



Older Queer Voices Roundtable
The Next Decade for Older LGBTQ+ People
Venue: Jubilee Room, House of Commons Date: 5th May 2026

Executive Summary

Overview

Hosted by ParliOUT and Older Queer Voices Founders, Raga D'silva and Nicola Fenton, and chaired by Queer Britain founder, Joseph Galliano-Doig MBE.

We are grateful for the powerful pre-prepared testimonies and provocations offered by Lisa Power, Bob Green, Julian Hows, Ted Brown, Keith Winestein, Claire Harvey, Caroline Paige and Dr Clare Summerskill. Audience members shared their lived experiences.

The room saw a diverse group of LGBTQ+ activists, healthcare professionals, and community members begin a discussion in Parliament about the unmet needs and systemic problems faced by older LGBTQ+ people.

We heard older LGBTQ+ people call for the dignity, safety, and belonging they deserve and that they fought to establish for theirs and future generations. The room called on policymakers, care providers, and the wider community to ensure aging does not result in a return to the closet and instead to create a future rooted in dignity, visibility, and much-needed systemic change.

Testimonies and discussion emphasised that while older LGBTQ+ people lived through and campaigned against decades of criminalisation and partial criminalisation, the HIV/AIDS crisis, and Section 28, anxiety remains about aging in systems that lack cultural competency and adequate funding.

- **Fear of Care:** A defining reflection was the statement that many would “rather die than go into a care home” with a huge concern amongst members of our community that we will be mistreated by ‘carers’ because of our sexual or gender identity.
- **Return to the closet:** There is a profound fear of being forced to conceal identity in later life to access safe housing or support, particularly for those facing cognitive decline or dementia.
- **Economic & Housing Insecurity:** Decades of workplace discrimination have led to long-term financial disadvantage, compounded by a lack of affordable, LGBTQ+-affirming housing.

Key Concerns

- **Trans Ageing:** Older trans people face fear regarding healthcare discrimination, identity erasure, and a lack of understanding within care systems. These fears are reinforced by experience.
- **Intergenerational Disconnect:** There is a perceived invisibility of older people in youth-focused queer spaces and a need to bridge the gap through storytelling and mentorship.
- **Disability & Isolation:** Disabled LGBTQ+ people facing heightened exclusion and social isolation.
- **Trauma-Informed Support:** The cumulative impact of lifelong stigma requires mental health services that are both culturally competent and understand historical trauma.

Potential Priorities To Guide The Next Decade Of Advocacy

1. Implement mandatory LGBTQ+ inclusion training across health and social care, with greater oversight from the Care Quality Commission.
2. Develop and scale LGBTQ+ affirming housing and care models for those at all economic levels.
3. Build partnerships with universities to gather better data on older queer lives and establish intergenerational programmes
4. Create community-led guidance on care planning, powers of attorney, and safeguarding identity in later life.

Introduction

On 5th May, Older Queer Voices convened a roundtable discussion at the House of Commons, Chaired by Joseph Galliano-Doig MBE, hosted by Raga D'silva and Nicola Fenton (Founder of Older Queer Voices) bringing together activists, healthcare professionals, housing leaders, researchers, artists, policy specialists, carers and members of the LGBTQ+ community to discuss one central question:

“What next for older queer lives?”

Older Queer Voices began as a podcast dedicated to documenting the lived experiences of older LGBTQ+ people and has grown into a platform for intergenerational dialogue, storytelling, advocacy and system change.

Through conversations, partnerships and public events, Older Queer Voices seeks to ensure that older LGBTQ+ people are considered within policy, healthcare, housing, culture and community frameworks and life.

This event was designed to create a space where community members' experience could directly inform future thinking around ageing, dignity, care, belonging and visibility.

The discussion focused particularly on health and social care, housing and later life, intergenerational connection, mental health and isolation, disability and accessibility, the experiences of trans older adults, economic inequality, visibility and representation, and the urgent need for practical and systemic change.

While many of the testimonies shared during the session were deeply emotional and, at times, distressing, the conversation was characterised by resilience, honesty, humour and a collective determination to create better futures for older LGBTQ+ people.

This report captures the key themes, concerns, reflections and opportunities raised throughout the discussion.

Context

The roundtable took place against a complex social backdrop.

Many older LGBTQ+ people in the UK have lived through criminalisation, social stigma, workplace discrimination, Section 28, the HIV/AIDS crisis, rejection from family and institutions, lack of legal recognition and social invisibility.

Participants discussed that many members of this generation spent decades fighting for rights, visibility and dignity while also building communities, support networks and cultural spaces in the absence of institutional protection.

Despite progress achieved over recent decades, many older LGBTQ+ people now face significant anxiety about ageing within systems that still lack cultural understanding, inclusion and safety.

