

Report of the Town Clerk

Research related to hard to reach communities

Background

1. Committee is reminded that council previously adopted, the following recommendations:
 - a. That as regards engagement with hard to reach communities, council should work via residents groups and user groups where they exist,
 - b. That, where sufficient data is not already held by partner organizations such as Northumberland County Council, it consider using targeted research intended to identify whether we need to do more to fulfill our duties under the Equalities Act, and
 - c. That Council delegate to the Town Clerk authority to commission such research provided it does not cost more than £1000, to be allocated from existing underspends or general reserves.
2. This committee has subsequently approved a piece of work relating to the LGBTQ community in Berwick.
3. The issue is not simple; by way of example the Office for National Statistics paper on the design of questions on Sexual Identity for the Integrated Household Survey runs to 14 pages, and the resulting question, and the questioning process is itself controversial.
4. We have, as previously advised to committee, engaged the services of a consultant with specialist knowledge both of research and the LGBTQ community to undertake an online survey using our systems to enable us to better understand the following themes:
 - a. Demand for services for the LGBTQ community in Berwick,
 - b. Organizations that the LGBTQ community currently uses for services in Berwick,
 - c. Levels of satisfaction with existing services,
 - d. Demographics of the LGBTQ community in Berwick, and
 - e. Levels of satisfaction with our consultative processes / awareness of the services of the Town Council.

Issues

1. The first issue that has been addressed is, simply, what terminology to use. In choosing which terms to use to refer to marginalised groups a number of considerations need to be given weight:
 - a. The desires of those whom the terms apply to. A good example here would be the move from using the term handicapped and replacing it with disabled,
 - b. General understanding of the wider community,
 - c. Accuracy, often commonly used terms inaccurately label a group, for example, bisexual people object to being included under the label gay, and
 - d. Adherence to any legal responsibilities, particularly under the Equalities Act (2010).

Recommendations

1. That the advice of the consultant (below) concerning terminology be adopted, and that council standardize on the use of LGBTQ, and
2. That committee note the proposed survey questions, attached below.

Options

Given these considerations there are 3 terms worth considering for the LGBTQ community.

Option One

GRSD (Gender, sexual, and relationship diversity)

This is an increasingly common term among academics, and researchers. It has the advantage of accuracy, and inclusivity. It has been adopted by a small number of organisations including Bi Pride (UK) and Pink Therapy.

However it is still a relatively new term, and has low public recognition. It is more difficult for those with learning difficulties to understand, and may indeed not be known by members of the communities it intends to describe.

Option Two

LGBTQAAI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, asexual, agender, aromantic, intersex)

This has the advantage of greater inclusivity and accuracy. It uses terms which many are familiar with, and also includes groups such as aromantics and asexual people who are often overlooked. It can also be added to, which many see as an advantage.

However, there can be an element of shame and embarrassment which acts as a barrier, as people feel they should know all of the elements of the acronym but do not. This barrier applies to members of the community, as well as the wider public. It is also, as with GRSD, less understandable for those with learning difficulties.

Option Three

LGBTQ/ LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer)

This has the advantage of simplicity, whilst expanding on the more familiar LGBT. The inclusion of questioning and queer widens the acronym to those who have often felt ignored by both the wider community, and in decisions made by service providers. Queer is a term which is growing in use, perhaps reflecting research which shows a majority of young people do not feel themselves to be exclusively heterosexual. (*YouGov 2015).

It can be criticised because it does not explicitly include every identity, sometimes this is tackled by adding +. There is little research showing which is preferred, or more widely recognised, however both are common, and the general public is becoming used to seeing either variation.

Recommendation

It is my recommendation that LGBTQ be used. It has the advantages of greater inclusion, wide recognition factors, and ease of usage, without presenting the barriers of LGBTQAAI or GRSD previously described. If there are concerns about the lack of asexual, agender, and aromantic inclusion, then the + may be added. When dealing with marginalised and stigmatised groups it is important to use accessible and easy to understand language. LGBTQ or LGBTQ+ meets these criteria, without erasing those you are attempting to reach out too.

*Yougov research

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2015/08/16/half-young-not-heterosexual/>

No.	Question	Comments	Logic	Type
1.a	What is your preferred Title?	We need this information to help us refine any forms used by the council.	All to answer	dropdown
1.b	What are you preferred pronouns?	As 1.a	All to answer	dropdown
2.	Are you i. From Berwick, even if not living here now? ii. A visitor to Berwick? iii. A member of the family of an LGBTQI person? iv. An LGBTQI ally?	Need to be able to segment data while enabling as many responses as possible	All to answer	dropdown
3.	Standard demographic age groups	As above	All to answer	dropdown
4.	First half of postcode	To enable data segmentation, but also to test how many LGBTQI people from Berwick have relocated elsewhere	All to answer	Write in
5.	The lived experience questions i. Safety - is Berwick a safe place to be out? ii. Safety - is Berwick a safe place to socialize as an LGBTQI person? iii. Is Berwick the kind of place where you could publicly show affection to a same sex partner? iv. Have you experienced hate crime or direct discrimination in Berwick, or while you lived in Berwick - include definition of hate crime?	To test perceptions of Berwick and to record experiences via correlation with q.2	All to answer	6 point Likert scale
6	Support organisations and services i. Which ones - write in?	To enable council to respond more effectively to	All to answer except 2.b	Text boxes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Where were they based or how did you access them? iii. Missing links? Were you able to access all the support services you need - if not why not? 	consultations about VCS resources and to help it understand how it can intervene.		
7	<p>Health and wellbeing</p> <p>Optional health questions - smoke, drink, mental health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. General wellbeing? ii. General physical health? iii. General mental health? iv. Can you access the health services you need? v. Can you access the leisure and sports services you need? 	To enable council to better respond to consultations on the provision of services by partners	2.a only	Radio buttons and Likert scales (i, ii and iii) Y/N and text boxes (iv and v)
8	Do you think being LGBTQI affects your ability to access services?	To assess level of discrimination and enable council to consider reasonable adjustments	2.a only	Write in box
9	Would you like to receive a copy of our report and any anonymized data?		optional	Email address capture

Notes.

Q3. The consultant will work with Berwick Youth Project to test both the survey distribution within the 13-19 age group and to check whether further qualitative work is required.

Q4. An explanation will be offered before completing the survey, and on this question page, explaining that no single responses will be identifiable, and that where there is a small number of responses from any given area, they will be aggregated with the nearest areas until there are sufficient responses to ensure anonymity.

GD to send KP contact details for John Bell - how do we collect youth data and so on - would JB set up a focus group in support of the survey?