

# **Social Justice and Regeneration Committee**

**SJR(2)-02-07(p.4)**

**Date: 1 February 2007**

**Time: 9.00 - 12.30**

**Venue: Senedd, Cardiff Bay**

**Stonewall Cymru briefing paper for Social Justice and Regeneration committee-31<sup>st</sup> January 2007**

**"The housing needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Wales" (Stonewall Cymru/Triangle Wales research report.)**

## **Background**

The housing needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people in Wales have received little or no attention in research or policy. The research was instigated by the recognition that a comprehensive analysis of the housing needs of LGB people in Wales does not exist. In response Stonewall Cymru and Triangle Wales sought funding from the Welsh Assembly Government to conduct research that specifically reflected the Welsh context of housing needs and the experience of homelessness for LGB people in Wales.

The application was successful and SPARK Research secured the tender to undertake the work. The main aims were to explore the range of housing needs facing LGB people in Wales and to identify examples of good practice among housing service providers.

The research involved a self-selecting sample of LGB people who had experienced housing problems and a variety of housing service providers.

## **Findings**

- A major cause of housing problems for LGB people is homophobic harassment. Examples of harassment include arson, burglary, graffiti and physical assault.
- Youths are identified as the main source of homophobic harassment and intimidation and a significant contributory cause of housing problems for LGB people.
- Young LGB people who have been forced out of their family home after "coming out" to family members are at risk of homelessness and often find it difficult to discuss the reasons behind being homeless for fear of further discrimination.
- Very few local authorities and housing providers understand the specific needs of LGB people or had guidance for their staff on how to deal with sexual orientation issues.

## **Some Housing providers and Local Authority attitudes**

Homelessness officer to a gay young man recently thrown out by his father: "Can't you just stop being gay and go back home?"

At a housing association training event to a Triangle member of staff: "I don't know how you can work with them."

## **Key recommendations for housing service providers**

- Awareness training for all staff on LGB issues and how to address them.
- Demonstrate a zero tolerance policy against homophobia.
- Review existing policies and practices to ensure services are open and accessible to LGB people.
- Make links with specialist LGB service providers.
- Monitor access to housing services by sexual orientation, including allocations, transfer, waiting lists and anti-social behaviour cases.

The Research report was launched by Mrs Edwina Hart at the Welsh Assembly Buildings in Cardiff Bay on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2006.

## **Next steps**

- Stonewall Cymru funded the printing of the full report in both languages and also produced a bilingual booklet "From outside to inside" How housing services can meet the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. It contains a summary of LGB service requirements and how service providers can adapt their services to meet them.
- Stonewall Cymru distributed copies of the report and the booklet to all Local Authority Housing and Homelessness departments. Copies were also sent to all known housing associations as well as voluntary organisations known to have links with housing service providers.
- The report has been downloaded from the Stonewall Cymru website 2,274 times (December 2006)
- Triangle Wales is in the process of developing a toolkit and training programme that will enable housing service providers to recognise and address the needs of LGB people in Wales.
- NB . The impending Goods Facilities and Services regulations (April 2007) make it illegal for service providers to discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation.