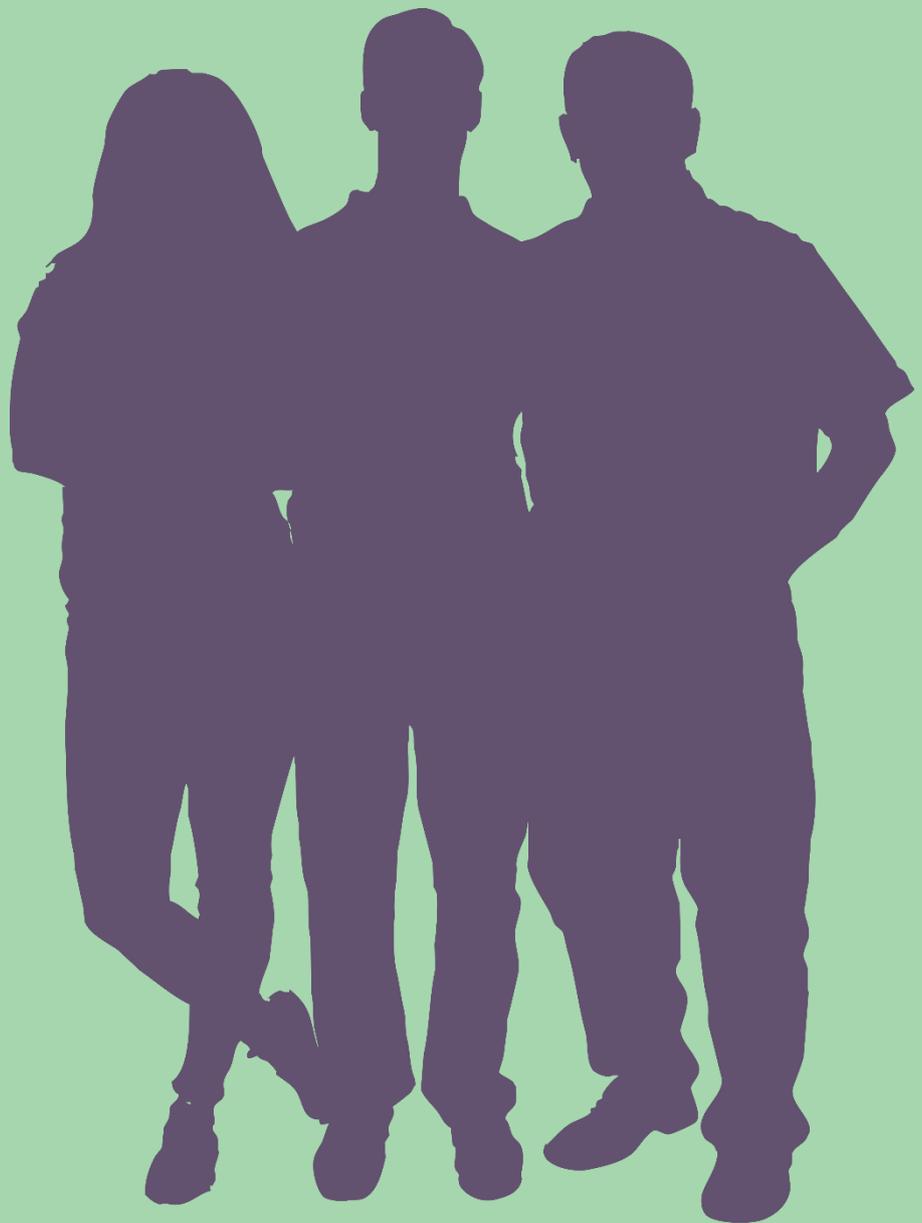


'You feel like a nobody'

An investigation into the support and advice needs of LGBT+ Asylum Seekers in Merseyside



Thanks & Acknowledgements

Above all, I am extremely grateful for the strength and bravery of those asylum seekers and refugees who were willing to share distressing memories and experiences, plus some uplifting stories with me in the hope that doing so would help improve the lives of others.

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Nina Houghton

December 2017

1. Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents evidence about the support and advice needs of LGBT+ asylum seekers in Liverpool. The findings and recommendations it contains are based on the results of a series of seventeen interviews based on set questions with individuals who identify as LGBT+ and have claimed asylum in this country, not necessarily on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity. Similarly, set questions were asked of eighteen front line workers from LGBT+ and asylum organisations.

Despite the development of extremely valuable services provided by many groups and organisations in Liverpool, the results presented here suggest that individuals continue to face considerable barriers both to accessing the help they need to enable them to live with dignity and respect in this city and the legal advice required to assure a fair hearing of their asylum claims in court.

'Around the world more than 70 countries consider homosexuality illegal; in five of these the death penalty can apply. Moreover, the persecution experienced by LGBTQI+ people goes well beyond any official prosecutions. The violence, humiliation, inequality and discrimination many LGBT people face, can be enacted by state officials, but is also often experienced within their own communities and families without any recourse to protection.'

UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group June 2017

Key aims

The aim of this study is to investigate and report on the advice needs of asylum seekers and refugees based currently in the Liverpool City Region who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT+). The intended outcome is to identify gaps in current services and provide the evidence needed for applications for funding to address those gaps whilst building on existing initiatives.

Types of activities

- Initial consultation with key organisations regarding all aspects of the research methods.
- Face to face interviews with asylum seekers and refugees.
- Questionnaire with relevant organisations and follow up one-to-one interviews. The questions asked were mostly qualitative rather than quantitative as was appropriate to the size of the sample and the nature of the study.
- Participant observations conducted at a group organised by an outreach worker for a leading Liverpool charity.
- Telephone calls with regional and national campaigning organisations.

Summary of Key Findings

Of the 18 organisations we interviewed, 14 provide front line services to asylum seekers whilst 9 worked exclusively with refugees. Of the total, 13 were primarily asylum organisations and 5 were specifically LGBT+. 2 have a national campaigning and lobbying role. 9 groups described their role as signposting to other services only. Workers from 6 of the asylum groups reported that they were unaware of whether their service users were LGBT+.

As a result, the severity of the problems experienced can be, in some senses, invisible. Many asylum organisations, including those providing services on behalf of the Home Office, and the Home Office itself, were unable when asked to provide statistics on numbers of individuals claiming asylum on the basis of their sexuality and/or gender identity. There is therefore no reliable and accurate way of identifying the scale and nature of their needs.

In addition to the problem of invisibility, the other major source of extreme hardship is the exceptional social isolation people experience as LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. When people 'come out' within their own communities they are frequently ostracised, abused and threatened with violent attack. This intensifies existing feelings of shame, fear and trauma and makes it especially difficult, sometimes impossible, for people to seek help. Many have been disowned by their families because of their sexuality and so tend to be poorer than others because they are cut off from help from family and are thus more likely to be forced into begging and sexual and other forms of exploitation. In addition, being cut off from emotional support in this way exacerbates the severe mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder, which many face, as well as their vulnerability to abuse.

When making an asylum claim on the grounds of sexual orientation and/ or gender identity, the issue of credibility is a major obstacle. Most come from countries where being LGBT+ is considered a disease or a crime punishable by a prison sentence or even death, or at the very least rejection and isolation from family and friends. Therefore, when asked to provide 'proof' of having lived as a LGBT+ person, they have in their home countries been afraid to disclose their sexuality because of well-grounded fears of persecution. As a result of this quest for 'proof' and the default position of disbelief, everyone we spoke to in this study commented on the frequently intrusive and degrading approach of asylum adjudicators.

The scarcity of legal advice is a major problem. Only 2 asylum organisations we questioned provide immigration advice to OISC level1, and none to level 2. Yet there is a serious scarcity of legal aid lawyers on Merseyside available to help asylum seekers gather evidence for their claim, an issue which was the most frequently highlighted by organisations.

Safety in asylum accommodation is a big issue. Reports of abuse, bullying and discrimination in shared housing were common and the response of accommodation providers variable. The problem is even more severe for those unfortunate enough to be detained in an Immigration Removal Centre, which in the UK can be for an indefinite period.

There are examples of difficulties with interpreters during asylum interviews in LGBT+ claims. The consequences of breaches of confidentiality can be life threatening. Therefore some asylum seekers are understandably reluctant to talk openly to those who come from the same community, and this can be another obstacle to making their case successfully.

