

# Supporting LGBTQ+ carers

A good practice briefing



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# Introduction



This briefing highlights **good practice** across the UK in supporting LGBTQ+ unpaid carers. Unpaid carers are people who provide support for an ill, older or disabled family member or friend.

We suggest reading this briefing alongside the Carers UK research briefing *The experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual carers during and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic* which looks at the evidence on how lesbian, gay and bisexual carers have been affected by the pandemic. Unfortunately, due to sample sizes being too small, we were unable to include analysis about trans carers in that report. However, when comparing the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual carers to heterosexual carers, the research found that lesbian, gay and bisexual carers were:

- more **anxious about their current financial situation**
- more likely to say **they were struggling financially**
- more likely to **feel lonely or isolated**
- more likely to **have poor mental health.**

Carers UK **analysis** of the NHS England GP survey found that 7 in 10 (70%) lesbian, gay and bisexual carers reported a long-term health condition or disability compared to 60% of heterosexual carers.

It is clear that there is already good practice in supporting LGBTQ+ carers which, if replicated across the UK, could make a significant difference to the lives of carers and those they care for.

This good practice briefing sets out examples of projects and organisations working to support LGBTQ+ carers by:

- **Providing information and advice** targeted to LGBTQ+ carers
- **Improving the health and wellbeing** of LGBTQ+ carers
- **Improving LGBTQ+ awareness** amongst staff
- **Involving LGBTQ+ carers** in policy, practice and research.

This briefing also makes several recommendations to support organisations working with LGBTQ+ carers. These include a number of practical suggestions designed to encourage organisations to take action to support LGBTQ+ carers.

While we recognise that carers will have their own unique experiences, some LGBTQ+ carers may have experienced the following:

- Caring for a family member who **may not be aware** of their LGBTQ+ identity, or who has rejected them because of their LGBTQ+ identity. Some research has found that bisexual people are less likely to be out to all their family.<sup>1</sup>
- **Losing aspects of their LGBTQ+ identity** as a result of the demands of their caring role. This might include not being able to attend LGBTQ+ events, connect with others or have opportunities for self-expression. As a result, carers may feel they have gone back ‘in the closet’ and their self-esteem, mental health and opportunities to connect with others may be impacted.
- **For young LGBTQ+ carers**, there may be fewer opportunities for them **to explore their LGBTQ+ identity** with less time to go out with friends and meet new people.
- **Experiencing mental health issues or loneliness** which may make the caring role even more challenging. Some people may be estranged from family or have difficult relationships with family members who are not accepting of their LGBTQ+ identity, resulting in increased loneliness or lack of support with their caring role. LGBTQ+ people can also be subjected to abuse or attacks which may cause or exacerbate mental health problems. Some LGBTQ+ carers may not be accessing support for mental health issues due to concerns that support services are heteronormative.
- **Experiencing prejudice, discrimination or harassment** when accessing services, and feeling distrustful of support services as a result. Many carers are aged over 65: LGBTQ+ older carers may have lived through times of legal and structural discrimination and be reluctant to access support services or to share their LGBTQ+ identity because of previous negative experiences. Trans people also experience frequent discrimination.<sup>2</sup>

1 [www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/new-research-bi-people-less-likely-be-out](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/new-research-bi-people-less-likely-be-out)

2 [www.pfc.org.uk/pdf/EngenderedPenalties.pdf](http://www.pfc.org.uk/pdf/EngenderedPenalties.pdf)

