



IMPACTFUL GOVERNANCE
Community Interest Company

DUAL SPIRITS

“Why don’t gay/bi/trans or non-binary masculine presenting people ask for help or refuge in Domestic Abuse situations?”

“I didn't feel I could tell anyone about it because of the whole sense of shame that you're a man”

“I didn't think anyone would understand”

“grew up in a highly controlled religious environment”

“I often felt I shouldn't cause trouble or be a burden”

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“homeless shelters were religious and didn't consider being gay as acceptable”

“better treatment in the U.S. than the U.K.”

“not enough safe spaces”

“didn't want to label myself as a victim”

“police system is a mixed bag”

“hard to talk when you don't know people's opinions”



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INTRODUCTION

This report examined difficult and awkward relationships that members of the LGBTQ+ community, living in Hertfordshire have experienced. The central research question was: 'Why do gay/bi/trans/nonbinary masculine presenting people not seek assistance for difficult and awkward relationships?' The research is part of the Dual Spirits project; which is Impactful Governance's domestic abuse support.

1 The research included a two part process: the first being a questionnaire

2 and the second part being telephone interviews.
QUALITATIVE

The questionnaire was open to the Hertfordshire LGBTQ+ community from March 16th 2026 until June 12th 2026; during that time, 38 people responded to the survey questionnaires and 24 LGBTQ+ people gave in-depth personal details during the telephone interviews, in which participants answered questions about their relationships and they could speak for as long as they needed. The goal for the research was to gather at least 100 responses from the questionnaire; although the responses fell short of the goal, we received quality responses from those who participated in the research. Because domestic abuse, or difficult and awkward relationships, is hard to talk about in the LGBTQ+ community, and there is so few support options available, we gained quality conversations and insights from those who wanted to talk about their experiences.

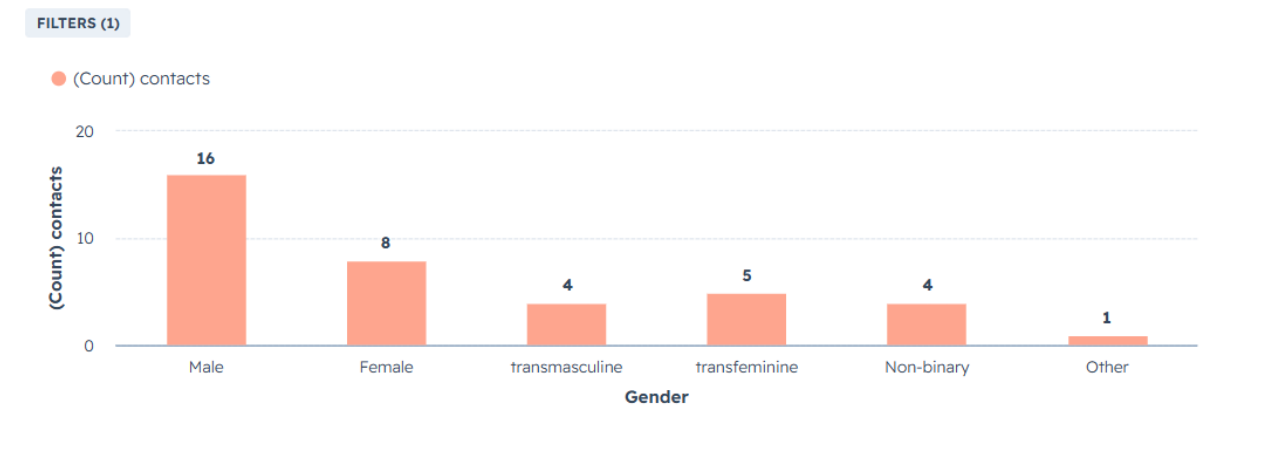
The questionnaire was initially sent to a group of 547 people; later, it was posted on Facebook, posted in the monthly e-newsletter for May and June, and sent to 9,000 people through community groups. In the last two weeks of the research, people were called randomly, inviting them to participate in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also shared in Impactful Governance's mentoring groups, the six Impactful Lives Queers and Peers groups, and the two Impactful Governance Unpaid LGBTQ+ Carers group. Both the questionnaire and telephone interviews were spread by word-of-mouth. About halfway through the research, questions were modified slightly to broaden the scope and clarify confusion whilst retaining the ethical questions integrity;

additional questions were added to fill-in some further identified research gaps during the project. 201 people viewed the questionnaire meaning a 19.05% conversation rate.

