

NatCen

Social Research that works for society

Not just ‘a nice thing to do’ :

Hardship and marginalisation for LGBT older people in the context of austerity

Dr Martin Mitchell, Senior Researcher

29th April 2014



Who we are NatCen Social Research



Over **40 years' experience** of conducting research on public and social policy



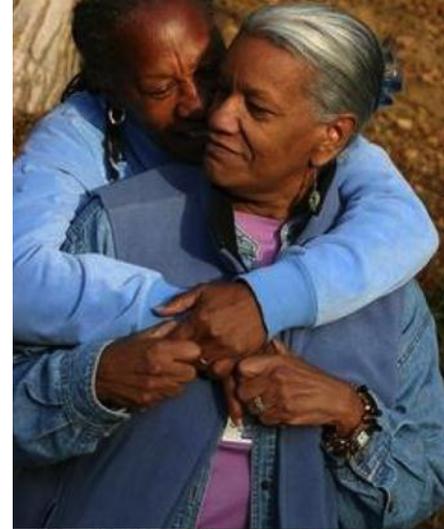
A **not for profit, non-politically affiliated** research organisation



Strong **track record** researching **LGB and T** and **broader equality** issues

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- Aims and objectives
- Methods and sample
- Why austerity cuts to services mattered
- Effects of austerity, esp. older participants
- A sense of growing marginalisation and invisibility
- Summary



The Research



1.

Aims and objectives

Commissioned UNISON

- Anecdotal evidence from members re. effects from austerity cuts

Aims

- Qualitative *insight* into the ways cuts are affecting public services and LGBT people
 - Service users (LGB and/ or T and mainstream)
 - Service providers
- Provide *case examples* of challenges arising to inform UNISON' s evidence base and campaigns

Methods



Qualitative design – insight into range of experiences, not how prevalent



101 written responses to six open questions via a secure website



12 purposively selected follow-up telephone interviews

Recruitment and sample

Recruitment via UNISON's LGBT network and other contacts

- Mix of **UNISON members** and **non-members**
- Mix of **service providers, users** or **both**
- Balance of **genders, sexual orientations** and **gender identities**

Older LGBT people

- Mostly of working age
 - 14 in the **46-55** age group
 - 11 in the **56-65** age group
- **Common** and **different** themes by age group

**Why austerity
cuts mattered!**



2.

Why austerity cuts mattered

■ **LGBT invisibility**

*‘LGBT issues are traditionally out of site and easily removed or placed in a “nice to do if we can afford it, never, never category and this only increases in times of austerity”’
(Lesbian service user).*

■ **Disproportionate reliance on statutory funding**

- Limited charitable funding for services to/ for LGBT people
- Increased reliance on services due to discrimination

■ **Cuts in funding seen as a ‘false economy’**

- Leads to worse problems later

■ **Changes in commissioning compound problems**

Effects of austerity on older LGBT people



3.

Effects – Worse pay and conditions

■ Financial hardships from worse pay and conditions

*‘Due to working in local government, I have not had a pay rise in three years, despite earning under £21,000. Plus my job has been re-graded and I now earn less money’
(Older trans woman)*

■ Reductions in standards of living

‘I’m forced to make reductions in purchases like social, groceries and heating bills (Older service provider)’

■ Additional work-related stress and poor morale

■ Unsustainable conditions in the longer-term

Effects – Loss of LGBT specialists

- **Experienced older LGBT service providers being made redundant**

‘The worker who frankly deserved an OBE.. And who had the best part of two decades of youth work as a dedicated youth worker for LGBT teens was laid off’

(Service user discussing local LGBT youth project)

- **LGBT people working in equalities posts also being made redundant**
- **Loss of considerable expertise leads to negative impacts on services**

Effects – Isolation and mental health services

■ Need for non-scene support and services for older LGBT

‘Don’t feel as connected to the community; have lost network of support; more isolated. Don’t feel able to reach out for help when I need it. Not able to access services as readily because they’re not as available’ (Older gay man)

- Especially important where older LGBT people don’t have support from family
- Evidence that mental health services users being discharged earlier than appropriate

Effects – Marginalisation and invisibility

- **Less time for people who don't fit the norm**

'Issues like.. having staff at the Jobcentre filling in forms incorrectly due to mistaking my gender are made difficult. If they have no time for you, they have even less for you if fitting into their system is difficult' (Trans woman).

- **Feeling 'guilty' to ask for appropriate services**

'Like wanting LGBT groups is somewhat a luxury at work at the moment when there are so many other pressing demands' (Older lesbian service user)

- **No services for LGBT and/ or T people at all in some local areas**

Effects – Marginalisation at service level

- **Reversal of progress from the Equality Act**
- **LGB, T and issues facing older LGBT lost in less focused equality agenda**

‘There are pressures for the LGB and T network to become part of a wider advisory forum. We feel that LGBT issues have tended to get lost in that forum’ (Gay man, part of an advisory forum to a public service)

- **Other indications**
 - Reduction in community engagement
 - Cutting monitoring of service access by sexual orientation and/ or gender reassignment

Summary



4.

Not just a nice thing to do

Worse pay and conditions leading to hardship and stress

Loss of the expertise of older LGBT workers with significant impact on services

Sense of isolation and fears about psychological well-being in the context of cuts to mental health services

Feelings of marginalisation and growing invisibility at individual and service levels

Thank you

If you want further information or would like to contact the author,

Dr Martin Mitchell

Senior Researcher

T. 020 7549 7061

E. martin.mitchell@natcen.ac.uk

Visit us online, natcen.ac.uk

Full report at: <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/205545/unison-lgbt-austerity-final-report.pdf>

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