 3XX.*

*Website: [www.blpes.lse.ac.uk/archives/hallcarpenter/default.html](http://www.blpes.lse.ac.uk/archives/hallcarpenter/default.html)*

The HCA, founded in 1982, is the largest source for the study of gay activism in Britain following the publication of the Wolfenden Report in 1957.

### **Spare Tyre Theatre Company**

*Hampstead Town Hall, 213 Haverstock Hill, London NW3 4QP.*

*Tel: 020 7419 7007. Email: [sttc@dircon.co.uk](mailto:sttc@dircon.co.uk)*

Currently working on production of ‘Constant Companions’, a celebration of a century of British lesbian and gay history. Older lesbians and gay men are interviewed about their lives and encouraged to participate.

## HOUSING

### **Anchor Trust**

*Fountain Court, Kidlington, Oxfordshire OX5 1NZ.  
Tel: 01865 854164. Fax: 01865 854007.*

The UK's largest national housing association and social care provider specialising in services to older people. Anchor has expressed its keenness to work with and for older lesbians and gay men.

### **North British Housing Association (NBHA)**

*4 The Pavilions, Portway, Preston PR2 2YB.  
Tel: 01772 897 200. Fax: 01772 202 436.*

The NBHA is the first housing association to address directly the needs of older lesbians and gay men and has produced an excellent research document 'The Housing Needs of Older Lesbians and Gay Men in the North East', available from the above address.

### **Polari**

*6 Electric Avenue, London SW9 6JX. Tel/Fax: 020 7346 6807.*

Promotes care for older lesbians and gay men through education and information to housing and social care providers.

### **Stichting L A Ries**

*PO Box 3386, 1001 AD Amsterdam, The Netherlands.  
Tel/Fax: 00 31 20 620 16 11. Email: [LA\\_Ries@yahoo.com](mailto:LA_Ries@yahoo.com)*

Europe's first sheltered housing scheme for older lesbians and gay men.

## LEGAL ADVICE

### **GLAD**

*Room N5, 10-14 Macklin Street, London WC2B 5NF.  
Tel: 020 7831 3535. Minicom: 020 7831 3555.*

Gay and lesbian legal advice.

### **Village CAB**

*Website: [www.thevillage.org.uk/](http://www.thevillage.org.uk/)*

Internet-based free legal advice service for lesbians and gay men.

## **NEWSPAPERS**

### **Pink Paper**

*Cedar House, 72 Holloway Road, London N7 8NZ.*

*Tel: 020 7296 6000. Fax: 020 7957 0046.*

*Email: [editorial@pinkpaper.co.uk](mailto:editorial@pinkpaper.co.uk) Website: [www.sonow.net](http://www.sonow.net)*

National weekly lesbian and gay news and current affairs magazine.

## **RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL**

### **Beit Klal Yisrael**

*PO Box 1828, London W10 5RT. Tel: 020 8960 5750.*

Lesbian and gay Jewish group.

### **The Evangelical Fellowship for Lesbian and Gay Christians**

*Sigrid Rutishauser-James (convenor), 13 Westbrook Drive, Macclesfield SK10 3AQ. Tel: 01625 426178*

This group firmly believes that there is no contradiction in being both gay and Christian.

### **Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group**

*BM JGLG, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 020 8922 5214.*

*Email: [info@jglg.org.uk](mailto:info@jglg.org.uk) Website: [www.jglg.org.uk/](http://www.jglg.org.uk/)*

### **Jewish Lesbian and Gay Helpline**

*BM Jewish Helpline, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 020 7706 3123.*

### **Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM)**

*Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, London E2 6HG.*

*Tel: 020 7739 1249. Counselling Helpline: 020 7739 8134.*

*Email: [lgcm@churchnet.ucsm.ac.uk](mailto:lgcm@churchnet.ucsm.ac.uk)*

### **Metropolitan Community Churches**

*Website: [www.ufmcc.com](http://www.ufmcc.com)*

An inclusive Christian Church for the lesbian and gay community, with churches throughout the country and the world. The website provides contact details of your nearest church.