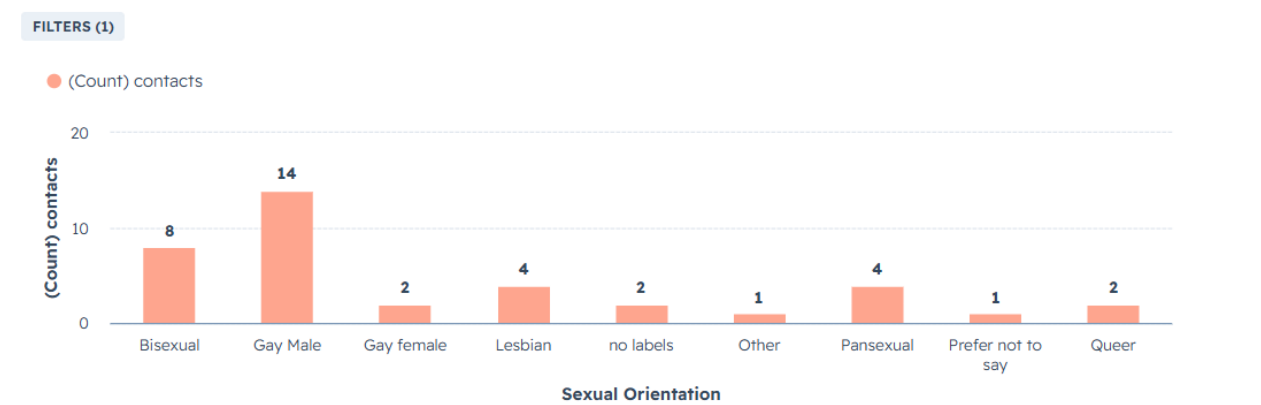
QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

(Total overall respondents = 38 LGBTQ+ adults)

30 responses fit our research question for the gender male, transmasculine, nonbinary perspective on difficult and awkward relationships. 12 questions comprised the questionnaire, which was created and sent out to participants via our CRM platform:

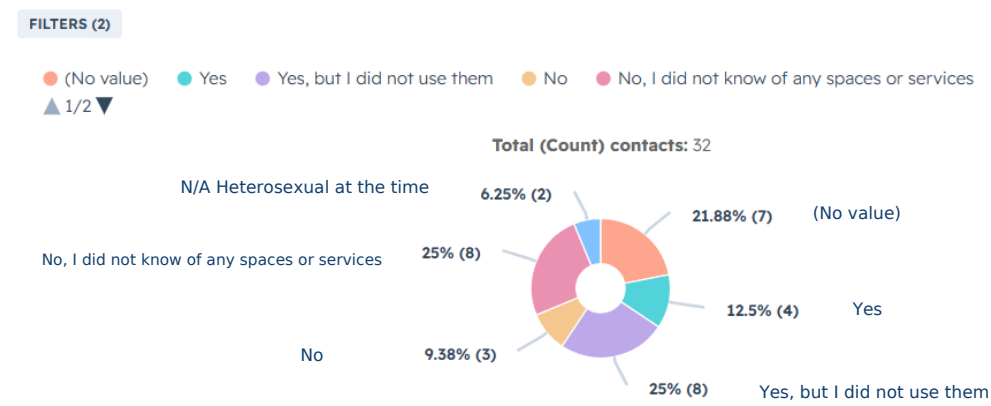


Each participant was a part of the LGBTQ+ community, so the total number of responses fit the research demographic to gather insight from individuals who are not heterosexual:



Of those 38 people, 33 responded with yes to having experienced a difficult or awkward relationship; 19 reported that the relationship was with a romantic partner, 10 with a family member, 1 with a friend, 1 with an ex-partner, and 1 as a teen/young person relationship.

Focusing now only on the 30 LGBTQ+ masculine presenting people who responded. These are the responses for the question: ‘Were LGBTQ+ friendly support services available during your difficult relationship?’



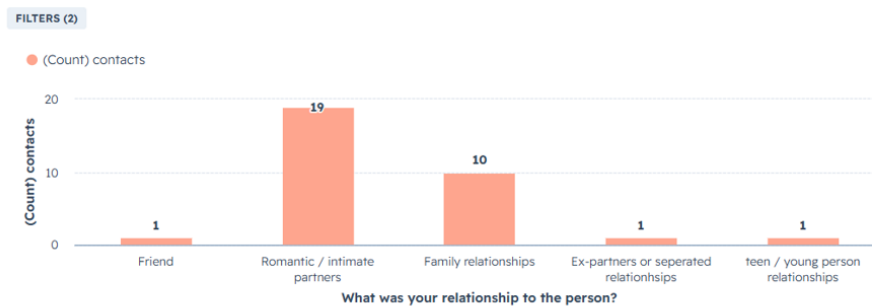
Considering the research topic, we would expect this to be a higher than average % of people who had no services available to them, although this is even higher than anticipated.