Summary of Methodological Limitations

Most of the evidence from asylum seekers and refugees has come from those who attended Sahir House and Many Hands One Heart at the Armistead Centre, so the findings could be skewed in their favour. The short timescale of the project (less than 4 months) means that we have produced an overview rather than an in-depth study. The research was mostly Liverpool based - agencies from outside Liverpool were approached they were not able to respond within the timescale. Some questions could have been improved had we had time to re-draft them. There is a lack of baseline data despite our efforts. At the time of publication, we are still awaiting a response to a Parliamentary question. Similarly, we have been unable to obtain any statistics which would give us a picture of the level of reported Hate Crime in Merseyside. We were

unable to elicit a response from immigration solicitors with experience of representing LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees.

Overview of the Evaluation Approach

Our perspective as a community-based organisation has shaped the approach to designing and conducting this study. Whilst at the outset a literature search was conducted in order to provide a social and political context for the study, the findings are based on the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees themselves as expressed in face to face interviews and through participation in an asylum seeker and refugee support group. This was complemented by a survey of the views of front line workers in community organisations, national charities, the Police, Home Office and its privately outsourced accommodation services.

2. Overview

a. Aims and Outcomes

This study was supported by Big Lottery Fund in 2017. In order to achieve this aim, a part time worker was employed by North Liverpool Citizens Advice to conduct the research and produce a report which would survey existing services and identify important gaps. Its intended outcome is to contribute to an improvement in the lives of LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees by providing the evidence needed to support the development of a partnership project which builds on the valuable work of existing agencies, many of whom have had to curtail their activities and limit the help they offer due to funding cuts.

Additionally, we aimed to develop in the course of the research a directory of local and national advice and support agencies which could be used by workers and service users.

b. Activities of the Project

Citizens Advice launched the study in July 2017 with an invitation to asylum, refugee and LGBT+ support agencies in Liverpool to meet the researcher and to consult on the way forward and methods to be used. We asked questions about the following:

- Most appropriate survey methods and core questions
- Groups to be consulted, locally, regionally, nationally.
- Use of interpreters
- Issues of confidentiality

The following organisations were represented at this initial meeting:

- Armistead
- Sahir House
- Refugee Action
- Merseyside Police Community Engagement

Whilst this group inevitably did not include everyone working in this field, they are all key to future developments and all welcomed the research and were willing to be involved. Their suggestions and comments informed the approach we took to the study.

Feedback from asylum seekers and refugees – the core of this research

Interviews with 17 individuals form the core of this research and provided rich and moving evidence. Everyone interviewed identify as LGBT+. Though all had had first-hand experience of the asylum process, 6 had been granted Limited Leave to Remain in the UK for 5 years. 6 of the people we interviewed had not felt able to reveal their sexuality or gender identity to any agencies (including the Home Office) other than Many Hands One Heart, so this issue was not part of their asylum claim.

Most were referred to us by Many Hands One Heart and Asylum Link, based in Liverpool. Therefore, it should be noted that the feedback we gathered was from those already engaging with support groups.

The interviews took place at Sahir House or, on two occasions, in a person's home. Anonymity has been carefully observed. Interviews were conducted with the greatest respect for confidentiality and care has been taken in this report to completely change all names, first languages and countries of origin.

For a list of questions, we asked individuals see Appendix 3

Feedback from asylum, refugee and LGBT+ agencies

Building on contacts made through the Lottery Funded OUTreach project in North Liverpool Citizens Advice, we contacted agencies providing advice and support in this field. The support they provide is wide ranging, including health and wellbeing support, social activities, legal help, food banks, benefits and housing advice.

We used a questionnaire as the basis of interviews and telephone surveys with twenty local organisations which included open questions to encourage a dialogue about potential gaps in provision.

We also interviewed face to face or by telephone 20 regional and national organisations which provide information and support (including legal help) and /or engage in campaigning activities. This included input from the Black LGBT Caucus of a Trade Union which represents local authority and third sector and community workers and has been involved for many years in raising issues of unfairness and discrimination affecting asylum seekers and refugees.

Though we made every effort to reach everyone with evidence to provide, it is inevitable that there are groups we have missed. In the current funding climate, groups start up and close down regularly and the picture changes constantly.

- The information we gained from this activity has formed the content of the Directory in Appendix 4
- For a list of agencies who participated, see Appendix 1
- For the list of questions we asked organisations, see Appendix 2

Focus groups

LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees can be difficult to engage with for a variety of reasons, mostly connected with the exceptionally high levels of discrimination they face. It has therefore been essential to work with trusted groups and agencies in safe settings. The researcher was invited to the Many Hands One Heart support group which meets in central Liverpool and is supported by outreach workers from Sahir House and Armistead. This usually attracts as many as 30 people and we were able to question group members there about their views and experiences of support and advice needs, met and unmet.

Context of the study

The position of LGBT+ asylum seekers has to be seen within the context of a 'hostile environment'

"for asylum which this Government enshrined in the Immigration Act of 2016. Describing her intentions for the legislation in 2012, the then Home Secretary told the Daily Telegraph that, 'the aim is to create here in Britain a really hostile environment for illegal immigration **Refugeetales.org**

There has been a steady decline in the number of decisions to grant discretionary leave to remain. The percentage of decisions to grant refugee status was the lowest in 2016 than in the past 5 years.

In 2016 66% of initial responses to asylum claims were refusals, though 41% of appeals were allowed, which calls into question the quality of the original decision-making. **Refugee Council Annual Trends Feb 2017**

This has a direct impact on the hardship experienced by all asylum seekers, most of whom cannot return to their country of origin and so become destitute when their asylum claim is exhausted.

There is a wealth of evidence to show that LGBT+ asylum seekers face issues common to others seeking safety in the UK, but they are compounded by prejudice, stigma and a lack of awareness within refugee communities and in wider society. This makes them particularly vulnerable, and their key problems are inextricably linked: invisibility and isolation.

Invisibility

The region of the UK with the largest number of asylum seekers in dispersal accommodation at the end of 2016 was the North West (9,491). This region has had the largest number since the beginning of 2008.

Liverpool Home Office is the only place in the country which deals with further submissions; this attracts larger numbers of destitute asylum seekers than in other major cities.

It has not yet been possible to find out with any accuracy how many people to date are affected, either nationally or locally. Despite frequent Freedom of Information requests over the past 6 years, no statistics have been forthcoming from the Home Office, despite the fact that Home Office has apparently been recording whether a claim includes sexual orientation since 2011. A researcher from the UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group (UKLGIG) passed a request for these data to the Statistics Team in 2016 but were told they will publicise them only when the reliability and quality of the data is good enough. This has been followed up with a Home Office official who heads up the LGBTI action plan but no response has been received.

At our request, Dan Carden, MP for Walton agreed to table a written question in Parliament on 7th September 2017.

The Minister's response to the tabled question, received on 17th October, states *"The Home Office remains committed to publishing information on the number of people claiming asylum on the basis of sexual orientation. Work is ongoing to assure the quality of the data for publication in line with reporting standards"*

Considering this, the MP will reply with a further question: *"In pursuant to question 9634, when and where will information be published on the number of people claiming asylum on the basis of sexual or gender identity in each year since 2011"*.

Isolation

When people come out within their own communities they are frequently ostracised at the least or abused and subject to violent assault at worst, since those for whom sexuality or gender identity is the core of their asylum claim come from countries where there is State-sponsored homophobia.

In 8 countries, being LGBT is a criminal offence punishable by death, and in 14 it is subject to 14 years to life in prison, with a further 57 where a sentence of up to 14 years can be imposed. **(May 2017: ILGA.org).**

This is the context for the prevalence of homophobia in many asylum and refugee communities, as cited as a key issue by **Jennifer New, PhD Researcher, Liverpool John Moores University in the Spring 2017 edition of the magazine Sexual Health.**

Because of their exceptional social isolation, LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees may not be able to collaborate with others and thus to find ways of coping with the deprivation and destitution that many asylum seekers face, such as accessing word of mouth information about where to get help with food and clothing or finding opportunities for casual work. A mental health development worker told me that for example LGBT+ asylum seekers may be unable to access Church groups (which are often the source of practical help) because of fears of being 'outed' within their own community and then to their family back home.

Many have been disowned by their families because of their sexuality and tend to be poorer than others because they are cut off from any help from family in the form of money, mobile phones or clothing. Thus, they are more likely to be forced into begging and sexual and other forms of exploitation.