A recurring concern throughout the discussion was the fear that LGBTQ+ people may be forced back into the closet in later life to access care, housing or support safely.

Fear and Distrust Within Health and Social Care Systems

One of the most urgent themes expressed was a deep fear many older LGBTQ+ people feel towards the health and social care system, particularly around care homes and later-life care.

Care homes were described as spaces associated with fear, invisibility and loss of autonomy. There was a recurring theme that many attendees would “rather die than go into a care home.”

Participants described fears including:

- Being forced back into the closet in later life
- Having relationships ignored or erased
- Experiencing homophobia or transphobia from staff or residents
- Loss of dignity
- Loss of agency
- Fears around dementia and identity loss
- Fear of being othered at the point of greatest vulnerability.

The discussion highlighted serious concerns about the wider care system itself. Many participants argued that the current care model is fundamentally broken, not only for LGBTQ+ people but for society more broadly.

Contributors spoke about:

- Underfunded care systems
- Poorly paid and unsupported care workers
- Lack of cultural competency training
- Short care visits that fail to meet emotional or physical needs
- Unaffordability of care
- Emotional and financial pressure placed on individuals and families
- Absence of systems designed around dignity and humanity.

Several people reflected on the fact that LGBTQ+ concerns around care cannot be separated from the wider crisis within adult social care.

At the same time, participants stressed that LGBTQ+ people face additional layers of vulnerability because of histories of discrimination, rejection and invisibility.

There were concerns raised about the issue of discrimination and prejudice that older LGBTQ+ people can face from 'carers' who come into their own homes.

Particularly moving testimonies were shared around experiences in care homes where same-sex partners were not recognised, where homophobic abuse occurred, and where trans residents experienced fear around exposure, dignity and safety.

One contributor shared the experience of a partner with dementia who was subjected to homophobic abuse in a care home setting, while another spoke about trans residents living in fear of ridicule, exposure or erasure within care environments.

There was discussion around the fear of dementia and cognitive decline. Participants reflected on the emotional impact of forgetting one's own queer identity or transition history, and the vulnerability this creates within systems that do not understand LGBTQ+ lives.

A strong concern throughout the room was that many LGBTQ+ people who had spent decades fighting to live openly now fear having to conceal their identities once again to survive safely within care systems.

Participants repeatedly stressed the need for:

- Mandatory LGBTQ+ inclusion training within care settings
- Better regulation and accountability
- Greater oversight from the Care Quality Commission
- Inclusive care standards
- Better visibility of LGBTQ+ affirming services
and care systems built around dignity rather than mere survival.

Existing initiatives such as Pride in Practice, Pride in Care and HIV Confidential standards were acknowledged positively, though many contributors noted that awareness and implementation remain inconsistent and fragmented.

Housing, Economic Insecurity and Later Life

Housing was another major area of concern.

Participants discussed the lack of affordable LGBTQ+ affirming housing, fear of unsafe or hostile living environments, inaccessibility of existing homes as people age, loneliness and isolation, homelessness within older LGBTQ+ populations and the absence of suitable emergency accommodation.

Several speakers reflected on the reality that many LGBTQ+ people experienced workplace discrimination during key earning years, resulting in long-term economic disadvantage and reduced financial security later in life.

Participants also discussed the importance of preparing for ageing earlier in life, including adapting homes before health crises occur, considering accessibility needs and planning for future care and support.

Examples of positive developments were shared, including LGBTQ+ affirming housing initiatives and emerging models of inclusive later-life housing.

However, participants agreed that current provision remains far below the level of need.

Intergenerational Connection and Community

A major focus of the discussion was the growing disconnect between generations within LGBTQ+ communities.

Participants reflected on ageism within queer culture, youth-focused LGBTQ+ spaces and the feeling among many older people that they are becoming invisible within the very communities they helped build.

At the same time, contributors spoke about the importance of younger generations understanding the histories, struggles and activism that secured many of the freedoms enjoyed today.

The discussion highlighted the importance of intergenerational storytelling, shared spaces, mentorship and recording lived experience.

Several participants stressed that queer history is not simply about remembrance, but about survival knowledge.

There was also recognition that younger LGBTQ+ people face distinct and new pressures including online visibility, social media culture and new forms of discrimination and community fragmentation.

Many contributors emphasised that stronger intergenerational relationships could create empathy, resilience and collective solutions for the future.

Trans Ageing and Visibility

Key concerns included fear of discrimination in healthcare and care settings, public hostility and anti-trans rhetoric, anxiety around identity erasure, lack of understanding within care systems and fear around dignity in later life and death.

Participants discussed the emotional impact of living in a social climate where visibility can simultaneously feel necessary and unsafe.

There was concern that many care systems and institutions remain ill-equipped to understand the diversity and complexity of trans identities and experiences.