These are the responses for the question: ‘Have you ever been in a relationship that felt difficult or uncomfortable? (e. g. romantic, friendship, family)’

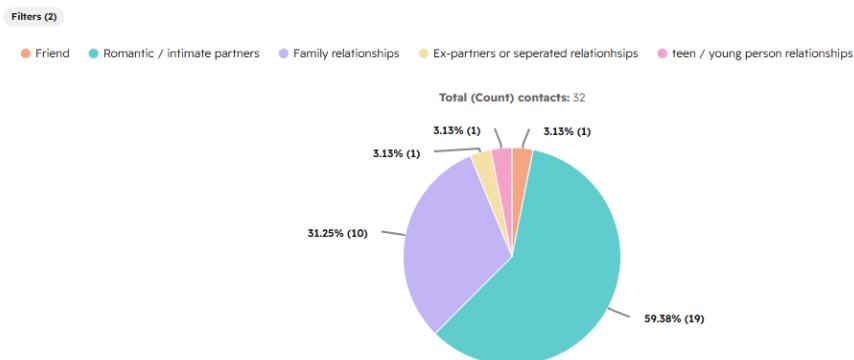


Meaning: Masculine presenting LGBTQ+ respondents reported high levels of difficult relationships at 89% in this research.

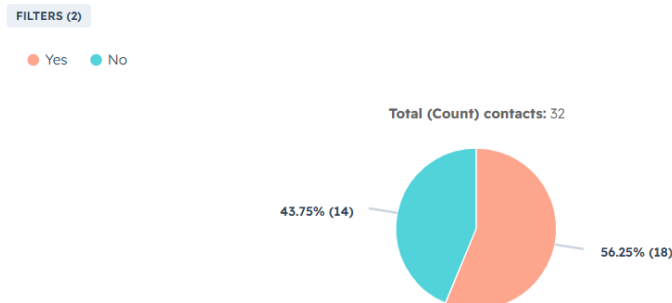
The table below shows the responses for the question "What was your relationship to the person?"



Meaning: 1/3rd of difficult relationships are with families and 2/3rds are romantic relationships.



These are responses for the question: 'Did you have support from family, friends, or professionals during the relationship?'



For Domestic Abuse services or support received, people wrote in:

- 'After my relationship broke down, I relied on family and friends. This helped me feel more positive.'
- 'Couple of friends and trustees of herts pride, mind counsellor McMillan nurse'
- 'I didn't reach until after a brief separation'
- 'I lived in New York but didn't seek help as I hoped to change it. Dumb move.'
- 'Impactful Governance, Switchboard.'
- 'In the 1970s when, I was a teenager to young adult, there weren't any gay support groups that I knew of. In the 1980's I used to go to the Samaritans when I felt really lost and bad about things. Later, I became aware of some services, I used to go to London Friend and

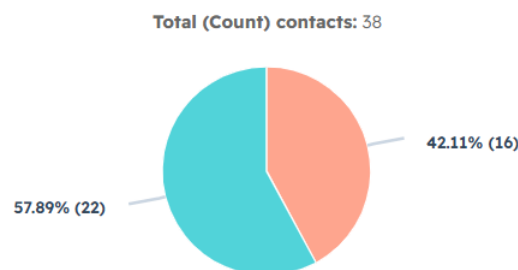
then there were other more local gay friendly support services developing in the later part of the 1980's.'

- 'Queer Therapist'
- 'Relate who used to be called something different in those days.'
- 'Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA)'

These are responses for the question: 'Do you know others who have experienced a difficult relationship?'

FILTERS (1)