Most importantly, being cut off from emotional support exacerbates the severe mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder, which many face, as well as their vulnerability to abuse here when they have supposedly reached sanctuary here in the UK.

There is a serious problem with access to legal help for asylum seekers since the Legal Aid Agency severely cut funds for asylum cases.

3. The evaluation approach

a. Existing Research

Our perspective as a community-based organisation has shaped the approach to designing and conducting this study. Our ambition is that this study will complement the valuable work conducted by all the individuals and organisations mentioned in this report.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees- Guidelines on International Protection 2012

In the introduction, it states that 'it is widely documented that LGBTI individuals are the targets of killings, sexual and gender-based violence, physical attacks, torture, arbitrary detention, accusations of immoral or deviant behaviour,in all regions around the world' Yet despite this awareness being in the public domain, the treatment that asylum seekers receive from the authorities in this country does not appear to take it into account '

Jennifer New, PhD Researcher, Liverpool John Moores University in the Spring 2017 edition of the magazine Sexual Health

researched the experiences and needs of LGBT + people seeking asylum and refugees, some of whom may also live with HIV, living in Liverpool. It was a collaborative research project with Sahir House, an HIV Support, Information and Training Centre in Merseyside.

The research identified personal, social and structural barriers that could restrict individuals from sharing their identities and experiences and was in turn found to directly impact on their ability to access and receive support. A core part of it was to work with key stakeholders in Liverpool to establish a network for this particular client group to provide a safe, supportive and confidential meeting space once every fortnight. As a result, in March 2016 Many Hands One Heart was set up and has flourished; now supporting more than 30 individuals. The group receives information; gains advice and support from professionals; services; volunteers and each other.

However, like most of the Third Sector, this group is precariously funded and it is hoped that this research will be helpful in supporting further sources of partnership funding so that the valuable work can continue and grow.

Merseycare NHS Trust – working with people seeking asylum & refuge - March 2016. A Guide for Mental Health & Social Care Professionals in Merseyside

This guide, produced with Liverpool Community Development Services with help from Ashton, Leigh and Wigan Council, provides comprehensive and detailed information for staff assisting people seeking asylum and refugees, particularly in accessing the health services.

It provides definitions of terms such as asylum seeker, refugee status, different forms of support, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, destitution. It outlines health care entitlements such as primary care, emergency treatment at A&E, services for the diagnosis of HIV and TB, family planning services, victims of trafficking. The guide contains guidance on supporting a person who is seeking asylum, particularly sensitivities around torture and sexual abuse. There is also information on cash and housing and legal support. It includes sensitive advice on areas for care planning and recovery for asylum seekers, good practice in working with an interpreter, a comprehensive list of advice and support agencies and useful web links, together with details of Immigration Removal Centres.

However, in order to remain relevant, it needs to be updated regularly and requires substantial resources in terms of staff time to do so. This has informed the recommendations in Chapter 6.

UKLGIG submission in response to the invitation of the Independent Chief Inspector with respect to the Inspection of Asylum Casework June 2017 UKLGIG Annual Report 2017

Founded in 1993, UKLGIG is a registered charity providing support to more than 1500 LGBT+ people every year, by facilitating access to specialist legal advice as well as other types of practical support. They are also advocates for improvements in law and practice. Their 2017 report focuses on LGBT+ people in detention, and highlighted key issues, not all of which relate only to detention. Many of those findings were confirmed at a local level in my study and are expanded upon in Chapter 4.

No Safe Refuge – Experiences of LGBT Asylum seekers in detention - Stonewall & UKLGIG Oct 2016

‘Harassment and violence are a common experience for many lesbian, gay, bi and trans people.’ Foreword by Paul Dillane UKLGIG.

This shocking report has helped to raise the prominence of detention as a political concern. The scale of UK detention has expanded rapidly in the past 20 years. It has one of the largest detention estates in Europe and detains more migrants and asylum

seekers than most other countries. Shockingly; the UK is alone in detaining people indefinitely.

The researchers conducted 22 in-depth interviews with LGBT+ asylum seekers from 11 different countries in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Russia who had been in immigration detention, i.e. held in Immigration Removal Centres. They found that LGBT asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable in immigration detention and experience discrimination, harassment and violence from other detainees and from members of staff, with serious long-term effects on their mental & physical well-being.

The Hate Crime Report 2016. Homophobia, biphobia, & transphobia in the UK – Nick Antjoule galop.org.uk, the LGBT+ anti-violence charity.

This charity, together with its international partners, launched a hate crime reporting website and mobile app on 28th September 2017.

It includes analysis of an online community survey of 467 LGBT people, which asked about experiences of hate crime and interactions with services. Its stated aim is to educate, raise awareness and give insight into LGBT peoples' experiences of hate crime, support services and the criminal justice system.

Whilst the findings relate to LGBT people generally, rather than specifically for asylum seekers and refugees, it has been useful research to consult to confirm what we have been told in interviews about why so few report the harassment and violence they experience regularly on the street and in their accommodation. In this study, of those who had reported a Hate Crime 26% said they would probably not report in future. The most common reason given for this was the perception that it would not be taken seriously (44%).

Other reasons included:

- Low standards of police training on LGBT issues (24%),
- Fearing police would react negatively to their identity (21%),
- Discomfort about having to disclose their identity (14%).

Several Trans and pansexual respondents also wrote that reporting had previously caused them more problems than it solved.

These findings have informed the recommendations in Chapter 6.

b. The Research Method

The questionnaires we used for workers and for individuals contained both closed and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were essential because there was a need to encourage respondents to consider and reflect upon the type and scope of advice and support that they have found useful and the unmet needs they have. Whilst we used set questions as the basis for all our interviews and focus groups we finished with a wide-ranging discussion.

In all interviews and focus groups with asylum seekers and individuals we were careful to make sure that respondents did not feel compelled to talk about events in their lives that would bring up traumatic memories since this could be damaging in a non-therapeutic setting. There was also an exceptional need for confidentiality and discretion given the potentially dangerous consequences of disclosure.

The opportunity for participant observation through attendance at the support group Many Hands One Heart in the Armistead Centre, Liverpool, has been invaluable to the study. I was fortunate to be invited to attend as a guest by the organisers of the group in order to understand in more depth what were the members' main concerns. It became clear that this group is a lifeline to many in Liverpool since above all it provides a sense that they are not alone, gives opportunities to share experiences and offer support, practical and emotional as well as organising social events, making friends and having fun.

Use of Survey Monkey online questionnaire for recording outcomes and analysis *see Appendix 5* Initially we had intended to ask respondents to complete the survey online but found this would not be practical in view of language difficulties. Instead we used face to face interviews using standard questions and uploaded the findings into Survey Monkey later for the purposes of analysis.

4. Key Findings

Unsurprisingly, none of the organisations we asked considered that the advice and support needs of LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees are being met, though 11 answered 'partly' to this question. 7 felt they were not met at all. One respondent said that 'the whole system is not supportive of any refugees; their needs are not met anyway, so it is especially difficult for those who are LGBT+.'

How can you 'prove' you're gay? - The issue of credibility

Mohammed:

My asylum case took 3 years. My claim was rejected at first. The Home Office didn't believe I was gay and advised me to go back home and hide my sexuality for the rest of my life. They also said there was no-one else from my country who had applied for asylum on this basis so this counted against me. To provide 'proof' I sent the Home Office photos of me taking part in Pride and speaking out publicly to support gay rights.

Asylum worker Josie:

We had one case where a woman was an out and proud lesbian and attended our group with her partner....on the request of the H.O., we took photos of the pair kissing to support her case.

To provide 'proof' I sent the Home Office photos of me taking part in Pride and speaking out publicly to support gay rights.

The UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection of 2102 make clear that the grounds for asylum as outlined in the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees are most commonly recognised under the 'membership of a particular social group' ground. There is no requirement that members of the social group associate with one another, or that they are socially visible, for the purposes of the refugee definition. Yet the Home Office appears to ignore this guidance when assessing credibility.

In a report commissioned by Theresa May, then Home Secretary, in 2012, into the treatment of LGBT people claiming asylum and the investigation found that a fifth of asylum interviews contained stereotyping and a tenth contained questions of a sexual nature. There are questions as to why a person is not attracted to the opposite sex or what makes them more attracted to one as opposed to the other sex. While such questioning will elicit little by way of evidentially significant material, it has the capacity to render the interview a search for justification for sexual orientation.