**Quaker Lesbian and Gay Fellowship**

*Ruth/BM, 20 Newland Street, Coleford, Gloucestershire GL16 8AN.*

**Quest**

*The Secretary, Quest, BM Box 2585, London WC1N 3XX.*

*Tel: Quest Linkline on 020 77920234.*

Quest is a group whose purpose is to sustain and increase Christian belief among homosexual men and women.



## 8 Funders

Other than those working in the HIV and AIDS field, there are relatively few well-known lesbian and gay voluntary organisations. As a result, there is a correspondingly low level of awareness of lesbian and gay needs amongst funders of all kinds. Potential funders, therefore, need help in understanding the specific issues for lesbians and gay men. Being a minority group is not enough to qualify for funding in a highly competitive market and it is important to make a strong case that the needs you are seeking to meet are charitable.

The **Association of Charitable Foundations** has produced an excellent guide for trusts and foundations on the charitable needs of lesbian and gay men, *Reaching Out*, details of which are given below. Though the guide is aimed primarily at those *giving* funding, it is also full of useful advice for those *applying* for funding, and contains individual case studies of successfully funded projects.

Some of the study's main recommendations are summarised here, but we strongly advise any organisation considering applying to trusts and foundations to obtain a copy:

- Being lesbian or gay is not of itself evidence of charitable need. Needs arise because of intolerant attitudes and fear of discrimination, not just because of different sexuality.
- There is little awareness of the *issues* affecting lesbians and gay men amongst many trusts and foundations.
- Quantifying the level of need of older lesbians and gay men is difficult because no comprehensive evidence of numbers exists. However, ignorance, prejudice and intolerance are major causes for concern even if they happen rarely, so the limited research that currently exists already makes a strong case for action.
- Older lesbians and gay men often demonstrate the most need of support because they rely on others to provide shelter, support and care.
- Lesbians and gay men facing additional discrimination – those in rural areas, from ethnic minority communities and with disabilities – tend also to show greater need of support.

- A clearly stated commitment to equality of opportunity is as important as funding history when seeking out explicitly lesbian- and gay-friendly trusts and foundations.
- The absence of a lesbian/gay funding history, or explicit statement of non-discrimination by trusts and foundations, should not rule out making an approach.

The following are some of the charitable trusts and foundations that have recently supported lesbians and/or gay projects:

Albany Trust	Henry Smith's Charity
Allen Lane Foundation	Hildon Charitable Fund
Bridge House Estates Trust Fund	Housing Associations Charitable Trust
Camelot Foundation	John Moores Foundation
Campden Charities	Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
City Parochial Foundation	King's Fund
Comic Relief	Lyndhurst Settlement
Cripplegate Foundation	Pilgrim Trust
Crisis	Tudor Trust
Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust	Tyne and Wear Foundation
Gatsby Trust	Wates Foundation
Glaxo-Wellcome Drugs Education Grants Scheme	

**Reaching Out – a guide for trusts and foundations on the charitable needs of lesbians and gay men**

*Gill Goodby and Gerard Lemos, 1999. Association of Charitable Foundations. ISBN 1-987916-16-7.*

*Available from:*

*Association of Charitable Foundations, 2 Plough Yard, Shoreditch High Street, London EC2A 3LP.*

*Tel: 020 7422 8600.*

Additionally, the Association's website contains invaluable information, guidance and links for individuals and organisations seeking funding from UK trusts: [www.acf.org.uk](http://www.acf.org.uk)

## 9 Listed Age Concern Providers

The following is a list of Age Concern Organisations and Groups that are undertaking, or are planning or interested in undertaking, work with and for older lesbians and gay men, based on responses to the Age Concern England Omnibus Survey 2000. The list will be regularly updated, so please send in details of your services or plans to Nick Pizey, Research & Development Unit, Age Concern England, Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER, if you wish to be included in future lists.