- Feeling like they should be the one to care for a family member if they are **unmarried and do not have children**, and not wanting to ask other family members for support.
- **Having to continually ‘come out’ to services** when assumptions are made about their sexuality and/or gender identity and/or their relationship with the person being cared for.
- **Not feeling comfortable about sharing their sexual orientation or gender identity, or feeling that they need to go ‘back in the closet’** due to fears of discrimination or unfair or biased treatment by services.
- **Not being recognised as a carer** can be an issue for some LGBTQ+ carers who may be caring for people in their ‘family of choice’ – ie their support network of friends, neighbours, or ex-partners.
- **Feeling like the person they care for has gone ‘back in the closet’**, particularly if they have moved into sheltered housing or a care home and they feel they need to hide their LGBTQ+ identity due to fears of discrimination. This can be a particular issue for older LGBTQ+ people who have lived through times of significant prejudice.
- **Experiencing physical health issues as a result of medical gender transitioning**<sup>3</sup> which, for some trans carers, may affect their ability to carry out their caring role. Some trans carers also change employment after transitioning which can cause additional stress. Trans people can already face significant barriers in accessing employment<sup>4</sup> which has an impact on mental health and wellbeing.

<sup>3</sup> [www.gires.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/trans\\_mh\\_study.pdf](http://www.gires.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/trans_mh_study.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [www.crosslandsolicitors.com/site/hr-hub/transgender-discrimination-in-UK-workplaces](http://www.crosslandsolicitors.com/site/hr-hub/transgender-discrimination-in-UK-workplaces)

# Recommendations for practice



## Providing information and advice

- **Understanding different terminology** used to describe LGBTQ+ identities, recognising that there are many different words that people use to describe themselves. Although organisations like Stonewall have a [list of terms](#), it may be preferable to ask carers themselves about the best language to use.
- **Using diverse language and imagery** in publications, ensuring that LGBTQ+ carers feel included.
- Including LGBTQ+ books or magazines in shared spaces, displaying LGBTQ+ flags or banners, or using posters or badges to indicate that LGBTQ+ carers are welcome can be helpful in **signalling** that services are LGBTQ+ inclusive, though it is important to make sure these are supported by more long-term changes to practice.
- **Not making assumptions** about someone's identity, sexuality or relationship status. Not everyone who identifies as trans will have transitioned. Being aware that just because someone hasn't spoken about their LGBTQ+ identity, this does not mean they identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender. People may be reluctant to share their sexual orientation and/or gender identity', particularly if they have faced discrimination in the past. This could be a particular barrier for older LGBTQ+ carers who have lived through times of legal and structural discrimination.

- **Asking about people's pronouns** and taking note of responses so that these are used in the future. Misgendering someone can feel disrespectful, so if you have accidentally misgendered someone, apologise and then move on, to avoid further causing further discomfort.
- **Using gender neutral language** – for example 'partner' rather than husband or wife
- Ensuring that LGBTQ+ carers have a **safe space** to talk about their concerns. Some LGBTQ+ carers may have previously faced prejudice or discrimination and it might take a bit longer to build trust and develop a rapport if carers have had negative experiences in the past.
- Holding information and advice sessions, peer support groups or other events for carers in **trusted local spaces**, such as LGBTQ+ centres, to boost attendance and engagement.
- Considering how **information can be communicated** to carers who may not be in contact with services. This might include using the expertise of local LGBTQ+ community and voluntary groups to share information with people or attending local Pride events to raise awareness of support services. **Identifying local groups which offer targeted support to LGBTQ+ people** is necessary in order to build these links.

## Improving health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ carers

- **Monitoring participation** amongst LGBTQ+ carers in services to help you understand more about what support LGBTQ+ people may or may not be accessing and demonstrate progress towards equalities goals. This might include asking questions about sexual orientation and gender identity on registration forms. The LGBT Foundation have a [good practice guide](#) specifically on monitoring sexual orientation and trans status. Asking monitoring questions is also a positive way of learning more about someone and giving them the opportunity to express their identity.
- **Taking a holistic approach** to supporting carers by providing services that look at the whole person not just one issue in isolation. Some issues, such as mental health, substance abuse, homelessness and domestic abuse, can be more common amongst LGBTQ+ people and may affect someone's caring role. Signposting people to organisations who have expertise in these areas can help ensure carers get the support they need.
- Considering forming LGBTQ+ **support networks or befriending programmes** for carers who may find peer

support helpful. This might include LGBTQ+ carers who are unable to socialise much due to the demands of caring, but who would find it helpful to share their experiences with others and express aspects of their identity. **Inviting local charities or support services to peer support sessions** can be helpful both in raising awareness of local support services, and in ensuring that local services are aware of what support people need.

- **Appointing volunteers as ambassadors or buddies** may be helpful in welcoming carers to support groups, particularly if they have social anxiety or lack confidence in social situations. Some LGBTQ+ carers may have had experiences of discrimination and find it more difficult to trust others as a result.
- Recognising that while it is helpful to tailor services to LGBTQ+ carers, not all carers who identify as LGBTQ+ will have the same needs or face the same challenges. **Speaking to carers individually and understanding more about their experiences** can help build trust and ensure they get the support they need. It is also helpful to consider that sexual orientation and/or gender identity is just one aspect of that person's identity, and additional factors such as age, disability, socio-economic background and ethnicity may also impact on the experiences that person has.
- Understanding more about the needs of LGBTQ+ carers by **speaking to organisations who have expertise in working with LGBTQ+ people, as well as LGBTQ+ carers** themselves. Providing a clear explanation of why organisations and carers are being consulted and how their feedback will be used can help build trust
- Considering ways in which **mainstream services** can be more inclusive, as well as developing LGBTQ+ specific services. While some carers might appreciate LGBTQ+ support groups, others might want to focus more on their caring role rather than their LGBTQ+ identity. LGBTQ+ specific groups can act as a gateway into mainstream services, but speaking to carers about what they need, rather than making assumptions, might be helpful.
- **Supporting carers to express themselves** and to participate in activities that align with their interests can be helpful in building trust and improving their wellbeing.
- **Recognising that mental health issues**, such as anxiety, which are common amongst LGBTQ+ people, might impact on how comfortable carers feel in accessing support with their caring role.
- **Evaluating the impact of projects supporting LGBTQ+ carers to understand whether these were effective.**

This might include conducting a process evaluation, looking at how the project was run and what worked well, or carrying out an impact evaluation looking at whether the project was effective in supporting LGBTQ+ carers. The NCVO offer [monitoring and evaluation resources](#) to help charities, voluntary organisations and community groups to evaluate their work, including examples of Theory of Change and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. For resources specific to LGBTQ+ projects, the LGBT+ Consortium runs a [membership programme](#) for LGBT+ groups offering a range of support, including in relation to monitoring and evaluation.

## Creating a diverse and inclusive workplace

- **Recruiting staff, volunteers or trustees who identify as LGBTQ+** may be helpful in developing inclusive practice.
- **Obtaining support from senior staff** is often necessary in ensuring there is widespread cultural change across the whole organisation.
- **Providing staff training on issues such as discrimination, unconscious bias and equalities** and considering whether this could be incorporated into new staff induction training. Ensuring organisational policies on equalities and inclusion are regularly reviewed and updated where necessary.
- **Running LGBTQ+ awareness sessions for staff**, focusing on areas such as terminology, myth busting, and key facts and figures. Considering whether LGBTQ+ carers could be involved in delivering these sessions. Empowering staff and giving them the confidence to ask questions and have open discussions can help create a safe space. The LGBT Foundation have a [training academy](#) for anyone wanting to **increase their knowledge and confidence of LGBT inclusion at home, at work and in the community**.
- Considering whether members of staff could become an **LGBTQ+ champion or advocate**, with a commitment to supporting LGBTQ+ staff. Some organisations like LGBT Foundation offer accredited training to become an ally.
- **Creating an advisory group** of LGBTQ+ staff, or any other staff who want to improve practice, and asking this group to review organisational policies, to ensure LGBTQ+ staff are supported.
- **Applying for an LGBTQ+ quality standard** or accreditation such as Opening Doors' [Pride in Care](#) to recognise and celebrate inclusive practice.
- Asking staff to consider **sharing their pronouns** in email signatures, but ensure that this is done on a voluntary basis.