This creates a major obstacle and resulting hardship for LGBT+ asylum seekers who are almost always afraid to disclose their sexuality because of well-grounded fears of persecution. They are often highly marginalised in society and isolated from their communities and families. Some may have feelings of shame and/or internalised homophobia. And so, may be inhibited from informing asylum officials at the screening interview that their real fear of persecution relates to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This applies to one third of the individuals we spoke to. Any delay in providing information then severely weakens an asylum claim because it is likely to be cited as evidence of lack of credibility.

UKLGIG (which is a consultation body to the Home Office) submission in response to the invitation of the Independent Chief Inspector with respect to the Inspection of Asylum Casework found that decision –makers often place no weight on evidence from friends, partners, participation in groups, attendance at events or similar. Such evidence is often labelled ‘self-serving’, yet the absence of it is also seen to damage credibility.

Even where this may not be intended, the interviewee may well have the experience of having to explain why they are not heterosexual.

As a result of this Home Office approach, which has a default position of disbelief, everyone we spoke to in this study commented on the extremely intrusive and degrading approach of asylum adjudicators. This takes the form of inappropriate questioning related to sexual conduct, which may become a search for justification for sexual orientation. The problem is confounded because solicitors cannot generally give clear advice on what constitutes proof of sexuality, since it is inconsistently applied.

Examples of this:

- An asylum seeker who is lesbian being asked to submit photos of herself in bed with her partner.

- Another asylum seeker, who had cited evidence of membership of an LGBT+ group, had her case dismissed by the judge on the grounds that she had no-one from the group in court to support her.
- A lesbian woman who was advised to get a letter from a particular asylum agency in Liverpool to assert that she is gay. This was a problem because it was potentially too dangerous for her to be 'out' in the agency.
- At appeal, an individual person submitted letters of support from LGBT+ organisations and evidence of his mental health problems arising from his situation, yet still his appeal was refused.

Problems in Asylum Accommodation

Paresh - My application was rejected and I ended up on the street, very sick because I couldn't get medical treatment. I believe that M from Sahir House saved my life! She got me seen at the hospital and sorted out legal help for me. No solicitor would take my case because they thought I couldn't win. She came to visit me in hospital, which was a lifeline... I had 12 months of counselling to help me deal with the trauma I experienced. In the end I did win my case and got limited leave to remain, a house to live in, and I'm hoping to get a job.

Sofia - I come from a strict Catholic country and received a lot of abuse, including death threats because I'm Trans. When I came to this country after escaping from traffickers, the Housing Manager in my IA's behaviour changed when he saw from my ID that I am a Trans woman and he started to ignore me and treat me with disrespect. I try to ignore it but it's hard.

Hamid - it's risky living with people who see being gay as completely unacceptable. We need someone to make sure we're safe.

Safety in accommodation is a big issue. In our survey, 9 of the 17 people reported being abused, bullied or discriminated against in shared housing. Armistead find that most issues reported to them by LGBT+ asylum seekers were around the unsuitability of initial accommodation, which can be especially difficult for Trans people. A caseworker based in initial accommodation confirmed that if it is disclosed that a person identifies as LGBT+, they are likely to be targeted as an outsider, with their fellow asylum seekers refusing to share a fridge or kitchen accommodation in general.

There are further problems when asylum seekers are 'dispersed'. A caseworker described the difficulties a lesbian couple faced when requesting accommodation together, something that happens without question for heterosexual couples.

The problem is even more severe should someone be unfortunate enough to be detained in an Immigration Removal Centre. European Court of Human Rights case law documents the fact that they are an especially vulnerable population in detention and that the detention environment is a source of danger and an affront to their dignity. In their weakest state, they are asked to prove how weak they are, without having the resources to do so. They are often forced to hide who they are for fear of abuse, partly as a result of deeply entrenched prejudices in many countries of origin. (UKLGIG 2016)

There are also problems around the use and recording of the correct gender in the case of transgender people in the asylum process which can lead to housing in the wrong detention population.

Use of Interpreters

Paresh - The interpreter told my family back home that I was HIV+ and the friend I was staying with found out. As a result I became homeless and my family disowned me. I can never go home and so had to claim asylum.

Elizabeth: Many people have abused me. Because of that I don't like a face to face interpreter. I don't want to talk to someone from my own country because in the past I've been attacked by guys. So far I have managed without.

Four people we spoke to had had problems with interpreters, one of whom as quoted above, had had serious life changing consequences.

Issues with interpreters are reported in other studies as a common occurrence. UKLGIG is of the view that there is a need for regular sensitisation and equalities training of all interpreters used by the Home Office at every stage, be it at Screening Interviews or subsequently. In UKLGIG's experience, there is inappropriate conduct of some interpreters during asylum interviews in LGBTI claims. The consequences of breaches of confidentiality, as in the evidence above, can be life threatening. Some asylum seekers are understandably reluctant to talk openly to those who come from the same community, and this can be another obstacle to making their case successfully.

Community Engagement Officers for Merseyside Police highlighted this as a barrier to reporting Hate crime.

Invisibility

'If you've lived your whole life in fear you're not going to come out here until you've built up your confidence ' **asylum seeker**

'I live my life in secret' **asylum seeker**

'It's a challenge to be met- making people feel comfortable about coming out to me' **asylum support worker**

A worker from a national refugee charity described services for LGBT+ people as: a 'massive gap'. He explained that this is probably because caseworkers are individually supportive and intent on providing a safe space for asylum seekers, but do not currently ask questions about sexuality and this only becomes an issue if the basis of someone's claim is their sexuality or gender identity. It is the individual's decision whether to disclose this. Therefore, they have no systematic monitoring systems, and no way of identifying the scale and nature of needs. He felt that a conversation about good practice in working with LGBT asylum seekers is needed at an organisational level so that staff on the ground can feel fully supported.

Giving support is seen as difficult because of potential issues with some refugee communities, who may have very negative attitudes. There are also risks of endangering individuals by breaching confidentiality.

Two other workers described how they would only become aware of the issue if a person discloses that they have claimed asylum on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity (which they do not necessarily do). He does, however, fully support the need for addressing the issue, becoming more aware of LGBT issues. He resolved to review the information given out by his organisation to make sure it explicitly encourages people to come forward for help if needed. This would probably focus on the assurance of complete confidentiality. He had an interesting anecdote to share with me:

"I was passing a children's playground, accompanied by an asylum seeker who saw a notice with a rainbow symbol on it. The man pointed out the symbol and asked if in this country it was a gay symbol. I replied that, although not in this context, it was in general. An uneasy silence followed, until the man said 'is it OK to be gay in this country?' I then replied that, although sometimes there is hostility in some situations, in general it's

absolutely fine, and in his organisation, it definitely is, at all times. But I wasn't sure how to take this further though I did assume the man was coming out to me."

Another worker described a recent situation which raised her awareness of the issue:

"I recently tried to organise an activity which was associated with the LGBT+ community...I provided plenty of information about it and encouragement but no-one attended. This was a very unusual response, and showed me how strong the negative feelings are, not necessarily from the individuals themselves but also from their partners and families.

*There's a lot more we could do without alienating our client base to make clear that we are gay friendly and that it is a comfortable space for anyone who comes out. We need training on how to have conversations about this. I feel that asylum seekers who come out as lesbian are challenging **every** norm on top of the other aspects they're confronting such as gender based violence, and 'honour' crimes, that they may be fleeing from, so are in particular need of support. I will take this back to my team."*

Social Isolation

Maryam: When you're an asylum seeker you're nothing. It was hard and degrading, you feel like a nobody. You try to make friends and mix with people, it's difficult to blend in.

Lucy: People say such disgusting things about LGBT people I'm afraid to come out. 'I live in secret' because I'm afraid of the rejection I might get.

Elizabeth: I don't feel safe anywhere except Sahir House. Because I have been attacked so many times I'm afraid to go out. I have trauma because of this. People say 'What is that? Why do you look like a female? But when I got to Sahir House I started to make friends because I learned I was not alone. I was homeless, all alone, and knew nobody in this country; I just needed to rebuild my life. We asylum seekers are dying inside ourselves. We've been called names like 'witch' 'devil' 'mental'. Groups like Many Hands One Heart have helped me a lot. I'm happy there because we can talk freely- and we get travel costs. Essential for me as I don't get any cash, only vouchers.