● No ● Yes

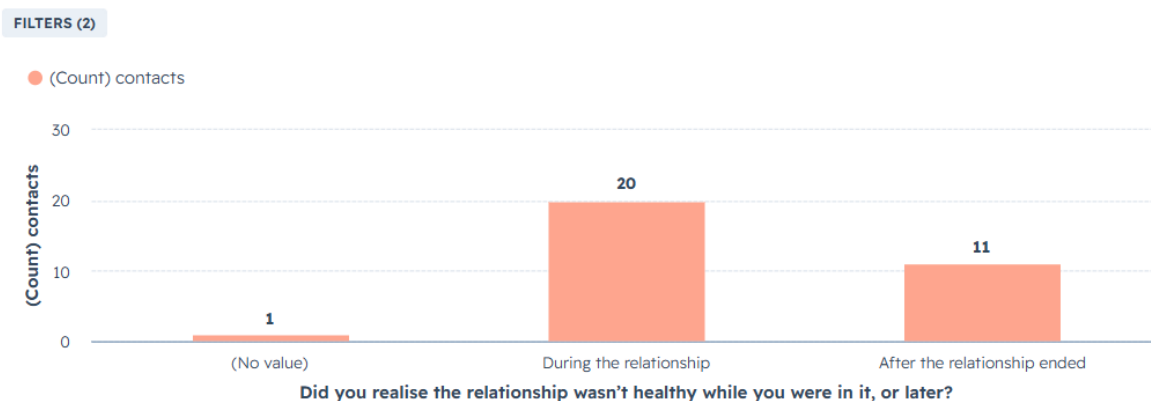


People wrote-in responses to knowing other LGBTQ+ people in a difficult or awkward relationship:

- 'A few of my trans male and non binary friends have been in abusive relationships.'
- 'Another emotionally unavailable partner.'
- 'Can't as a current legal case'
- 'I have had clients in difficult relationships who seem to feel reluctant to give up on the relationship.'
- 'I know of people who have had naughty words from morons.'
- 'I'm sure I do, but we have not really talked about it much. I guess it's too painful to keep bringing up?'
- 'I've known many over the years.'
- 'I'm aware if various people who have felt awkward about coming out to their families in fear of negativity towards them. Growing up in Harlow, there was a lot of homophobic banter in schools which made me feel awkward.'
- 'Lots of LGBTQ+ people have shared stories with me privately.'

- ‘Over the years I have been aware of other LGBTQ+ relationships that have not been healthy, it was not really openly discussed though, more whispered about in quiet corners.’

These are responses for the question: ‘Did you realise the relationship wasn’t healthy while you were in it, or later?’



For the question ‘How did the relationship impact you?’ people wrote in:

- ‘Challenged me’
- ‘Emotionally hurt and angry. It also impacted my work and my finances’
- ‘Felt humiliated hurt disappointment let down isolated ashamed disregard’
- ‘Hugely impacted my sense of psychological and at times physical safety. Impacted my sense of self and self-esteem’
- ‘I grew up in a high-control religious group and my thoughts, feelings, appearance and behaviour were all heavily controlled. I still have tension from my brother who is a member of the organisation still, who is trying to find information about me and my transition. He could use this information to get me officially removed from the organisation which could mean I wouldn't be able to see my mother anymore. My mother is disabled and requires my care sometimes.’
- ‘I grew up in social services care and have serious negatively life impacting trauma from that. This experience affected my ability to develop positive and loving relationships and so the trauma was extended into my relationships. I've had suicidal thoughts since the age of 15 to the present. The last time I tried to end my life was when I was 23 and I'm 66 now.’

- 'I learned from it'
- 'I think I have ADHD/ASD so I don't know if it's that, but I also when I came out my family were not supportive. It was a time where I felt uncomfortable in my own home.'
- 'I've had a romantic relationship that has left me traumatised and I will be in therapy for a long time.'
- 'It did not affect me mentally, but I took it as a learning experience and move on.'
- 'It was quite challenging emotionally'
- 'It was toxic and very upsetting'
- 'It was traumatic and broke up'
- 'Lead to confrontation and exploitation of expectations.'
- 'Made me stressed and impacted my ability to feel my emotions and express them. Led to dissociation over the long term.'
- 'Made me wary of others'
- 'Negative mental health aspects - Feelings of confusion/not being good enough/not being a good partner'
- 'Not significantly'
- 'Reduced trust in others'
- 'Some of my past relationships, including friendships, family relationships, and personal relationships, have had periods of awkwardness, tension, or difficulty. These experiences affected me emotionally because they sometimes left me feeling misunderstood, uncertain, and cautious about expressing myself. At times, I felt that my dignity was not respected, especially when communication became forceful, aggressive, condescending, or controlling. Over time, this kind of behaviour could feel like bullying, particularly when I felt pressured, spoken down to, or made to feel smaller rather than treated as an equal. This affected my confidence and made it harder for me to trust my own judgement, because I often found myself overthinking situations, questioning whether I had done something wrong, and trying to keep the peace even when I felt uncomfortable or disrespected. However, these experiences have also helped me become more reflective, more aware of my boundaries, and more committed to building healthier relationships based on mutual respect, emotional safety, honesty, and clear communication. I have

learned that I need relationships where I am treated with dignity, where concerns can be expressed calmly, and where disagreement does not become intimidation, pressure, or humiliation.'

