



The  
Life House  
Project

# THE LIFE HOUSE IMPACT PROJECT:

Transforming LGBTQ+ EDI  
training in Housing and Social  
Care through creative approaches.

2026 Summary Report



CENTRE OF  
EXCELLENCE  
ON AGEING  
UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

GSA  
est. 1935  
UNIVERSITY OF SURREY



UNIVERSITY OF  
**SURREY**



# Report Overview

The Life House Project (TLHP) was conducted by researchers at the University of Surrey with older LGBTQ+ people using arts-based methods to explore views on housing and social care. Further funding supported The Life House Impact Project (TLHIP), which aimed to:

- Develop a co-created animation with older LGBTQ+ people to highlight housing and care issues, and
- Test its impact on service provider staff understandings of older LGBTQ+ people's housing and care needs.

The animation content was developed using theatre techniques to help older LGBTQ+ people 'tell their stories' and identify ways to create more inclusive services. It was incorporated into Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training for one London-based housing provider and one London-based at-home care provider, delivered in July 2025. Pre- and post-training surveys evaluated its impact on staff care and support practices.

This report outlines the project background, key findings, staff reflections, conclusions, and recommendations.

## Background to the project

### Why The Life House Project was needed.

Older LGBTQ+ people have concerns about housing and care provision. While the home is often a refuge where they can be their authentic selves, there is a lack of confidence that mainstream providers will understand and meet their needs.<sup>1,2</sup> Many wish to remain independent but worry about who they may need to let into their home.<sup>2,3</sup>

Negative experiences with health and social care workers affect service access, alongside fears of prejudice, discrimination, or social isolation if sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, community-based education for service providers about older LGBTQ+ people's lives and needs remains limited.<sup>1,5,6</sup>

### What was done

Applied Theatre was chosen as it can challenge social inequalities and reduce stigma

through work developed with LGBTQ+ people.<sup>7</sup> Following its success in TLHP, the approach was used again in TLHIP to raise awareness and educate service providers.

### *Stage 1: Creating the animation*

Six older LGBTQ+ people took part in theatre workshops to develop the story, characters, and script for a short educational film, including recommendations for change. A team of animators produced a 4-minute animation sharing experiences of older LGBTQ+ people living independently or in mainstream retirement or care settings.

### *Stage 2: Implementation and assessing impact*

One homecare provider and one housing provider collaborated to embed the animation into EDI training. A one-hour workshop was delivered at each site. Three short surveys measured impact before training, immediately after, and 6–8 weeks later. One-to-one interviews with managers were also conducted post-training.

## Project Findings

### Training and animation feedback

Across both sites, staff rated the training as ‘excellent’ (95%) or ‘good’ (5%), with 76% identifying the animation as the most helpful component. All respondents would recommend its use in EDI training.

The animation format was valued for storytelling and for reducing unconscious bias by focusing attention on issues rather than appearance.

*“Story telling is always a great way to bring people’s stories to light and the animation does that perfectly.”*

Seventy-one percent reported an emotional response, which raised awareness in a respectful and accessible way.

*“I found the animation heartbreaking to watch knowing that older, vulnerable LGBTQ+ people can be treated in such horrible ways by carers and in spaces that should be safe and inclusive.”*

## Impact of the training and animation

Immediately after training, most staff reported improved understanding of LGBTQ+ issues (90%) and older LGBTQ+ needs (86%), alongside increased confidence in providing care (95%).

*"I will need to educate myself more and I think confidence grows when you can apply learnings, but it encourages me. The training has helped me reflect."*

At 6–8 weeks post-training, confidence had risen from 77% to 95%, and those reporting they often or always met service users' needs increased from 55% to 85%. Use of inclusive language increased from 70% to 95%, and most staff agreed changes had been made in practice.

*"We now have our ID badge that show our pronouns and evidence that we are allied and trained. Staff are introducing themselves using their pronouns. I listen more attentively and show a lot more empathy."*

However, increases in asking about pronouns or discussing sexual orientation and gender identity with clients or in the workplace were more modest.

## Reflections from the interviews

All interviewees felt the training was successful and that the animation was emotionally impactful and effective in prompting discussion and reflection. The animation was considered engaging, accessible, and appropriately timed.

*"I think people felt quite personally, like emotionally moved by that which, I think, is a good way to get people to learn, you know, rather than just 'here's the data, here's the information, learn it'"*

While staff confidence had increased, some concerns remained about saying or doing the 'wrong thing', highlighting the need for ongoing training. This was supported by survey responses, with 90% of staff identifying further training as essential.

# Conclusions

The findings support previous evidence that theatre-based methods can encourage dialogue and mutual learning to improve services for older LGBTQ+ adults.<sup>8</sup>

The co-created animation generated empathy and positively influenced some care and support practices. While it is a powerful learning tool, additional and ongoing training is needed to support inclusive conversations and practices.

## Next steps & recommendations:

The animation will be incorporated routinely into EDI training, with potential for wider use across housing and care sectors. Recommendations include:

- Keep training groups small - staff may have little knowledge or experience of LGBTQ+ issues and need to feel safe and comfortable asking questions.
- Set the ground rules - opinions and reactions will vary with different audiences.
- Be prepared for difficult or sensitive questions.
- Reassure staff - some people may worry about causing offence and lack confidence in, for example, using (the right) pronouns.

# Participants, Acknowledgments & Weblinks

Twenty-two staff took part in the training and Survey 1, with most completing Surveys 2 and 3. Participants were predominantly female, aged 25–64, and most had completed previous EDI training. Six staff were interviewed 6–10 weeks post-training.

The researchers thank the funders, participating organisations, staff, and especially the LGBTQ+ participants who shared their stories. Thanks also to the London Bubble Theatre Company and Izabella Barszcz for their roles in the co-creation process.

The animation can be accessed [here](#).

For more information about the project, visit [the website](#).

# References

1. King, A., and Stoneman, P. (2017). Understanding SAFE Housing – putting older LGBT\* people's concerns, preferences and experiences of housing in England in a sociological context. *Housing, Care and Support*, 20(3), 89-99.
2. Lottmann, R., and King, A. (2022). Who can I turn to? Social networks and the housing, care and support preferences of older lesbian and gay people in the UK. *Sexualities*, 25(1-2), 9-24.
3. Willis, P., Maegusuku-Hewett, T., Raithby, M., and Miles, P. (2016). Swimming upstream: the provision of inclusive care to older lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) adults in residential and nursing environments in Wales. *Ageing & Society*, 36, 282-306.
4. Bailey, D., Calasanti, T., Crowe, A., Di Lorito, C., Hogan, P., and De Vries, B. (2022). Equal but different! Improving care for older LGBT+ adults. *Age and Ageing*, 51, 1-7.
5. King, A., Almack, K., Suen, Y.T., and Westwood, S. (eds). (2018). *Older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans People: Minding the Knowledge Gaps*. London: Routledge.
6. Almack, K., King, A., and Jones, R.L. (2022). Care in late life, end of life and in bereavement for the oldest LGBT generations around the globe. *Sexualities*, 25(1-2), 3-8.
7. Logie, C.H., Dias, L.V., Jenkinson, J., Newman, P.A., MacKenzie, R.K., Mothopeng, T., and Baral, S.D. (2019). Exploring the potential of participatory theatre to reduce stigma and promote health equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in Swaziland and Lesotho. *Health Education & Behaviour*, 46(1), 146-156.
8. Hughes, A.K., Luz, C., Hall, D., Gardner, P., Hennessey, C.W., and Lammers, L. (2016). Transformative theatre: a promising educational tool for improving health encounters with LGBT older adults. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 37(3), 292-306.