As described earlier, everyone I spoke to said that the main cause of the exceptional social isolation they face is the fear, shame and trauma that many people have experienced. This makes it especially difficult, sometimes impossible, for people to attend support groups. Another key reason is lack of money for bus fares. One group provides travel expenses, which is essential. Even so, some walk miles to attend a group. One individual felt strongly that support needs to come from someone who 'understands what it's like'. He felt that being part of a social group of people who have gone through a similar experience is the most helpful.

One worker in a LGBT youth group expressed worries that 2 or 3 asylum seekers have attended the group over the past 2 years but have stopped coming. He's concerned they may find it difficult to integrate for language and cultural reasons as they are a distinct minority in the group. A health worker told me:

"A gay man in initial accommodation, when he went into the kitchen, everyone went out. He was not invited to play cards with others. He had terrible health problems and no-one helped him.

"Two gay asylum seekers were dispersed to Skelmersdale and Wigan. There they suffer miserable isolation. They are highly identifiable as there are very few BAME people in the area. One became a victim of hate crime and has severe depression. To attend the support group in Liverpool he has to leave Skem by 6.30am to get to a meeting for 10am. The only way he can afford it is because at the moment he can get his travel costs paid by the charity... Yet the group is his lifeline and also attendance is the only way he can to 'prove' his sexuality."

Trauma and Mental Health Problems

Mohammed, Gulf States, has refugee status: 'I went to the doctor and asked 'give me an injection to make me straight' At that he referred me to counselling which I had for 9 months. It made a major difference. I hated being gay and now I'm out and proud, a difficult journey from growing up in a country where you could get up to 14 years in prison if it was found you're gay.

Janet: I couldn't come out, it took me a year of counselling with Four Wings before I could. I had to leave my country because there you can be stoned to death for being a lesbian. There being gay is seen as a disease, you're not seen as a human being. I felt like I was crazy.

Johann: I am HIV+ but the Home Office didn't tell me where to get my medication. It was hard even to find the hospital when I first came. The first time I went to the Royal they refused to put me on the list for treatment because they said I may not be staying in Liverpool. Only when I went back for a second time did I get put on the list. The nurses there were lovely, and told me about Sahir House. They talked to me like a human being.

Hamid : Everyone comes here seeking protection and help, then you get rejected, it's really stressful.

All the asylum seekers and refugees I spoke to talked about their need for help with mental health problems as a result of their experiences. It's particularly difficult for those who do not speak English. Some talked of wishing to end their lives. A senior psychological therapist working for a large charity, Personal Services Society, reported that for most LGBT+ asylum seekers a key issue is dealing with the guilt and shame they feel about their sexuality as a result of the abuse they have experienced in their country of origin. She felt that the strength of their agency is setting up therapy for individuals which help people coming to terms with this. She described a 'triple jeopardy' which people face:

1. Abuse and discrimination in the country of origin
2. The asylum journey & everything that happens along the way, which can be as bad as the reason why a person left home in the first place
3. Living in the UK – the asylum process, which can be abusive in itself, the social isolation, massive adjustments needed to integrate, often when facing hostility and threats of violence. When you get here it can be seen as the end of the journey but it's actually only the beginning.

Yet research shows that if you work with trauma it can be contained and people can get on with their lives. If not, there can be long term damage, panic attacks presenting at A & E, numerous mental and physical health problems and increased risk of suicide. However, she feels that there is a serious gap for adult asylum seekers and refugees needing therapy.

Talk Liverpool provides therapy for adults in Liverpool, and reported that of the 431 referrals they had received, only five people had identified as LGBT+, whilst six were unwilling to divulge and 125 had not answered the question. There is evidence of poor treatment from the Home Office seeking evidence for credibility that had impacted on clients' mental health. They do not collect data on refugees who use their service and identified this as a hidden problem that may need addressing. They say that most of

their work is on grounding & stabilisation because this has the biggest effect on anxiety & depression. The therapist However they do not deal with trauma because asylum seekers may not be in Liverpool long and it can be damaging to start this if you cannot follow through. They also reported problems in finding interpreters in certain languages.

Overall it seems impossible to assess the level of unmet need through these data as they are so incomplete, presumably because people are not comfortable asking and/or answering questions about their sexuality or sexual identity.

A Serco Partnership Manager explained the role of Serco, which is basically providing accommodation for asylum seekers and wrap-around support around housing. This includes induction of new asylum seekers and orientation briefings, which includes helping people register with a GP. Within the Initial Accommodation, UC24 provides health assessment within a certain number of days after arriving in IA. They have a medical book which follows people to dispersal. Mental health assessment is conducted at this stage, but only by means of a set of general welfare questions which she described as 'quite generic'. 'If no problems are disclosed, nothing can be done. 'If there is a concern they'll make referrals to Social Services, GPs and 'Freedom from Torture' in Manchester. This signposting varies from one area to another and in some places, they liaise with charities such as the Red Cross.

Hate Crime Reporting

Seth: I've been bullied for being gay in the street and reported it as a Hate Crime, but the Police took no action and didn't even investigate.

Mohammed: Here I have had a lot of abuse on the street but didn't feel I could get any help with it. Now I have more confidence, I would report it.

There are 80 Third Party Reporting Centres for Hate Crime in Merseyside, one of which is based in Initial Accommodation for asylum seekers. According to *Merseyside Police Community Engagement Unit* all Centres have received training when they first set up. Merseyside Police also provide an orientation session at an asylum support centre & give out a welcome pack which includes advice on what to do about Hate Crime incidents. They were, however, unable to provide any data on levels of Hate Crimes reporting in Merseyside.

In addition, StopHate UK is an online reporting centre with a Merseyside site which offers training but regrettably in the timescale of this study we were unable to obtain any further information from them.

An Asylum & Refugee Group was set up in 2017, to engage with key stakeholders in the region, meeting quarterly. They have had one meeting, in July this year.

Figures for England and Wales in the Statistical Bulletin 2015/16 on reported Hate Crime in England and Wales show that LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees will tend to fall into the three highest categories of complainants, as follows:

- 79% of all hate crimes reported related to race.
- 12% related to sexual orientation.
- 7% related to religion.

The barriers to reporting Hate Crime that the Community Engagement Unit identifies are familiar:

- fears of coming out in their own communities
- fear of the Police
- fear of families finding out they're LGBT+
- language barriers (though the Police supply interpreters)

There's clearly a need for more work in this area in order for the Police response to Hate Crime experienced by LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees to be effective. This is reflected in the Recommendations in Chapter 6.

Access to legal help

The Legal Aid Agency has severely cut funds for legal help for asylum cases, resulting in far fewer solicitors doing these publicly funded asylum cases. In addition, there are even fewer solicitors with specialised knowledge of the specific issues, for asylum seekers who are gay men, lesbians, and bisexual, Trans or intersex. This shortage of good quality solicitors with Legal Aid Agency contracts makes it extremely difficult for LGBT+ asylum seekers to find suitable solicitors to represent them.

And what happens when you finally get Leave to Remain?

John: When I got leave to remain it was traumatic .they just told me I had 28 days to sort everything out and came in to get my room ready for the next person while I was still in it! It was hard to find somewhere to live as I had no money to go to hostels. I could not have managed without the help I got from my caseworker with getting a NI number, claiming benefits and getting somewhere to live. We need support to support and guide us after getting leave to remain, counselling, therapy and social events to help us because we are starting a new life. We need support from someone who has been through it themselves. and didn't even investigate.

Seth: the main help I got was from friends who let me stay with them when I first got leave to remain. I got no help otherwise.

i) Housing

When Refugee Status (limited leave to remain) is granted, all asylum support stops, and a person is given 28 days to find a place to live, claim benefits, get a National Insurance number, and set up their lives in the UK. The most difficult of these in the current housing situation is finding a place to live.

At present, those who have been granted Limited Leave to Remain (usually for five years) have to present to the local authority on the day they have to vacate their accommodation and not a moment before. (However, the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 amends the Housing Act 1996 which extends the previous 28-day period for 'threatened homelessness' and should give those granted status a little more time.)