## Involving LGBTQ+ carers in policy and practice

- Inviting LGBTQ+ carers to be part of a strategic **steering group or advisory group** to inform the development of services or to shape policy and research work. For example, carers could be invited to co-produce research, by helping to design surveys. As well as helping to ensure that research captures the experiences of LGBTQ+ carers, this can also be beneficial in boosting carers' confidence and wellbeing.
- When conducting research with LGBTQ+ carers, if sample sizes are small, try to **avoid making generalisations** about LGBTQ+ carers. Carers' experiences can vary, and assuming all LGBTQ+ carers have the same needs does not take into account different factors that may affect people's experiences, such as age, ethnicity or socioeconomic status.
- **Co-designing projects or services** with LGBTQ+ carers to ensure that these meet carers' needs. This might include using carers' expertise to create specific products or activities. When co-designing with carers it is important that support and training is provided, to enable carers to take on responsibilities and ensure there is a genuine balance in power. Free resources on how to effectively co-design projects include the [NPC's toolkit](#), the [Kings Fund toolkit](#) and NESTA's [guide on co-design](#).
- **Sharing any learning on developing inclusive practice** with other carer support organisations and services, to encourage others to become more inclusive.

# Good practice in...

## Providing information and advice

### Wandsworth Carers' Centre

Wandsworth Carers' Centre is a registered charity and limited company providing support to unpaid carers in Wandsworth since 1995. The Centre has raised awareness of LGBTQ+ carers through LGBTQ+ awareness sessions delivered to professionals. As part of this work, funded through the Carers Trust/Carers UK Making Carers Count project, it put together a LGBTQ+ toolkit for professionals to improve awareness amongst health and social care staff of issues faced by LGBTQ+ carers.<sup>5</sup> The toolkit contains information on terminology which people might use to describe themselves, as well as practical suggestions on how services can be more inclusive.

Wandsworth Carers' Centre also worked with the LGBT Foundation in Manchester to develop training for other carers centres in London about LGBTQ+ awareness and supporting LGBTQ+ carers.<sup>6</sup> This training has been developed further this year and is delivered online to carers centres in London as well as other organisations who work with carers.

Following on from this work, Wandsworth Carers' Centre recently started delivering peer support and wellbeing events which give carers the opportunity to share their lived experiences with other carers who may be in similar situations. The events take place every month at the LGBT Community Centre in London and are advertised through the community centre as well as the Wandsworth Carers' Centre LGBT Facebook and Meet Up group. Information about the events is also shared with other carers centres in London who then share details with their networks.

To ensure the sessions meet carers' needs, carers are invited to suggest themes or activities for the events that they feel they might benefit from. For example, carers felt it would be useful to have information sessions as well as time to talk. Following this feedback, the next event focused on access to GP services, where carers submitted questions which were then answered by a GP and discussed in the meeting. A forthcoming event will include an information session on carers' rights, delivered by a carer who volunteers with Southwark Carers. Another event, featuring social care staff, has also been planned.

<sup>5</sup> <https://carerswandsworth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/LGBTQ-Carer-Toolkit-.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://carerswandsworth.org.uk/for-professionals/carer-awareness-training/>

To ensure it is inclusive to LGBTQ+ carers, Wandsworth Carers' Centre sought advice from organisations such as Stonewall and LGBT Foundation about how to collect data on sexual orientation, gender identity and trans status through monitoring forms. There are posters displayed in the centre indicating that LGBTQ+ carers are welcome, and posts on social media during key LGBTQ+ events. The Centre recently took part in the London Pride parade, marching with carers and carer centre staff from across London. To support the delivery of the LGBTQ+ activities, it set up a steering group to influence the development of the project, and this is open to LGBTQ+ carers and carer centre staff from the five partner centres who are collaborating with Wandsworth Carers' Centre on this project. As more carers get involved in the peer support sessions, they will be invited to give their views to the group as well.