- 'Struggles with mental health'
- 'They caused me to hide my identity, my interests and my personality; I was very emotionally shut down, depressed and angry.'
- 'When my first real relationship broke down, it was very upsetting. I didn't know why and hoped the relationship would continue.'

For the question 'What makes services and spaces inaccessible?' people said:

- 'I didn't need them'
- 'I didn't feel that the situation was that bad. I didn't know that support was available.'
- 'I was too busy blaming myself and didn't realise it was abusive. I would've been scared to reach out anyway.'
- 'If I would have felt something classed as domestic abuse I would have reached out'
- 'N/A for me personally to DA Safe Space when I've attended Queers and Peers Group'
- 'The relationship was controlling and manipulative'
- 'The town I lived in didn't have a support group accessible to the public (that I knew of). I couldn't travel far as I don't have a car and struggle with public transport due to being autistic.'

9

9 people responded that 'It was a family issue and too complicated to reach out.'

4

4 people responded, 'Worried about discrimination (from NHS/ Police/ Homeless Shelters/ Religious Spaces/ or Support groups)

4

4 people said, 'I was not 'out' yet.'

2

2 people said, 'I was in a heterosexual relationship'

2

2 people said, 'There were none in my area.'

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW RESPONSES

The twenty-four people who consented to a telephone interview answered the same questions across each interview; if the participant answered a question before it was asked, the question was skipped. Participants knew that the interviewer was also LGBTQ+, to ensure solidarity and safety, and they were welcome to talk for as long or as little as they preferred. Participants who agreed to an interview were grateful that someone reached out to the community. Generally, participants spoke for at least twenty minutes, and some interviews were nearly an hour. Having a human connection helped people open up about their experiences and share what they went through. There was an internal safeguarding protocol in place prior to interviews, in case there was an additional support need identified. The experiences from participants in their lives made trusting others and reaching out difficult because the relationships were so complicated and the support from either statutory services, heteronormative or personal connections was so weak that real support was difficult to obtain. Participants experienced a variety of difficult types of relationships, such as romantic, familial, platonic, and work-relationships.

Why don't LGBTQ+ masculine presenting people ask for help?

The complicated intricacies of relationships and being queer made it difficult for participants to seek assistance or get adequate assistance if they sought help. A gay man reported experiencing shame, that there was no support in Devon, and there was no LGBTQ+ support in 1991. Hertfordshire has a transient population of people from other counties who move in and from other countries, both having limited networks and support. A bisexual woman responded that she does not have much or not the best support; she has one nonbinary friend for support, but not a lot, and she reported that she 'has used ChatGPT to navigate my relationship.' Participants reported experience with domestic abuse in various forms; Impactful Lives identifies domestic abuse ranging from sexual, physical, emotional, coercive behaviour, and conversion therapy. X number of participants reported domestic abuse with romantic partners and X amount with family members.

One gay man reported that his ex-partner physically abused him by hitting him with a laptop and smashing everything in his apartment. He said, 'A lot of his [ex-partner's] treatment, in hindsight, was quite manipulative.' This participant was working in the US at the time and on a visa; he said that he 'didn't feel like I could tell anyone what

happened.’ The situation could have destabilized his life and that he didn’t ‘want to be put on a document for visas and document that you’re in trouble.’ He did not reach out for assistance in his domestic abuse situation because he ‘didn’t feel I could tell anyone about it because the whole sense of shame that you’re a man. Battered spouse is the woman .’ The same participant experienced controlling and coercive behaviour abuse because he said, ‘I removed myself from my community because that was the thing [my ex-partner] was jealous of.’ A bisexual woman, responded that every relationship was difficult because of mental health (romantic and platonic). She reported being raped by three men. Three transmasculine men (75%) stated that they were groomed as children. Because the situation was so difficult, one of them reported that there were ‘times when I thought it was normal and others when I felt I couldn’t talk about it to anyone in fear of getting people in trouble.’ He said that he ‘needed someone to safeguard’ him in the situation. Another transmasculine person said that the relationship began when he was 15, and that the ex-partner was ‘abusive physically and sexually for four years.’ A transgender man responded that he has experienced difficult relationships, ‘All my life.’ The difficulties of child grooming in a queer situation made it difficult for the transmasculine participants to seek assistance. One of the transmasculine participants reported that he did not reach out because it was so complex it was ‘hard to convey’ and explain to someone. Another transmasculine person reported that he experienced difficulty with ‘trusting people.’ A third transmasculine person said that he ‘didn’t feel he was able to’ seek assistance and that he ‘didn’t think anyone would understand.’