Most will be placed in hostels, where they will remain for some time as they are frequently rated 'non-priority' for housing. Refugee Action research based on a study of 300 cases showed that the search for housing can have a significant impact on mental health and access to community mental health services is time limited. This is exacerbated for LGBT+ refugees who often have no family or friends to help them, may have limited English and little knowledge of how things work in the UK. At this point people are acutely in need of help from advice agencies but in a context of austerity there have been significant cuts in services available and even where help is available, it may not be accessible:

A worker from an LGBT organisation described a situation where he was asked for help from a young man who had to leave his accommodation within two weeks but could not seek help from an asylum charity in Liverpool because he felt intimidated as a LGBT+ individual.

As a result, refugees are exceptionally vulnerable to becoming destitute and street homeless.

The Guardian newspaper in 2017 published an article entitled *'Destitution is Routine': refugees face homelessness even after gaining asylum'*. This was based on research, conducted by the Refugee Council, which, involved in-depth interviews with 54 people who had been granted asylum in 2016 or 2017 and had later sought help from the Refugee Council. It revealed the devastating impact of homelessness among those who often believe gaining refugee status will be the end of their troubles. Instead, they often say the period after being granted protection produced even greater difficulties.

The interviews showed that sleeping rough and sofa-surfing were common experiences.

Interviewees said housing insecurity was a cause of great anxiety, with one person saying he attempted suicide multiple times.

ii) Claiming Benefits

Many people in the Refugee Council research encountered such significant delays in obtaining the documents they needed to claim benefits, or to apply for work (which includes difficulty in opening bank accounts, proof of identity, obtaining a National Insurance number), that they were forced to sleep rough and plead for support from friends and charities.

Only one of the people interviewed for the study had a job by the end of the move-on period; one was studying, and just four were receiving benefits of any kind by the time their asylum support payments were stopped. The rest were without any form of income. The most common forms of support relied upon in this stage were friends and family, which as we have seen may not be possible for LGBT+ refugees. Many resort to food banks, but this is not a long-term solution as most can only help on three occasions.

"It is routine, I would say, that people transiting from asylum support into mainstream benefits experience destitution,"

Fabio Apollonio,

UK development adviser for asylum support at the British Red Cross.

iii) Legal help

The Legal Aid Agency has severely cut funds for legal help for asylum cases, resulting in far fewer solicitors doing these publicly funded asylum cases. In addition, there are even fewer solicitors with specialised knowledge of the specific issues, for asylum seekers who are gay men, lesbians, and bisexual, trans or intersex. This shortage of good quality solicitors with Legal Aid Agency contracts makes it extremely difficult for lesbian and gay asylum seekers to find suitable solicitors to represent them.

5. Limitations of the Study

- a. For a variety of reasons, most of the evidence from asylum seekers and refugees has come from those who attended Sahir House and Many Hands One Heart at the Armistead Centre, so the findings could be skewed in their favour. However, the experiences they shared were confirmed by national research from all over the country.
- b. The short timescale of the project (less than 4 months) determined our research methods and approach. As a result, we have produced an overview rather than an in-depth study. However, we believe this fulfils the purpose of providing the basis for further developments in services.
- c. The research was mostly Liverpool based. Though agencies from outside Liverpool were approached they were not able to respond within the timescale.
- d. Though we initially sought advice on the surveys we used, over time it became clear some questions could have been improved had we had time to re-draft them.
- e. To date, there is a lack of baseline data despite our efforts. At the time of publication, we are still awaiting a response to a Parliamentary question. This would in any case provide national figures only.
- f. Similarly we have been unable to obtain any statistics which would give us a picture of the level of reported Hate Crime in Merseyside.
- g. For unknown reasons, we were unable to elicit a response from immigration solicitors with experience of representing LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees.

6. Recommendations

There is clearly potential for further development of support and advice services.

These findings suggest that those in need of help and support in a safe setting rely almost entirely on one organisation in Liverpool – Many Hands One Heart. The idea for MHOH arose out of a partnership between Sahir House, an HIV support, information and training centre in Merseyside and Armistead Centre, a free and confidential sexual health promotion service for LGBT+ people, and facilitated by a Liverpool Community Development Worker. Awareness of the issues was detailed and evidenced by the PhD research of Jennifer New, an Interchange student, which was published in 2016. This research had originally been commissioned by Sahir House.

Currently, the group has as many as 30 members, with 18 actively seeking support and attending fortnightly meetings. At least two people regularly travel from as far afield as Wigan and Rochdale to attend. It provides a safe, supportive and confidential space in which LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees can meet. As a collective group, members identify their own support needs and facilitators arrange information and training sessions to address them. The group is facilitated by a specialist outreach worker employed by Sahir House and is funded only until April 2018.

Workers we consulted all agreed that future developments should be based on the existing good practice of MHOH with a support worker dedicated to the needs of LGBT+ Asylum seekers & refugees. This could be further enhanced if the worker were qualified to Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) level 2 since there are few organisations other than overloaded solicitors in Merseyside who offer this. Discussions with lesbian asylum seekers and refugees suggest that a women only self-help group is also needed, particularly in view of the experiences of male violence, sexual and otherwise, experienced by the great majority both in their home countries and whilst on their asylum journey. The charity MRANG, which runs well attended groups for refugee and asylum women in Liverpool, provides individual casework for a number of lesbian women but does not at present host a group.

In order to address the issues of social isolation and invisibility, a key role of support is to provide information, signposting, referrals and partnerships with the many community organisations and networks which provide social events of all kinds in which LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees can be made welcome and assured of a safe space. This could include film showings, art events and activities in which refugee voices can be heard and the many talents and skills of LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees can be recognised and celebrated. An example of this is a recent initiative

supported by the trade union Unison in liaison with FACT Liverpool. The Union provided funding for a film night for a group of asylum seekers. It was very popular and provided a rare opportunity to relax, socialise and have fun.

Respondents reported that there is a long way to go before an integrated system of support is established. They felt that there is no clear pathway for those needing advice and support, because of a lack of communication and insufficient sharing of information.

Move on advice for LGBT+ people with limited leave to remain

Research shows that hardship can be severe after asylum support ceases, leading to homelessness, destitution and mental and physical health problems. However, there is a major gap in services which are LGBT+ friendly since OUTReach funding ceased in 2016, since, although refugee caseworkers do an excellent job in Sahir House, they are funded only for service users living with HIV.

A useful approach would be to build on the work of the Lottery Funded OUTReach project delivered by North Liverpool Citizens Advice. This well – used and highly valued service provided free advice on welfare benefits, debt, housing, employment, and reporting hate crime. It was set up specifically to meet the needs of LGBT+ service users and, though it was a Citizens Advice service, it was based in an LGBT+ agency because of the critical importance of safety and confidentiality.

Training, awareness raising and advocacy

- I. This research identified an urgent need for LGBT+ awareness training for workers in asylum and refugee organisations, the Police and housing agencies such as SERCO and Registered Social Landlords. This is related to well-founded fears that LGBT+ individuals have about being 'out' in 'mainstream' groups, partly based on lack of trust about confidentiality. Workers themselves talked about their lack of confidence in opening up a conversation with service users in order to provide a safe environment for LGBT+ service users. Such awareness training could also be beneficial for 'mainstream' therapy organisations. In fact, it was suggested that anyone in a public role, especially those who work in banks (because of refugees' difficulties in getting a bank account) and benefits agencies should receive training.
- II. Some LGBT+ groups identified a need for training on asylum and refugee issues, partly to improve the quality of their signposting.

- III. Hate crime reporting; advocacy is needed here to support individuals making complaints, particularly to housing providers and to the Police. This could potentially be conducted by a team of trained advocacy volunteers.
- IV. Having the opportunity to volunteer in a supportive environment is well recognised as an extremely useful means of integration and confidence building. An advocacy service provided by trained volunteers (ideally those who have been through the asylum system) would be an invaluable source of support when dealing with health, benefits and housing agencies. This should include accompanying asylum seekers to Court hearings, not to provide legal advice, but to provide much-needed support at a highly stressful and potentially life-changing event. In addition, having a visible presence at court hearings has been shown to be beneficial to an asylum claim as on occasion Judges have cited the lack of support in Court as a factor in rejecting a claim.
- V. English classes for asylum seekers and refugees need to be available in LGBT+ settings. This was an issue highlighted by everyone we interviewed.

Resources

It would be beneficial to develop publicity materials to help organisations indicate in their waiting rooms and public spaces that they are LGBT+ friendly and inclusive, and to make clear that homophobic attitudes are not acceptable. It has been suggested that a quality standard, a 'Charter of Respect' could be developed and awarded to organisations which trained their staff and publicly committed themselves to inclusive and anti-discriminatory practices.

