Manchester LGBT Question Time 2014

FREE PUBLIC EVENT

Have Your Say in the City

Taking place as part of LGBT History Month, this is your opportunity to ask questions of elected members, service providers, members of the LGBT community, and LGB&T groups and organisations including: Manchester City Council, The Lesbian & Gay Foundation, NHS Manchester, Police & Crime Commissioner, LGBT Youth North West.

Sunday 23rd February, 12-2pm
Banqueting Room, Manchester Town Hall

Summary Report
INTRODUCTION

Manchester City Council hosted its second annual LGBT Question Time Event in partnership with organisations and service providers from across Manchester on Sunday 23 February 2014 at Manchester Town Hall.

The event, taking place as part of LGBT History Month, provided the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans community with an opportunity to ask questions of elected members, service providers and LGB&T groups and organisations including; Councillor Bev Craig, Lead Member for Lesbian and Bisexual Issues, Manchester City Council; Paul Martin, Chief Executive, The Lesbian & Gay Foundation; Craig Harris, Executive Nurse and Director, NHS Manchester; Tony Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner; Ryan, TREC; and Jake Adshead, Manchester Youth Council / LGBT Youth North West. The event was chaired independently by Ali Khan from Big Shop Comedy.

We were delighted with the fantastic response and the incredible turn out to the event. During the course of the session the panel discussed a number of key issues including Manchester Pride; Crime and Safety; Health; LGBT Services: and Education. There was a lively debate throughout with questions put to the panel from audience members in attendance and also questions that had been submitted in advance.
The information from the event will be used to inform key partners about the needs and issues of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people and communities across Manchester and is a key part of the dialogue between the City Council and the wider community to begin working to address the current issues and needs of Manchester’s lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans community.

Questions received ahead of the event highlighted four broad topics for discussion, including Manchester Pride; Crime and Safety; Health; and LGB&T Services. A summary of the discussion along with activities currently being delivered by the Council and its partners is set out below.

**TOPIC 1: MANCHESTER PRIDE**

“Looking at the August Bank Holiday event, isn’t it time for something new?”

The first topic up for discussion was Manchester Pride. A range of questions and views were heard from the floor including the amount of the amount of the festival proceeds that goes to LGBT charities; the current ticketed model based around the gay village; the inclusivity (or lack thereof) of young people in the cultural activities of Pride in the sense that it is viewed as largely an event centred on drugs and alcohol; the event has lost its identity and is less an LGBT event and more a pop concert event; there was a call for more involvement from the police; and a call for the panel and the organisations they represent to coordinate a meeting with Manchester Pride and the community.

Whilst it was recognised by the panel that there are some people within the LGBT community who are not happy with the way the festival is structured and run, the City Council and its partners have little control over what Pride choose to do. A range of options were discussed in the room about possible changes to the event and there was a clear recognition that all parties need to work more openly and more collaboratively together. Manchester City Council
is happy to engage in dialogue and happy to support activities brought before them but the Council cannot create these activities when the event belongs to Manchester Pride.

Manchester Pride have recently organised a series of listening group sessions to give members of the community an opportunity to engage with Pride and to share their views and offer up new ideas.

**TOPIC 2: CRIME & SAFETY**

“For policing to be effective, the police have to be trusted.”

The next topic for discussion focussed on the issues of crime and safety, specifically in the gay village. Responses from the floor included questions about how various agencies can work with the community to improve safety in the village; how GMP can work more closely with the LGBT community in terms of consultation and strategic advice; and homophobic and transphobic hate crime.

The village is a crime spot in Manchester and that’s why there is more visible policing there. GMP supports the Village Angels because that’s an example of the community policing itself, and that’s really important. For policing to be effective, the police have to be trusted and there is still some way to go overcome the fear of some people, including LGBT young people to approach them. The biggest gap in Manchester is between the police and young people but with training, communication and engagement positive changes are still being made. More information about the Village Angels can be found at www.lgf.com.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has committed to ensuring that transphobia is reflected in future hate crime campaigns as there is a real issue in getting across the problem of transphobia as part of the hate crime agenda. Communication channels between the police and the trans community exist but
can be emphasised and strengthened. TREC meetings are held every third Friday of the month from 7pm and they have held a trans crime surgery since 2005.