LGBTQ+ people experience barriers within family dynamics which prevent them from either realizing the difficult relationship is problematic or that they could not talk about their experience. One transmasculine person reached out to teachers when he was in school, but there was mixed support; he had to seek online communities for help. A transgender bisexual man reported that he grew up in a highly controlled religious environment and that mental health support was stigmatized; he couldn’t talk openly about relationships because he wasn’t supposed to be in a relationship. Another gay male responded that his first big difficult relationship was with his dad and is an ongoing difficulty. He said his father is emotionally neglectful of his sexuality. His dad is in his late 70s, and the participant is in his late 40s. The interviewee grew up in 80s when dad was in 40s; being gay was illegal

in UK until 1967, was illegal. The participant didn't know where to turn. A transgender woman reported that her family members abused each other, but not her. She said that she 'didn't realize she needed help.' She said that 'even looking back, she wonders if it was domestic abuse and thinking it's not real.' She further stated that the reason she does not reach out for assistance is that 'I'm adopted, and that has shaped how I relate to people. I've often felt I shouldn't cause trouble or be a burden. That mindset can make it harder for some people to ask for help, even when support is available.' One gay man reported that his family physically and emotionally abused him; he reported that his family locked him in a room, isolated and treated 'as a liability.' His family members 'saw kindness as a weakness.' The family troubles experienced by this individual made 'it difficult to find a job' and interact with society. One transmasculine person reported that he has difficulties with his mother after coming out; he said that he is closeted and has to transition slowly so she doesn't notice. Another transmasculine participant said his family shows subtle transphobia like refusing to use his new name and made him pick a different name alongside the lack of acknowledgement/engagement with his new identity.

Two members of the LGBTQ+ experienced religious persecution based on their identity. One transmasculine person discussed his experience in the religious environment and said, 'I grew up in a high-control religious environment in a cult that was unaccepting.' He said that it 'was not until I was 27-28 years old that I realised I was different.' Another transmasculine person expressed that their difficult relationship was a 'situationship [who] was in his faith community' and he 'didn't want to open a can of worms.' He did not talk about it because he was 'not wanting to invite drama.' A gay man reported that he sought assistance at homeless shelters, and he 'ended up in Church in Hong Kong, but they were dismissive' of his identity. LGBTQ+ people experience persecution and ignorance based on religious grounds. The gay man further stated that he was 'yearning for growth, but he couldn't get any.' He said the homeless shelters he reached out to were religious and didn't consider being gay as acceptable. The treatment from religious groups towards the LGBTQ+ community causes individuals to suppress their identity and turn them away from seeking support when it is needed.

Three people who previously lived in the US reported having a better time in the US and not facing discrimination like in the UK. Two of these participants noted that being on visas made it difficult and challenging to reach out for support because that would risk their livelihood in a different country. Two participants reported having better treatment in the US than the UK. A gay man reported, that the 'US has been wonderful' and that it 'always treated [me] right.' One bisexual woman reported that 'only when I was in a safe space' she could come out. She said that there are 'not enough safe spaces in St. Albans' and that she 'lacked representation. She says one of the differences between the treatment of LGBTQ+ people 'in UK people think 'partner' means a man, and have to feel safe to say it's with a woman.' She said, 'Hertfordshire is lacking support for LGBTQ+ people.'

Because there are so many barriers between the queer community and assistance, people end up suppressing their emotions or dealing with the problem without professional assistance. One gay man said that another guy on Grindr kept harassing him and getting new profiles to harass him. The participant said, 'I didn't want to label myself as a victim because if it was serious I would go to court. If it's low-level, I handle it myself. It would take ages for victims to get rights.' He said that the police system is a 'mixed bag,' which prevents him from reaching out for professional assistance. He says that he doesn't 'want the wrong person and it's not a quick process.' He said that 'CPS, justice system, no matter what it's slow.' He said that he has been a victim before, and 'didn't want the hassle—just wanted to go home and forget about it.' Two gay men reported that support differed between the 1990s and the present day, making it difficult for them to receive assistance. One gay man said that in '1991 [there wasn't] any support.' Another gay man said that there was 'not much out there at the time' in 1996, and he said 'at the time people [were] narrower.' He said that he 'wasn't going to come out' but it got better after 1998, even though it was 'still difficult to be gay back then.' He said that the acceptance for LGBTQ+ people is better than it was 30 years ago. He still feels like it is 'hard to talk when [you] don't know people's opinion.' The widespread disregard for LGBTQ+ individuals makes it difficult to reach out for support and talk about themselves when society disrespects people based on their sexual orientation.