The Mersey Care Guide entitled '*Working with people seeking Asylum and Refuge*' is extremely comprehensive and useful for staff supporting access to the health services. This was produced in March 2016. To remain relevant it needs regularly updating, which is labour intensive. The role of a Steering Committee with support worker(s) could include this.

Similarly, a multi-lingual welcome pack and guide for refugees similar to the 'New Communities Welcome Pack' which was produced in Liverpool could include information on where to go for help, legal rights and responsibilities, 'how to be a good neighbour' human rights, freedom from discrimination, equality laws, the laws on littering, driving etc, policing by consent, how to report Hate Crimes, and

Therapeutic help

There is a wide range of therapies which have been found to be useful in helping asylum seekers work through the traumatic experiences they have experienced. Any initiative that was developed would benefit from linking with organisations including Spinning World in Liverpool which have specialist expertise in this area.

Suggested management structure of a project

Whilst it is unlikely that a single initiative could meet all these recommendations, the expertise needed to develop a project to make life easier for LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees is clearly available in Merseyside. A Steering Committee structure which includes the key organisations mentioned in this report and elsewhere, including representatives of asylum seekers and refugees themselves, may well be the most effective means of bringing disparate groups together to co-ordinate activities. It would also be helpful to establish strong links with relevant national organisations at the outset.

It could be that such a Steering Committee could be a constituted body for fundraising purposes and to commission services. This could include psychological therapies since currently in Liverpool this is extremely limited.

It is the researcher's view that these recommendations could form the basis of further detailed discussions by the key organisations listed here, with the objective of developing a joint funding proposal to focus primarily on support (including therapeutic) , advice and training.

Appendix 1

List of Agencies who participated:

Asylum Matters- City of Sanctuary	Personal Services Society Spinning
Armistead Centre	World
Asylum Link Merseyside	Red Cross Liverpool
Citizens Advice Liverpool	
Liverpool Mental Health Consortium	Refugee Action Liverpool
Mary Seacole House	Sahir House
Merseycare : Community Development	SERCO Birley Court Liverpool
Services	
Merseyside Police	TALK Liverpool
MRANG	UKLesbian and Gay Immigration Group
Migrant Help Liverpool	Young Persons Advisory Service -Gay
North Liverpool Citizens Advice	Youth R Out

Appendix 2

LGBT Asylum seekers and refugees Survey Questions ORGANISATIONS

The aim of this survey is to help us identify the support and advice needs of asylum seekers and refugees who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans in Liverpool and the surrounding areas. We want to gather information from as wide a range of agencies as possible so we'd be grateful if you could give us your feedback.

1. Do you provide advice for : asylum seekers refugees

2. Are you aware of any asylum seekers or refugees identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender ? Yes No

3. If yes, how many over a year? (please give a rough estimate if your organisation does not collect data on this) _____

4. What level of immigration advice do you provide?
 - not applicable/ we do not provide immigration advice
 - not sure Level 1 : advice & assistance Level 2 : Casework
 - Level 3 : advocacy & representation

5. Do you provide any of the following support, advice or information?
(Please tick and give details)

asylum process	<input type="checkbox"/>	
other immigration	<input type="checkbox"/>	
housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	
benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	
health	<input type="checkbox"/>	
social	<input type="checkbox"/>	
hate crime reporting	<input type="checkbox"/>	
other	<input type="checkbox"/>	

6. Does your organisation provide LGBT awareness or cultural training to staff?

Yes No Not sure

7. Do you think that the advice and support needs of local LGBT asylum seekers and refugees are being met? yes partly no not sure

8. Can you explain why you think this?

9. In your experience, what do you think are the main issues that LGBT asylum seekers and Refugees need advice and support on?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share with us in regard to LGBT asylum seekers and refugees ?

Appendix 3

LGBT Asylum seekers and refugees Survey Questions INDIVIDUALS

We aim to collect the views and experiences of LGBT asylum seekers and refugees to help develop an advice service. Your answers will be entirely anonymous; **there is no way of identifying you.**

1. Do you identify as : Lesbian Gay Bisexual Heterosexual
Other please specify

2. How would you describe your gender?

Male (including trans male) Female (including trans female)
Non-binary Other please specify

3. Is your current gender identity the same as that assigned to you at birth? Yes No

4. Have you felt able to reveal your sexuality or gender identity to support services such as NASS, Refugee Action and other agencies? Yes No

5. What is your immigration status? please tick

In the asylum process	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have refugee status/limited leave to remain	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am in the Resettlement Programme as either a Syrian refugee or a vulnerable child	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family Reunion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please explain)	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Have you ever been abused, bullied or discriminated against in shared accommodation?
Yes, a lot Sometimes No, never

6a. Can you say any more about what happened?

7. Have you ever had any problems with an interpreter?
Yes Sometimes No, never

7a. Can you say any more about what happened?

8. Do you **know about** local LGBT groups and services? If so, please name them

9. How did you find out about them? a friend a worker or organisation website
doctor /hospital other (please explain).....

10. Have you had **support from** any local LGBT social or support groups? yes no

11. Can you name them?

12. Besides LGBT groups or services, what other organisations have helped you?

13. If you have leave to remain, have you been able to get the following advice or support?

Welfare benefits	
Housing	
Health	
Other (please specify)	

14. Thinking about the help you have had, which has been the most useful for you?

15. Have you had access to a solicitor? Yes No

16. Have you had any contact with the Police? Yes No

17. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences in the asylum process?

Please tell us about any support or services you think **would be useful** to you.

Appendix 4

LGBT + ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES CONTACT LIST

ORGANISATIONS in Liverpool	CONTACT INFORMATION	DETAIL
The Armistead Centre. The Beat Hanover Street Liverpool, L1 4AF	Lynsey Riley supports Ref & AS Group 0151 247 6560 Helpline Lynsey.riley@liverpoolch.nhs.uk Jo Lightwood 0151 247 6564 Jo.lightwood@liverpoolch.nhs.uk	Provides a safe space for LGBT groups, one-to-one support, harm reduction advice on lifestyle, support for parents and carers of LGBT people, counselling and Rapid HIV testing.
Asylum Link Merseyside. St Anne's, 7 Overbury St, Liverpool. L7 3HJ	Ewan Roberts, Centre Manager info@asylumlink.org.uk www.asylumlink.org.uk Ewan.asylumlink@yahoo.co.uk Sarah Jope Sarah.asylumlink@gmail.com Emma, Women Together 0151 709 1713 Emma.asylumlink@gmail.com	This is a drop-in centre for people seeking asylum and refugees which gives a warm welcome, friendship, help and advice.
Asylum Matters- City of Sanctuary, Manchester	Estelle Worthington 07557983264 info@liverpool.cityofsanctuary.org	An advocacy and campaigns project that works in partnership locally and nationally to improve the lives of refugees and people seeking asylum through social and political change.
Broudie Jackson & Canter Solicitors. 27 Dale Street, Liverpool. L2 2HD	Nadia Altairy 0151 282 1961 naltairy@jacksoncanter.co.uk	Legal aid solicitor

ORGANISATIONS in Liverpool	CONTACT INFORMATION	DETAIL
British Red Cross Refugee and Migrants Project (RAMP). St Brides Church, Catherine St, Liverpool, L8	Matthew Young 0151 702 5067 MYoung@redcross.org.uk	Short term support to newly arrived people seeking asylum in Liverpool and refugees who need help to move on.
British Red Cross Liverpool. Bradbury House, Tower Street, Liverpool, L4 4 BJ	07917 093 159 www.refugee-action.org.uk	Provide information sessions for asylum seekers and refugees in Liverpool
Family Refugee Support Project, Liverpool. Toxteth Town Hall, 15 High Park Street, Liverpool. L8 8DX	0151 728 9340	The project's aims are to improve the mental and physical health of families, to increase their levels of physical activity, their independence, their social networks and integration.
4Wings. Liverpool, Floor 2, Gostin Buildings, 32-36 Hanover Street, Liverpool. L1 4LN	0151 306 6524 info@4wings.co.uk e.hulme@4wings.co.uk	This service helps women who have suffered abuse and trauma move forward with their lives.
LARA, Liverpool.	Emily Hayes 07843 173 788 Lara_liverpool@yahoo.com Emily@pathwatarts.org	Is an asylum seeker and refugees led group aiming to support and improve the wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees in Liverpool.