# Good practice in...

## Supporting carers' health and wellbeing

### Carers' Support Centre and Navigo

The Carers' Support Centre offers a range of free and confidential practical and emotional support to carers in Northern Lincolnshire. Prior to the 2020 lockdown, the Service worked with Miss Transgender UK (Bea Wood, who won the pageant in 2017) to launch an LGBTQ+ peer support group. Although this particular group is no longer running, it demonstrated that support is needed. The Service has since been working in partnership with NAViGO, an organisation providing mental health care to people in North East Lincolnshire, to set up other LGBTQ+ support groups.

Over the past year, NAViGO has been running an LGBTQ+ group for 16–25-year-olds at the Carers' Support Service. The group now meets weekly and has supported over 50 young people, many of whom have some form of neurodiversity. Any 16–25 year old LGBTQ+ person can attend NAViGO and Carers Support Service also work in partnership to run Included, a monthly group for parents/carers family members and friends of LGBTQ+ people. The group enables parents and carers to talk about things they've found challenging and to share information and advice about support they have received. NAViGO will also shortly be launching a 25+ LGBTQ+ Inclusive group to support LGBTQ+ people who may be carers or who may be struggling with poor mental health. As well as signposting people to the support they need, NAViGO has recently appointed an LGBTQ+ befriender to help people to navigate support services. The work being done has highlighted that there are carers who are not LGBTQ+ that need information, advice and support in order to understand and care the best they can for their family member, relative or friend who is LGBTQ+. More often it is those whose cared for person is transgender that need support.

The Carers' Support Service has been reviewing its policies and procedures to ensure that LGBTQ+ carers feel confident about accessing support and that services are inclusive. Following a staff training session provided by the LGBT Foundation, the Service changed its information booklet to make it clear that LGBTQ+ carers are welcome. It also created a new page on

its website with information for LGBTQ+ carers. In addition, it is incorporating LGBTQ+ specific content into workshops with carers, including a forthcoming session on coping with change when the person being cared for moves into a care home. Some older LGBTQ+ people who have faced previous discrimination may worry about disclosing their sexuality when moving into a new setting as a result of concerns that staff or other residents will not be supportive.

The Carers' Support Service has also recently introduced monitoring questions about gender identity and sexuality on its carers' registration form, based on the advice from the LGBT Foundation. Some of the service staff were initially concerned about asking carers quite personal questions but have found that the majority of carers appreciate being asked and that the questions demonstrate inclusivity. By asking for this information, the Carers' Support Service now has a better understanding of the LGBTQ+ carers it is supporting.

Going forward, the Carers' Support Service are keen to focus on identifying carers, many of whom may not be receiving support. As part of this, there will be some specific work to engage carers from underrepresented groups, including LGBTQ+ communities. A priority is also building awareness in their area and strengthening local partnerships to ensure together they can support their population of LGBTQ+ carers the best they can.

## LGBT Health and Wellbeing

LGBT Health and Wellbeing works to improve the health, wellbeing and equality of LGBTQ+ adults in Scotland. In addition to providing support services, social events and resources to LGBT people to help improve their health, the organisation also works with partners to improve people's access to healthcare.

LGBT Health and Wellbeing's LGBT Dementia project, funded through the Life Changes Trust for two years, looked at the experiences of LGBTQ+ people with dementia and their carers. Through a combination of desk research and interviews with LGBTQ+ people and health and social care staff, LGBT Health and Wellbeing developed its understanding of some of the issues and challenges LGBTQ+ people and carers were experiencing.