Participants reported suppressing their emotions and not reaching out for assistance when they needed it. A transmasculine person said that

he 'didn't seek mental health support' and 'internalized' the difficult and awkward relationship. Another transmasculine person responded that he coped with self-harming. A transfeminine person reported that she 'spent a lot of time digesting' the relationship after it ended. A gay man said that he 'thought of other things.' Without spaces to talk openly about difficult and awkward relationships, LGBTQ+ individuals internalize their trauma from the relationship.

While the government does not assist directly with difficult and awkward relationships, three people reported having a workplace difficulty, but because of safeguarding in the workplace, they sought assistance. People who experienced difficult relationships in the workplace sought assistance because there were safeguarding protocols with HR. A transmasculine person did seek assistance with coworker. He talked with management because there's HR and policies and procedures which are 'clearly defined.' A gay man experienced a difficult relationship with a coworker—it was not based on his sexuality—and communicated with his boss about how to handle the relationship. All of the work relationships were resolved because there were safeguarding policies in place.

POSITIVE MESSAGE

Seven people reported that they sought professional assistance for their difficult and awkward relationship; however, six participants reported that they are inadequately supported by government systems like the police, the NHS, and public services like homeless shelters. Safe spaces or government support systems were not truly safe because they were homophobic environments and institutional attitudes are based on bias, stigma, religious beliefs or cultural views of the LGBTQ+ community .

One gay man reported that he lives in supported living, and felt the council discriminated against his age, disability, and being gay. He also experienced physical abuse from strangers in the streets based on his sexuality; he reported the hate crimes to the police, but they dismissed them. He said he 'can't get anyone to help him out' and that he is 'fighting straight people and can't get any support.' He said, 'Yes, I could've gotten [help] earlier and I still need it.' The police and hospital 'were crap' and had to stop working for the council. He said the 'biggest thing is council won't help.' Three social work reports were undertaken on him because he's gay, he states "but don't really support". He describes himself as a good person who loves volunteering, but he is

sitting indoors and he doesn't want to get a job or voluntary work because people 'were crap' towards him. He says that he is 'fighting straight people and can't get any support.'

Another gay man reported that he did seek assistance: 'Ended up in Church in Hong Kong, but dismissive.' The homeless shelters he went to were religious and didn't accept his sexuality. Conversion therapy is still not banned in the UK, which prevents individuals, as mentioned earlier, from receiving adequate support within religious institutions. He said that he 'Didn't trust the Samaritans so much.' He said, 'I never really lived a full life because I had to keep track of what I said,' and that, 'I was yearning for growth but I couldn't get any.' This individual eventually ended up at a charity to help vulnerable people. His experience there has been positive, and he experienced 'lots of heartache and maturity to learn openly' and learned that 'purpose in life is to help others.' The positive environment in which a community accepts his sexuality allowed him to flourish.

Two participants reported seeking assistance from the NHS but not receiving valuable assistance. A transgender male reported that he has been on the NHS waiting list for gender-affirming healthcare, specifically to start testosterone, since 2022. He started hormone replacement therapy privately, which is expensive, and he has no support financially or emotionally. He said it 'would be helpful for the government to step in and help.' A bisexual woman reported that she tried getting help, but felt it was hard to get impartial professional help. She got therapy from the NHS, but skimmed over her relationship and sexuality. She spoke with her therapist, but she doesn't know if 'they were equipped to assist with being gay.' Some charities asked about being queer, but didn't touch on being gay.

Participants reported that Impactful Lives and Impactful Governance was a helpful support system for them because it is queer people helping queer people. A gay man reported that he sought friends for assistance and joined Impactful Lives for the group meetings. A bisexual woman reported, 'Queers and Peers is amazing. Going to these events have made me feel normal.' She further emphasized, 'It felt important to me to speak with people.' Impactful Lives resolves some of the need for queer spaces within Hertfordshire.

Ending the interviews by asking about good relationships was a positive, the question sparked joy and excitement in the participants, and it gave

them an opportunity to reflect on the good people in their lives. A gay male describes himself as a 'happy homo' and that his life philosophy is to 'live your life and enjoy it' and that 'if you're honest then you live a happier life.' A transfeminine person said that a good relationship has 'lots of communication' and 'listening to how the other shows/gives love.' A gay male said that a good relationship is 'clearing the fog for them and letting them find their own way.' He said, 'My other half keeps me in check' and that they 'love openly.' A bisexual woman said a good relationship is 'somebody who makes you feel good' and 'somebody you can laugh with.' LGBTQ+ people want joy, love, and happiness in their relationships.