It is recognised that the trans community have a precarious relationship with the police but the trans community are building and there are opportunities to strengthen the collective voice.

“I can say pretty clearly that this [omission of transphobia in Hate Crime publicity] won’t happen again!”

Manchester City Council is making efforts to try and build its engagement with trans groups. Papers on trans issues have been discussed at Communities Scrutiny Committees and between now and the next Sparkle event the Council is planning to do even more work with trans groups on engagement and listening.

Other points raised included the persistent personal security risks around the canal area late at night where there have been a number of fatal incidents in recent years. A question was asked about the potential introduction of dark rooms/cruising areas in bars. It was recognised that this is a relatively new conversation for the police to be having but all the same it’s a conversation that the Police and Crime Commissioner is quite happy to have. It was highlighted that we are now a long way from the days when police went out of their way to target the gay community for having sex in public. A pragmatic approach will be taken to this situation.
TOPIC 3: HEALTH

“The real big deal is about mental health and how people cope with being brought up in a repressed society and then being part of an accepting society in Manchester.”

A question was asked from the floor that made reference to both health and crime and safety. The question focussed on LGBT people with autism, tourettes and mental health issues and the limited understanding that the police have about these conditions which can lead to poor handling of public situations. Wider points and questions were also raised from both the floor and the panel around mental health issues for LGBT people.

The panel outlined how NHS Manchester and the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner have met on a strategic level with a number of partners to talk about the NHS role in supporting the police. A workshop was held in February with the Mental Health Learning Disabilities Service, the police and other local authorities to look at how a more coordinated response for police officers on the street can be provided. This included how to handle a range of situations where mental health and learning disability issues are involved. The response is not about creating something specialised, but making sure that all police officers have the knowledge to know what to do. In the next 6-9 months we should see some real implementation of this, however with 7000 officers on the force this cannot happen overnight.

The NHS have recently launched a mental health improvement programme. It is acknowledged that health system has been broken. Poor access, fragmentation and the long journey that often needs to be undertaken to access a service has to change. Over the next 2 years a radical change will be taking place in
Manchester. Better access and faster responses will be key improvements that will be implemented. From April NHS Manchester will be looking at setting up a reference group and a strong LGBT focus will be required. More details will be made available public over the coming weeks and months.

Other points raised from the floor in relation to health focussed on the issues of ease of access to GUM clinics and how this service is promoted to young people; and the issues of safe sex education, especially for young people.

“The safe sex message is getting lost on the younger generation.”

Craig Harris re-iterated that Manchester’s universal services need to be more accessible to younger LGBT people, and not just segregated into a myriad of specialised services. There are clinical services that are community based and these have been shown to be effective in encouraging people to use them when they may not make the longer journey to the hospital clinic. Suggestions and ideas such as using third sector and community facilities are always welcomed by NHS Manchester.

Whilst improvements are being made there are a number of other health initiatives currently in play including the commissioning of HIV prevention programmes targeted at gay and bisexual men (LGF is the provider); sexual health promotion programmes aimed at lesbians, gay men and bisexuals (LGF is the main provider); and support for men and women living with HIV (George House Trust is the main provider). These services are commissioned by Public Health Manchester.

“If I wanted to promote something in my doctor’s surgery I’ve been told I cannot because they don’t want LGBT material on the walls.”
A comment was also raised by the floor that highlighted how some GP surgeries have refused to display LGBT health information on their notice boards. Both NHS Manchester and the LGF will be looking into this matter but it leads on to the work programme of the Building Health Partnerships led by the LGF and funded through the NHS Commissioning Board.

The Building Health Partnership initiative focuses on highlighting the health inequalities faced by LGBT people, exploring the issues and barriers they encounter to develop strong and informed Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) engagement with LGBT communities. The initiative will particularly centre around three areas: capturing and exploring LGBT people’s experiences of GP services; sexual orientation monitoring; and promoting the Pride in Practice benchmark. Both an LGB and trans work stream are both currently in effect.