To share this learning, LGBT Health and Wellbeing produced a toolkit (**Proud to Care**) for people working in dementia care and carer support services. The toolkit highlights the unique experiences that LGBTQ+ people with dementia and their carers can experience, as well as making recommendations to practitioners on how to develop inclusive services. In addition to

the toolkit, LGBT Health and Wellbeing ran LGBTQ+ awareness training with services supporting people with dementia, to improve their knowledge of the experiences of LGBTQ+ people and their carers.

The Dementia Project led to improved partnership working with organisations such as the Care Inspectorate and a range of housing and care providers, with increased opportunities to share learning and good practice. Following the project, LGBT Health and Wellbeing was invited to be part of the Carewell partnership in Edinburgh. This partnership is led by VOCAL and includes other partners working with carers across health and social care organisations (Health in Mind, The Eric Liddell Centre, and MILAN (Senior Welfare organisation (SWO)). As part of this work, LGBT Health and Wellbeing runs activities for LGBTQ+ carers in Edinburgh, including informal coffee meet-ups, walks, mindfulness sessions and peer support groups. These are held both in-person and online and provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ carers. The sessions are open to anyone from the LGBTQ+ community and some people have identified themselves as carers after attending the meetings.

To raise awareness of issues affecting carers, and LGBTQ+ carers in particular, LGBT Health and Wellbeing has produced a **community briefing** signposting to support and highlighting things that shape LGBTQ+ experiences of caring.

LGBT Health and Wellbeing has also created the Age Action group, giving LGBTQ+ older people the opportunity to influence policy and discuss common issues and concerns. This has included reviewing current service provision and thinking about what good practice might look like.



# Good practice in...

## Improving LGBTQ+ awareness amongst staff

### West Sussex County Council and Carers Support West Sussex

When West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) went out to retender its Carer Short Break Provision (day respite services for carers of frail older people and/or those living with dementia) it included a performance indicator measure on LGBTQ+ participation. In the past, it had asked providers to monitor ethnic minority participation, but hadn't previously asked for data on sexuality and gender identity to be collected.

To ensure that staff had the understanding and skills to collect data in an appropriate way, and to improve staff knowledge of issues that may be faced by LGBTQ+ carers, the Council commissioned training from All Sorts. LGBTQ+ awareness sessions were delivered for all Short Break Provision staff and this training was very well received.

To maintain the momentum of this initiative, the Council then ringfenced some funding and made it available to providers wanting to improve their practice further. This resulted in WSSCC part funding Carers Support West Sussex (CSWS), the county's provider of Information, Advice, Assessment and Support to carers, to apply for the Pride in Care award. Pride in Care is a quality standard awarded by Opening Doors London, an organisation supporting older LGBTQ+ people who use health and social care services.

After applying for the quality standard, CSWS took part in a year-long assessment process, in which Opening Doors London reviewed its work plans, policies and communications, as well as carrying out a survey with all staff. Opening Doors London found that CSWS's policies demonstrated inclusive practice, with the staff wellbeing policy described as "genuine and welcoming".

CSWS's application was successful and it was recently awarded

Pride in Care in recognition of its quality care and support to LGBTQ+ carers aged over 50. To build on the momentum of this work, CSWS recently set up an LGBTQ+ Allies Working Group to collect and showcase LGBTQ+ case studies, review processes and identify gaps in knowledge and training, and share information about local LGBTQ+ initiatives

CSWS is committed to making the organisation a positive place to work for staff and volunteers from all backgrounds, and to reducing barriers for LGBTQ+ carers in accessing support services. It has taken a number of steps to become an LGBTQ+ inclusive organisation and despite the challenges of the pandemic, successfully went through the Pride in Care application process.

West Sussex County Council convene the local Short Breaks Provision forum which enables providers to share best practice. Since the LGBTQ+ training sessions, many local carers organisations are now going along to local LGBTQ+ events like Worthing Pride and sharing information about their services.