ORGANISATIONS in Liverpool	CONTACT INFORMATION	DETAIL
Liverpool Mental Health Consortium, 151 Dale Street Liverpool L2 2AH	Claire Stevens 0151 237 2688 claire.stevens@liverpoolmentalhealth.org	Champions the voices of those affected by mental distress in Liverpool, help improve local mental health services, & challenge stigma through engagement with those concerned.
Mary Seacole House, Liverpool, 91 Upper Parliament St, Liverpool. L8 7LB	0151 707 0319 info@maryseacolehouse.com	A mental health drop in day centre for BME communities of Liverpool 8, offering support and advice in emotional and practical matters.
MerseyCare Liverpool: Community Development Services - Kuumba Imani Millennium Centre, 4 Prince Road, Liverpool. L8 1TH	Mohammed Taher 07816 598114 Mohammed.Taher@merseyCare.nhs.uk Dee Abimbola 0151 708 7414 Info.lcds@nhs.net	Aims to tackle race inequality in mental health services for BME communities throughout Liverpool.
Merseyside Police Community Engagement Officers, Canning Place Liverpool	Lindsey Brady Stephanie Burke 0151 777 8971 1963@Merseyside.Police.uk	Aims to get communities more involved and make policing more accountable to the public. Deals with Hate Crime reporting.
Merseyside Refugee Support Networks, 7 Overbury Street, Liverpool. L7 3HJ	0151 707 0566 www.merseysidenetworkforchange.org seana@merseysidenetworkforchange.org	Provides services to refugees and asylum seekers.

ORGANISATIONS in Liverpool	CONTACT INFORMATION	DETAIL
Migrant Help National Advice Line, Birley Court, 39 Percy Street, Liverpool. L8 7LT	Primrose Muparutsa, community outreach 0151 556 0475 0808 8000 630/631 Primrose.muparutsa@migranthelpuk.org	Asylum advice and guidance and help with applications for asylum support.
MRANG, Liverpool, The Florrie, 377 Mill st, Liverpool, L8 4RF	Ella Johnson 07875 530 673 0151 728 2323 info@mrang.org.uk ella@mrang.org.uk	Emotional and practical support to women seeking asylum or who have refugee status. Weekly outreach activities including two drop ins.
Open Table, Liverpool, St Bride's CofE , Liverpool L8 7LT. Every third Sunday of the month.	Warren & Kieran 07501 753618 Opentable.lgbt	An ecumenical Christian worship community which offers a warm welcome to people who are: (LGBTQIA) and who seek an inclusive Church.
PSS – Spinning World. Liverpool, 18 Seel Street, Liverpool L1 4BF	Lynn Learman Senior Therapist 0151 702 5527 spinningworld@pss.org.uk	A specialist psychological therapy service for migrant and refugees who have experienced human rights abuses, trauma or the impact of events that may have happened to other family members.
Quarterly Forum- Liverpool	Sam Chester Risk Assessment Coordinator 0151 233 7010 Sam.chester@liverpool.gov.uk	

ORGANISATIONS in Liverpool	CONTACT INFORMATION	DETAIL
<p>RASA: Rape and sexual advice service, Liverpool, 60 Duke Street, Liverpool, L1 5AA</p>	<p>0151 558 1801 rasaliverpool@btconnect.com www.rasamerseyside.org</p>	<p>Work with people offering face to face counselling and run survivor groups.</p>
<p>Refugee Action, Liverpool, 151 Dale St, Liverpool. L2 2AH</p>	<p>Philip Clark 07702 902165 PhilipC@refugee-action.org.uk</p> <p>Ronnie Murphy Rhiannon Knowler (Programme Manager) 07917093159 RonnieM@refugee-action.org.uk</p> <p>Daniel Fallon danielf@refugee-action.org.uk</p>	<p>Support and resources for organisations working with refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants across the UK. Runs the Syrian resettlement programme</p>
<p>Sahir House, Liverpool, LCVS 151 Dale Street, Liverpool. L2 2AH</p>	<p>Steve Earle, Manager Serena, Health Promotion 0151 237 3989 info@sahir.uk.com www.Sahir.uk.com</p> <p>Shereen Cowley Shereen.cowley@sahir.uk.com</p> <p>Kellie Welch kellie@sahir.uk.com</p>	<p>Support for people living with or affected by HIV. Access to asylum support, social work, welfare rights.</p>
<p>Stop Hate UK,</p>	<p>www.stophateuk.org/talk</p>	<p>Provide Hate Crime reporting services</p>
<p>YPAS/GYRO Liverpool</p>	<p>Chris Porter Support Services Team Lead 0151 707 1025 Chris.p@ypas.org.uk</p>	<p>Services for LGBT+ youth</p>

ORGANISATIONS in Liverpool	CONTACT INFORMATION	DETAIL
<p>SERCO, Liverpool. Birley Court,39 Percy Street, Liverpool. L8 7LT</p>	<p>Emily Doncaster Intensive Care Support Worker Adele Adjetey, team leader Adele.Adjetey@serco.com</p>	<p>Provides initial accommodation for asylum seekers</p>
<p>TALK Liverpool, Talk Liverpool 7 Newhall Longmoor Lane Liverpool L10 1LD</p>	<p>0151 228 2300 talkliverpool@merseycare.nhs.uk</p>	<p>A free NHS service offering psychological therapies to adults in Liverpool who are feeling depressed or anxious.</p>
<p>UC24, Liverpool, Birley Court 21 Percy St L8 7LT</p>	<p>Manager : Ann Pettit 0151 230 5550 Ann.pettit@uc24.nhs.uk</p>	<p>Provides emergency health care for asylum seekers in initial accommodation</p>
<p>UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). The Capital Building, 6 Union Street, Liverpool. L3 9AF</p>	<p>0151 237 0012/0444/0263 0870606 7766</p>	<p>Consider applications for permission to stay or enter the UK, citizenship and asylum.</p>
<p>Whitechapel Centre. Langsdale Street Liverpool L3 8DT</p>	<p>Alison Benbow 0151 207 7617 Alison.benbow@whitechapelcentre.co.uk</p>	<p>Charity for homeless people in Liverpool, to help people sleeping rough, living in hostels or struggling to manage their accommodation.</p>
<p>WHISC. 120 Bold St, Liverpool, L1 4JA</p>	<p>Caroline Willcocks 0151 707 1826 carolinewillcocks@whisc.org.uk</p>	<p>Aims to promote women's health by providing information, training and support to women and their families</p>

ORGANISATIONS in Manchester	CONTACT INFORMATION	DETAIL
African Rainbow Families, Manchester, LGBT Foundation 5, Richmond Street, Salford. Manchester.	Aderonke Apata 07711 285 567 info@africanrainbowfamily.org	Supports LGBTIQ people of African heritage.
Freedom from Torture, Manchester, 1 st floor, North Square, 11-13 Spear Street, Manchester. M1 1JU	jboyles@freedomfromtorture.org 0161 236 5744 www.freedomfromtorture.org	A counselling and therapy service to survivors of torture and organised violence for adults 18+.
GMIAU: Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, 1 Delaunays Road Crumpsall Green Manchester M8 4QS	Peter Simm 0161 740 7722 infor@gmiau.org peter@gmiau.org	Advises, supports, represents and campaigns with people subject to immigration control.
ORGANISATIONS National	CONTACT INFORMATION	DETAIL
British Red Cross International Tracing and Messages Services. London, UK Office, 44 Moorfields, London. EC2Y 9AL	0870 170 7000 www.redcross.org.uk	
UK Lesbian and Gay and Immigration Group, 32-36 Loman Street, London SE1 0EH	Leila Zadeh Executive Director 020 7922 7812 Leila@uklgig.org.uk Twitter: @uklgig @leilazadeh www.uklgig.org.uk	

Citizens Advice Liverpool (CAL) is a new organisation, formed through the merger of Citizens Advice organisations in the city, including North Liverpool Citizens Advice. CAL aims to create an effective and sustainable city-wide service, meeting the advice needs of all Liverpool's communities

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination.

***You feel like a nobody: An investigation into the support and advice needs of LGBT+ Asylum Seekers in Merseyside* was researched and written by Nina Houghton on behalf of North Liverpool Citizens Advice and with funding support from the Big Lottery**

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