*The following work with other local agencies to provide and/or support services for older lesbians and gay men:*

**AC Bolton**  
01204 382411

**AC Newcastle-upon-Tyne**  
0191 232 6488

**AC Brighton, Hove and  
Portslade**  
01273 570732

**AC Northampton and  
County**  
01604 611200

**AC Cheshire**  
01606 781406

**AC Portsmouth**  
023 9286 2121

**AC Devon**  
01392 250085

**AC Redditch**  
01527 584653

**AC East Sussex**  
01273 476704

**AC Salford (Metropolitan)**  
0161 788 7300

**AC Gillingham**  
01634 572616

**AC Tamworth**  
01827 709649

**AC Gloucestershire**  
01452 422660

**AC West Sussex**  
01243 775588

*The following are exploring ways in which to make their own services appropriate and accessible to older lesbians and gay men:*

**AC Blackpool and District**  
01253 622812

**AC Norwich**  
01603 496333

**AC Enfield**  
020 8373 6319

**AC Nottingham and Nottinghamshire**  
0115 947 5892

**AC Exeter**  
01392 202092

**AC Portsmouth**  
023 9286 2121

**AC Gloucestershire**  
01452 422660

**AC Sandwell**  
0121 555 8878

**AC Greenwich**  
020 8854 6079

**AC Sevenoaks and District**  
01732 454108

**AC Hereford**  
01432 350483

**AC Stockport**  
0161 480 5490

**AC Herefordshire and Worcestershire**  
01905 726652

**AC Swindon**  
01793 692166

**AC Newcastle-upon-Tyne**  
0191 232 6488

**AC Warwickshire**  
01926 883118

**AC North Tyneside**  
0191 280 8484

**AC Waltham Forest**  
020 8509 9909

As with any other list of organisations, potential users should be aware that they may, despite an organisational commitment, be met with an individual member of staff or volunteer who is not sympathetic. In such a situation, we would hope that the caller or user would be able to feed this back to the Chief Officer to have the issue dealt with within the organisation, either informally, or through a formal complaints procedure.

## 10 Glossary of Terms

From time to time, the language and terms used in this document may be unfamiliar to the reader. This glossary provides brief definitions of some of them, as used in the context of this Pack.

### **Butch**

Overly masculine, applied to both lesbians and gay men.

### **Camp**

Variously effeminate, affected or theatrical behaviour or language.

### **Closet**

‘In the closet’ or ‘closeted’ – hiding one’s homosexuality.

‘Out of the closet’, ‘coming out’ or simply ‘out’ – revealing or being open about one’s homosexuality.

### **Drag**

Dressing up in the clothes of the opposite sex; can be for ‘camp’ (see above) or ‘radical’ (e.g. challenging gender roles) effect.

### **Femme**

Overly feminine, applied to both lesbians and gay men.

### **Heterosexism**

A set of assumptions and practices which serve to promote heterosexuality. It assumes that the only valid ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ relationships are heterosexual ones.

### **Homophobia**

An irrational aversion to or fear of gay men or lesbians and hostile attitudes towards them.

### **Homosexual**

Attraction to members of the same sex – from the Greek *homos* meaning ‘same’.

**Out**

Being open about one's homosexuality.

**Outing**

Disclosing another person's homosexuality.

**Passing**

Outwardly and publicly appearing as heterosexual when not.

**Pink**

The colour most associated with homosexuality (and the colour of the triangle badge forced on known gay men in Nazi Germany) now often used in titles, such as the Pink Paper current affairs magazine, or as an alternative adjective to gay, such as 'pink economy' or 'pink pound'.

**Polari**

A slang language, often humorous and of mixed origin, used as a secret code by gay men.

**Sexual behaviour**

What we do sexually.

**Sexual identity**

What a person chooses to call themselves. Such labels include 'lesbian', 'gay', 'bisexual', 'straight' and 'asexual'.

**Sexual orientation**

The direction of our sexual and emotional attraction to other people. Categories include **homosexuals** (people attracted to those of the same gender), **heterosexuals** (attracted to members of the opposite gender), and **bisexuals** (attracted to both men and women to varying degrees).

**Sexuality**

A combination of a person's sexual attitudes, emotions, experiences and desires.