Going forward, the Joint Carer Commissioner is planning to support other organisations to apply for the Pride in Care standard. The main criteria for accessing some funding for this, and a key factor in determining how successful an organisation is in becoming LGBTQ+ inclusive, is having 'buy-in' at all organisational levels. From Board level and CEO downwards, staff must own the change that is needed. The ultimate goal is that whenever someone contacts an organisation, they have a positive experience and that this is not down to chance – ie who picks up the phone to them or sees them on that day.



## Swindon Carers

Swindon Carers Centre is a charitable organisation which is part of the Carers Trust Network, providing help and support to 4,500 unpaid carers in Swindon.

In order to offer an inclusive service to LGBTQ+ carers, Swindon Carers provided funding to enable a support practitioner in their Adult Carer team to undertake Pride in Practice training to become an accredited LGBTQ+ ally. This training, run by the LGBT Foundation, aims to support services to strengthen and develop relationships with LGBTQ+ people.

Since taking part in the training, the support practitioner has raised awareness across the organisation about how to deliver inclusive services through, for example, delivering presentations to colleagues about supporting LGBTQ+ carers, producing 'myth-busting' documents addressing common misconceptions, circulating facts and figures about LGBTQ+ related topics, wearing an LGBTQ+ ally badge and supporting a colleague with a workshop for carers looking at identity. As a member of the organisation's Inclusion working group, the support practitioner also ensures that LGBTQ+ awareness is considered in the organisation's Equalities Action Plan.

The possibility of having a safe space for staff to seek advice and support is currently being considered so that staff can talk about any concerns and feel confident about using the right terminology when talking to carers. Swindon Carers Centre ask monitoring questions about gender identity and sexual orientation when carers register for support, so it is important staff feel confident about doing this.

Swindon Carers Centre has reviewed the terminology it uses in its information resources as well as considering other potential barriers to accessing support. To be outwardly inclusive, it created a page for LGBTQ+ carers on its website which signposts LGBTQ+ carers to national and local LGBTQ+ support services. Most staff have now added their pronouns to their email signatures and key LGBTQ+ events such as Pride are acknowledged on social media. LGBTQ+ organisations have also been added to the organisations' internal resource library, enabling staff to signpost to further support when speaking to LGBTQ+ carers.

# Good practice in...

## Involving LGBTQ+ carers in policy and research

### Gaddum and LGBT Foundation

Gaddum is a Manchester-based charity specialising in advocacy, carers and therapy services. Although the charity had been supporting carers for over 20 years, it did not initially offer any specific support for LGBTQ+ carers. After identifying this gap, Gaddum ran a campaign in partnership to identify LGBTQ+ carers across Greater Manchester and explore whether an LGBTQ+ carers group would be of interest to those carers. Following that, the charity was successful in securing funding from the NHS Mind the Gap fund to create an advisory group of LGBTQ+ carers in partnership with the LGBT Foundation.

During the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, the carers advisory group worked with staff at Gaddum to devise a survey for LGBTQ+ carers. The group also played a leading role in sharing the survey with other carers, analysing around 100 survey responses, and producing the research report. During this time, the group met monthly. After the report had been published, carers were keen to continue meeting so Gaddum applied for more funding from the NHS Mind the Gap fund. This application was successful and enabled the group to co-produce some free LGBTQ+ carers awareness training for organisations working with LGBTQ+ carers such as local carers centres, local authorities and NHS and social care staff. As well as influencing the content of the training, a few members of the group also recorded video messages sharing their experiences, which are played during training sessions.

The group continues to meet monthly, and Gaddum has received funding to run events, such as theatre trips, meals and walks. While attendance at the group can vary each month, feedback from carers has been very positive. Some of the carers have also gone on to influence policy in the health and social care sector. A trans carer, for example, has provided feedback to an NHS service user board, while another carer has spoken at a local dementia event.

