

## **Lambeth LGBT Forum Meeting Tuesday 22 February**

### **Present**

Min Rodriguez  
Billie Ferrie  
Rose Donovan  
Yvonne Stewart-Williams  
Danny Fitzgerald  
Tim Chambers  
Rogerio Rangel-Gomes

Chris de Souza (Lambeth Council  
Community Safety Manager)  
Amy Donovan (Lambeth LGBT Anti-  
Hate Crime Coordinator)

### **Apologies**

Graham Alldus  
Paula Williams  
Fraser Serle

### **Discussion**

*Safer Housing for LGBT people ~ Guest speaker Vivien McKnight (Housing Quality Management and Equalities Officer)*

This meeting was chaired by Amy Donovan

A large number of homophobic and transphobic motivated hate crime is committed near to peoples homes, in their communities, by those that they know or recognise. Many people are forced to leave their homes due to homophobic/transphobic threats and violence making housing a central issue for many people who experience such hate crime.

The Lambeth LGBT Forum would like to invite you to a discussion evening specifically looking at the issues LGBT people face with council provided housing. Representatives from the London Borough of Lambeth's Housing department will be present to discuss the issues, possible solutions and to answer any questions. This is an excellent opportunity to have your concerns and suggestions for service improvement heard by the council's housing department.

Some of the key issues highlighted include:

- Within Housing offices there are officers to deal with racial incidents or if female, a female officer who to deal with. There is no support for LGBT people. An issue of LGBT information not being available within housing offices.
- Vivian cannot understand why housing offices are doing this and will follow it up with Catherine, Head of Housing's communications.

- LGBT people need a point of contact within housing offices to deal with all equalities issues and not just race and faith.
- All staff should be trained to deal with LGBT tenants, there shouldn't just be one centrally.
- Do Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour Officers receive adequate managing diversity training? (Vivien to follow up what the training comprises of).
- It can become problematic if NASBO officer is homophobic and this person is known as the only contact point.
- Tenancy conditions are being breached is a serious issue and there are concerns around the way in which housing officers deal with this.
- Perhaps there is a need to develop specialist officers around the borough if an LGBT person is unhappy with the service/outcomes they have received from their housing office.
- The ASBO unit needs to be able to deal with lease and free holders comprehensively as well.
- Too often the victim is the one relocated with no disciplinary consequences for the harasser, what about moving problematic tenants or disciplining them? If the tenant is harassing they are in breach of their agreement.
- Tenants are also responsible for their visitors behaviours under their tenancy agreement, so if visitors are perpetrators there should be policies and processes in place to ensure that the offender loses their right to come onto the Council estate.
- If a victim obtains an emergency housing transfer what policies are in place to discipline the offender and to ensure that they are not left to reoffend once the victim has been moved on?
- Housing staff identified to Amy that they felt there was a real break down between what is said at the policy level and what is happening within the Housing offices in regards to equalities. Communication Council policy from a executive level was seen to break down by the time it is put into practice.
- Unfortunately, Amy has had to raise issues at a senior level to ensure that something is done about the several cases she has been involved in.
- Housing officers also commented that they felt there was little support from middle management to address these issues.
- In relation to the monitoring of tenants it is done but questions about LGBT are not included.
- The idea of mystery shopping was raised as a way to establish whether the Council is able to deal with LGB equality issues competently.
- Contracting and procurement was raised as an issue , as these people are in effect council employees and what safeguards are in place to ensure that tenants won't be subjected to homophobia from these people? Contractors should be approved based on criteria which include equalities.

- The issue was raised the housing officers are often inadequately prepared to address conflict between tenants. Perhaps conflict resolution needs to be given more focus within training?
- Closer liaison between the housing officers and the Police was mentioned as being need.
- There should be a clear equalities and diversity policy which everyone should be aware of and all housing staff should be trained and staff contacts given to tenants and clearly identified.

## **Meeting**

### **LGBT History Month update**

1. Welcome and apologies
  2. Minutes from the last meeting (none)
  3. LGBT History Month
  4. Planning the year ahead for the Forum
    - Potential topics
    - Funding application
- LGBT Matters research supported by ACE (Chris Lee) and so steer is coming from Corporate Management Team.
  - Discussion was had around what will happen to the research once there is a change of administration, Amy and Chris highlighted that there is a strategy for handing over the research to the new administration.
  - It was raised that holding a second Speak Out could be a good way to increase interest in the Forum again and also to feedback to LGBT people.
  - We need to think about advertising the meetings regularly in the gay press. Funding is being sought for the Forum from several different avenues.
  - Chris Lee could be approached with a business case for the funding of the forum to ensure Council support of the forum.
  - Age Concern now has an older peoples LGBT group whom Graham and Amy are going to meet with. Representatives will also be attending the next LGBT Forum meeting.

### **Actions**

Amy to get copies of the Equalities policy for the next meeting  
 Vivian to be invited back to the June meeting to report back

## **Next meeting**

*21 March, 7-8:30pm Council Chamber*

This evening will provide an opportunity to meet with representatives from the London Borough of Lambeth Equality and Diversity Commission. Over a period of eight months, the commission has been undertaking a series of meetings with staff, service users, members of Lambeth voluntary organisations and members of the public. Their aim is to review the effectiveness of Lambeth's current equality and diversity policies and procedures and to make suggestions for ways that the council can improve the way that it provides for its diverse community and workforce. Have your say about the issues affecting LGBT residents in Lambeth!