**TOPIC 4: LGBT SERVICES**

“Looking at services, in Manchester we have nearly 30 sports groups in Manchester but nobody knows where they are! They don’t get promotion.”

The discussion moved on to services in Manchester for those who are disabled and part of the LGBT community. Points raised from the floor highlighted the difficulties in applying for grants and the lack of promotion of sports groups for LGBT people.

Questions were also asked about where LGBT people with mental health issues or learning disabilities can access services that respond to their specific needs.

A number of responses were fed back from the panel. Manchester City Council are introducing local health plans into each ward of the city, and with that will be work around prevention, profiling local services. Whilst it was acknowledged
that there hasn’t been a lot of publicity on LGBT sports provision there are opportunities for some of the organisations represented on the panel to better promote these. From a health perspective, NHS Manchester has a directory of services that groups are able to add to so that they are all featured in one place ie the Talking Health website. These services can be promoted to their 10’000 Twitter followers and through their newsletters and websites. The LGF highlighted the LGBT disability group, ‘As Good As You’ and are happy to also support services and activities that are brought to them.

Macc, Manchester’s voluntary and community sector support organisation is a good starting place for anyone looking to access or promote a specific service. Macc can also advise on funding sources and volunteering and capacity building opportunities to grow and develop services.

Manchester City Council are currently working with NHS Manchester and partners with a view to refreshing the Autism Strategy. There are opportunities here for some of the points raised at the LGBT Question Time event to be built in to the refreshed strategy, specifically with regards to LGBT autism and disabled services.

**EDUCATION**

The final part of the session touched on the role of education and cultural change. Jake and younger members from the floor talked about how pupils and students in schools are not being taught about sexual health and are not learning about LGBT health issues. This means that young people are moving through adult life unaware of some fundamental knowledge that could have been covered by better education in schools. The discussion focussed on how its not only young people who need to be educated but also people in public services such as police officers, doctors and teachers. There is an issue of re-education. Some of these professionals have been doing heir jobs for 20, 30, 40 years through significantly changing times.

“We have an Education Minister who doesn’t believe we should be talking about those things [hate crime, sexual violence, LGBT community issues]. We have to challenge that because it’s stupid!”
It is clear that there is more work to do in primary and secondary schools and certainly more work to do about challenging norms around gender but there cannot always be local solutions. Members of the panel and the floor highlighted that there are a number of schools who are not responding or engaging with the LGBT agenda but the City Council has limited influence to move things forward. There is still a massive role for national legislation with regards to the Curriculum and legislative policy for schools and not all solutions can be developed locally.

“We’re not taught about health [in schools]. We’re not taught that LGBT people are more susceptible to mental health problems, or where to go.”

The Council continues to work with schools via the Safer Schools Partnership to raise awareness of the impact of hate crime on individuals as well as the wider community and via the Healthy Schools Partnership who offer a full range of services to schools including drug and alcohol education; emotional health and wellbeing – mental health, pupil participation and anti-bullying; healthy lifestyles; and sex and relationship education.

There are a number of LGBT organisations in Manchester who work closely with schools to provide education and support. The City Councils’ Equalities Funding Programme provides funding to the Albert Kennedy Trust and the Lesbian and Gay Foundation to deliver LGBT information and awareness raising sessions in schools. LGBT Youth North West are active in Manchester schools providing interactive discussion based trans awareness workshops.
CONCLUSION

This year’s event was a great success. The number of people in attendance was three times greater than in 2013 with around 60 people attending from the community. There was a 96% satisfaction rate from attendees who completed the feedback form at the end of the session and 78% of attendees said they feel more informed as a result of attending the session.

Manchester City Council and our partners value the opportunity to engage in this dialogue with residents and will aim to find ways to ensure that the channels of communication remain open. Healthy debate and discussion such as that provided through the LGBT Question Time forum with everyone from across the city will enable us all to work collaboratively to ensure that Manchester remains a positive space within which to live, work and enjoy leisure activities.