As well as convening the monthly meetings with the carers' group, Gaddum also sends information to carers on key issues and invites carers to suggest topics for future meetings. Support staff attend meetings to give updates on topical issues: one member of staff provided information about accessing benefits, while another talked about carers assessments. While meetings tend to be flexible, there is always time at the beginning for carers to 'check-in' with one another and talk about how they're feeling. Feedback from carers is that this peer support is really helpful.

Gaddum found that providing a financial incentive to carers was an effective way of increasing engagement with co-production activities such as designing research. When £25 vouchers were offered to carers in recognition of their time and their expertise, attendance at meetings increased as a result. Demonstrating to carers why their feedback is being sought is also important: in this case, carers could clearly see that their expertise was used to influence the research, and many were proud of the final report.

# About the project

Carers UK, in partnership with Carers Trust, has received funding from the Covid 19 Support Fund to support the “Making Carers Count” project. This part of the three-year project seeks to understand the experiences of four traditionally under-represented groups of carers both during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. These are LGBTQ+ carers, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic carers, older carers without access to the internet and carers of faith. This project is pulling together existing knowledge and engaging in new research to more fully understand the experiences of these carers and the unique challenges they may experience in their caring role as well as collating examples of best practice. This knowledge gained will be applied to Carers UK services and shared with other service delivery organisations and commissioners to improve access to and outcomes from support, information and advice for marginalised carers.

Projects funded by the ‘Making Carers Count’ project to support LGBT carers are:

## Crossroads Together

Crossroads Together is a charity with a mission to ensure unpaid carers of all ages, and the people they care for, can access emotional and practical support needed to maintain their own health and wellbeing. Its 270-trained professionals offer services across Cheshire and Warrington, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Shropshire and Herefordshire, supporting over 5000 carers and people with care needs every year.

CarerLinks+ is its new service providing support to unpaid adult carers from the LGBTQ+ community. This innovative project will focus on understanding the barriers that people in this under represented group face and work collectively to improve awareness, understanding and access to services. Carer Advisors will provide 1:1 support for carers to support them with their own wellbeing and a calendar of peer support groups, activities and events will provide opportunities for carers to meet others who have a genuine understanding of their situation.

## Lanarkshire Carers Centre

Lanarkshire Carers is a carer led organisation with over 25 years of experience developing and delivering information, advice and support services for carers. It is experienced at reaching

under-represented communities and has a diverse Board of Governors, staff team and volunteers, many of whom are carers themselves.

Making Carers Count will enable learning, development and continual improvement of its approach to under-represented carers as a whole and inform positive changes to practice, communication and service offer. The centre wants to better understand and improve its work with LGBTQ+ carers to allow this approach to be adopted. By enabling and encouraging early identification, engagement and appropriate support for LGBTQ+ carers, it can prevent carers from reaching crisis point, minimising risk to health, wellbeing and impacts on quality of life.

## Wandsworth Carers Centre

Wandsworth Carers' Centre has been operating in Southwest London since 1995 working with and for carers. It offers a wide range of services including specialist support for carers of people with mental health problems, dementia, learning disability, neurological conditions, autistic spectrum disorder and Asian carers. It also offers advice, information & advocacy, counselling, massage and back care and access to respite.

The centre's new LGBTQ+ Carers Connect project sees it working in partnership with Carers Centres in Richmond, Camden, Redbridge, Sutton, and City and Hackney to improve the service that LGBTQ+ carers receive across London. The project offers LGBTQ+ awareness training to frontline staff in carers agencies and carer awareness training to LGBTQ+ support agencies. It also offers advocacy support for carers experiencing discrimination, and social groups and opportunities for carers to have a break with trips out and LGBTQ+ specific events. The project will also raise awareness of LGBTQ+ carers' rights, issues and barriers faced through social media campaigns, health and social care training, and digital training toolkits to enable services to be inclusive for LGBTQ+ Carers.



## Contact

We would like to thank our LGBT Carers Advisory Group for their support.

For further information about this briefing, please contact the policy team at [policy@carersuk.org](mailto:policy@carersuk.org)

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