One person said on the questionnaire, 'Over the years I have been aware of other LGBTQ+ relationships that have not been healthy, it was not really openly discussed though, more whispered about in quiet corners.' If there were more safe spaces to ensure that LGBTQ+ people felt comfortable, then individuals could openly talk about their experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Year round safe space buildings are needed for LGBTQ+ people in Hertfordshire, if people are to be encouraged to seek help or refuge. People suppress their relationship difficulties because so much of being gay is being in the closet.
- Instead of expressing one's truest self in their sexuality or gender identity, they have to inherently suppress it due to a lack of visible public support.
- Difficult and awkward relationships lead LGBTQ+ people to suppressing their problems. LGBTQ+ lives and safety systems have been eroded due to claims of politicised identity when instead they are without question human rights, safety and support issues not simply wanting a flag.
- Public environments and government support systems need to change quickly and show more public support in order to reduce domestic abuse. Progress and rainbow flag displays must be encouraged, if services want LGBTQ+ people to ask for help in domestic abuse or other safety situations.

Recommendation 1 -

Create a support for LGBTQ+ people within a physical building and environment, year-round that is for and by the LGBTQ+ communities to discuss concerns and support needs. As mentioned and referenced earlier, participants reported finding space with the Queers and Peers groups with Impactful Lives; if there were more a larger, more wide-spread support system, then more LGBTQ+ people can have emotional security to open up about their difficulties.

Recommendation 2 -

Provide NHS and police staff training for communicating with members of the LGBTQ+ community, including ongoing annual research of common difficulties that are faced and listening to LGBTQ+ perspectives, which would assist people in standard services rather than resorting to an add-on service.

Recommendation 3 -

Homeless shelters or support groups include LGBTQ+ safeguarding over and above religious beliefs or cultural bias. LGBTQ+ people interviewed reported having difficulties with charities that are not “by and for” based on sexuality. Because non-LGBTQ+ charities disregarded LGBTQ+ sexuality and Gender Identity, it added to the problem of participants suppressing themselves and not reaching out for support.

Participants who experienced a difficult/awkward relationship had to keep it a secret because they could not talk openly about it. If there were more accepting environments in which people could talk without discrimination, it would mend the LGBTQ+ community’s ache to be seen and understood.

Because family dynamics are complicated and ‘private’ topics, LGBTQ+ people resort to relying on found-families for support.

Recommendation 4 -

Encourage community organisations to undertake LGBTQ+ Gender Identity Awareness workshops, facilitated by an LGBTQ+ organisation with a track record in education, lived experience staff and using evidence-based LGBTQ+ research.

* Some people called did not think they had ever had a difficult relationship. People who responded ‘no’ to experiencing a difficult relationship had in fact experienced a difficult relationship but did not recognize it as such. One in particular had an experience with family difficulty; although the familial relationship did not involve the participant, she was still affected by the relationship. One person who did have a difficult relationship did not believe it was a difficult relationship. A lot of the problem is that there isn’t enough awareness for what qualifies as a difficult relationship, many LGBTQ+ people are living in relationships that are difficult but they can’t recognise them as difficult due to historic and ongoing abuse that has become normalised, meaning an expected style of relationship or short-term encounter is the norm. That includes family and friends and romantic partners. People resort to relying on chosen families rather than birth families because they were ostracized by their birth families. From the questionnaire, 10 people responded that their difficult relationship was with a family member. One person wrote-in saying, ‘I’m aware if various people who have felt awkward about coming out to their families in fear of negativity towards them.’

APPENDIX

RESEARCH AIMS

1. We are conducting research within Hertfordshire for LGBTQ+ people
2. We want to establish if there is a need for a network group that can inform via a nominated spokesperson to the Inequalities Steering Board.
3. This project will establish engagement in Domestic Abuse with LGBTQ+ people in Hertfordshire and inform support services.
4. In conducting the surveys, we consider issues of age, disability and ethnicity.
5. We also want to explore new ways to deliver community activities on behalf of the NHS, Borough and District Councils & Hertfordshire County Council. Also considering the Unitary Authority changes in Hertfordshire that are due in 2028.
6. The aim is to find mechanisms to enable easier access to services.
7. The final report will enable future co-production with community organisations, staff and volunteers with lived experience.

QUESTIONS USED DURING TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS (Qualitative Research).

1. When in your life did you have a difficult relationship? Can you tell me about it?
2. What were the circumstances around it?
3. What did you do about it at the time?
4. Was there a time where you could've dealt with more help?
5. How did you cope?
6. How did you present the relationship to others?
7. Did the relationship relate to or impact your LGBTQ+ identity?
8. What kind of support did you have during that time/relationship?
9. Were the reasons why you didn't seek assistance?
10. What are examples of a good relationship? Examples of a bad relationship ?

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