Participants highlighted the importance of making older trans lives more visible in public discourse and ensuring that ageing systems are prepared to support trans people safely and respectfully.

Disability, Accessibility and Isolation

The discussion explored the experiences of disabled LGBTQ+ people and the intersections between disability, ageing and queerness.

Concerns were raised around loneliness and social isolation, lack of accessible LGBTQ+ spaces, dependence on carers, inaccessible transport and venues, digital exclusion and reduced social networks.

The importance of accessible community spaces was highlighted as essential for maintaining connection and wellbeing.

Contributors emphasised the need to ensure LGBTQ+ events, services and cultural spaces are designed inclusively from the outset.

Grief, Trauma and Mental Health

Many contributors reflected on the cumulative psychological impact of living through decades of stigma, discrimination and loss.

Participants discussed long-term trauma, internalised shame, HIV/AIDS bereavement, isolation, fear of dependency and the ongoing emotional impact of surviving through periods of criminalisation and social hostility.

One theme was that many LGBTQ+ people learned patterns of self-censorship and invisibility as survival mechanisms, and that these patterns continue to shape experiences later in life.

The need for trauma-informed and culturally competent mental health support was strongly emphasised throughout the session.

Emerging Priorities

Several key priorities were identified for future action.

These included stronger LGBTQ+ inclusion standards within care and housing systems, greater accountability and oversight, better data and research on older LGBTQ+ lives, expansion of LGBTQ+ affirming housing, improved care training and accessibility, protection of chosen family structures, more intergenerational spaces and programmes, greater visibility of older LGBTQ+ voices, and more inclusive mental health and wellbeing support.

It was clear that meaningful change cannot come solely from institutions. Participants emphasised the importance of collective responsibility, community organising and sustained collaboration across generations and sectors.

Reflections

While the conversation surfaced many urgent concerns, it also reflected the extraordinary resilience, creativity and determination that has always existed within LGBTQ+ communities.

Participants repeatedly returned to the idea that queer communities have historically created support systems when institutions failed to do so.

The roundtable demonstrated not only the scale of the challenges facing older LGBTQ+ people, but also the depth of expertise, lived experience and collective care already present within the community.

There was broad agreement that this moment represents an important opportunity not simply to react to crisis, but to intentionally shape a more inclusive future for ageing LGBTQ+ people.

Next Steps

Older Queer Voices will continue to facilitate intergenerational conversations, document and amplify lived experiences, build partnerships across sectors, advocate for inclusive systems and policies, create public platforms for older LGBTQ+ voices and develop future roundtables, events and community initiatives.

A summary of recommendations and opportunities for collaboration will be shared with attendees and relevant organisations following this report.

Closing Reflection

Throughout the discussion, one message remained clear: Older LGBTQ+ people are not asking for pity. They are asking for dignity, safety, visibility and belonging.

The freedoms enjoyed by many LGBTQ+ people today were built by generations who resisted invisibility and created community against enormous odds.

As those generations age, responsibility belongs to us all to ensure queer people can grow older without fear or erasure.

Ageing should not mean disappearing.

And older queer voices must be remembered and continue to shape the future.

Actions for Older Queer Voices and other community members

Reach out to policymakers, local authorities, NHS leaders, and the Care Quality Commission to begin formal conversations about the needs of older LGBTQ+ people within health, housing, and social care systems.

Develop policy paper highlighting concerns around care homes, housing insecurity, mental health, disability, poverty, trans inclusion, and ageing with dignity.

Create a working group made up of activists, healthcare professionals, housing organisations, researchers, and people with lived experience to guide future action and advocacy.

Engage with care providers and housing associations to encourage adoption of LGBTQ+ inclusive standards inc. Pride in Practice, Pride in Care, House Proud and HIV Confident.

Build partnerships with universities and researchers to gather stronger evidence and lived experience data on older LGBTQ+ communities, particularly around care, housing, poverty, and isolation.

Develop intergenerational programmes and events that bring younger and older LGBTQ+ people together through storytelling, mentoring, and shared community spaces.

Expand Older Queer Voices platform with more public conversations, and the planned festival to ensure older queer lives remain visible, heard, and documented.

Create practical community resources around ageing, including guidance on wills, powers of attorney, care, housing and safeguarding LGBTQ+ identity in later life.

Work with LGBTQ+ organisations and cultural institutions to amplify older queer stories through theatre, media, exhibitions, writing, and digital platforms.

Advocate for mandatory LGBTQ+ cultural competency training across care homes, hospices, hospitals, and adult social care settings.

Establish ongoing conversations with organisations already working in this space, including housing groups, care networks, HIV organisations, disability advocates, and trans-led groups, to avoid duplication and strengthen collective action.

Ensure future conversations move beyond discussion into measurable action by identifying clear priorities, timelines, and opportunities for collaboration.

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