

# In or Out?

## The Housing Needs of Older LGBT People in Birmingham



March 2016

A report for Stonewall Housing &  
Birmingham LGBT

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This report is the work of several people, to whom thanks are given:

- Birmingham Older LGBT Housing Group originated the survey and its design and will continue to disseminate the findings to stakeholders.
- Stonewall Housing supports the Birmingham Older LGBT Housing Group and has provided further resources to enable this report to be published.
- Birmingham LGBT provides facilities and resources to the Birmingham Older LGBT Housing Group and has provided additional information for this report.
- We gratefully acknowledge the work of Julie Werrett, PhD Student at the University of Birmingham, for assistance with the survey design, and for analysing the results.
- Thanks are due to all of the volunteers who gave their time at events to encourage older LGBT people to complete the survey.

### **Stonewall Housing**

Stonewall Housing is the specialist lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) housing advice and support provider in England. We provide housing support for LGBT people in their own homes, supported housing for young LGBT people, as well as free, confidential housing advice for LGBT people of all ages. We also research and lobby for LGBT housing rights, so that all LGBT people can feel safe and secure in their homes.

We believe the needs of older LGBT people and communities are often overlooked in housing and care planning. Many older LGBT people feel they have limited housing and care options. Our older LGBT housing group provides a national platform for shared dialogue about housing issues faced by older LGBT people. It comprises regional groups in London, Birmingham and Manchester.

### **Birmingham LGBT**

Birmingham LGBT is the city's leading charity advocating for and supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities in the city and beyond. We offer a range of services focused on improving the wellbeing of individuals.

We also believe passionately that Birmingham should be one of the best places in the UK for LGBT to live, work and socialise, and work to enable a thriving, visible and PROUD LGBT community in the city.

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## INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that older LGBT people have concerns about using mainstream housing and care services, worrying that they may not receive appropriate treatment or be subject to abuse and discrimination, and also that they may be disconnected from their friendship and community networks.<sup>1</sup>

Other research shows that there are a number of housing, care and support providers who do demonstrate good practice in working with older LGBT people, but that these are often based on a local response, which is spread by word-of-mouth and attracts more LGBT customers in this way.<sup>2</sup>

The Birmingham Older LGBT People's Housing Group was set up by Stonewall Housing in January 2012 to look at the housing needs, concerns and aspirations of older LGBT people in Birmingham and the surrounding areas. The Group is made up of interested individual citizens, representatives of housing providers and other stakeholders, and Group meetings are facilitated by Birmingham LGBT, which is also a member organisation.

The Group made the decision that it would be a good idea to survey older LGBT people for their views on the housing choices they would like to be available to them, with the purpose of influencing housing and housing services providers and other stakeholders. This Report gives the results of the survey and offers some pointers which stakeholders may wish to consider when planning housing and housing services.

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<sup>1</sup> "Assessing current and future housing and support options for older LGB people", Joseph Rowntree Trust 2013

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/assessing-current-and-future-housing-and-support-options-older-lgb-people>

<sup>2</sup> "Building a sense of community: Including older LGBT in the way we develop and deliver housing with care", Stonewall Housing, 2013

[http://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_library/Resources/Housing/Support\\_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN\\_Viewpoint39\\_LGBT.pdf](http://www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN_Viewpoint39_LGBT.pdf)

## **FINDINGS**

82% of all respondents stated they'd prefer to live in LGBT-specific accommodation in later life

Of those respondents:

64% would prefer to live with other older LGBT people

54% would like to be able to live in a two-bedroomed apartment

18% would like to be able to live in a bungalow

51% would prefer to rent

43% would prefer to buy

69% would like to live in the suburbs

92% felt it was important to live near shops

89% felt it was important to live near bus routes

89% would like to have access to a communal area

84% would like to have access to a garden

80% would like to have access to a parking space

81% would like to be able to have pets

42% would prefer to have care delivered in their own LGBT-specific accommodation

43% would prefer to have care delivered in LGBT-specific sheltered accommodation

## **HOUSING SURVEY PROCESS AND ANALYSIS**

### **Questionnaire Design and Data Collection**

Data were collected using a two page questionnaire. Nine questions used nominal measurement and two questions provided an ordinal scale for participants' responses. Participants were asked to comment on a range of aspects relating to the provision of LGBT accommodation: type, size and location of accommodation; preferred ownership status; importance of location near shops or bus route; age and gender of those with whom participants would prefer to live; care provision preferences; and general accommodation facilities. Participants who were not interested in living in LGBT-specific accommodation were invited to provide further comment. Demographic data (gender, age, marital status, sexuality and ethnicity) were also gathered. Survey data were collected by face-to-face contact with participants. Three members of the Older LGBT People's Housing Group asked participants if they would complete a questionnaire, after giving a brief introduction to the background and purpose of the research. Individuals were free to refuse to participate without explanation. Completion of the questionnaire implied that participants gave informed consent. The self-report questionnaires were handed out for completion at a range of LGBT social events (for example Pink Sou'wester events, Older Lesbian Network meetings, Gay Birder events, Gay Arts and Creative events), contacts made at the Birmingham LGBT Centre and informal contacts. This approach provided greater access to the LGBT community. A total of 101 questionnaires were administered and completed.

All 101 respondents were invited to complete the demographic section of the questionnaire. The results are given below.

### **Demographic details**

#### ***Age and Gender***

Just over half of the respondents were female (n = 52 (51.5%)) and 45.5% (n = 46) were male. The overall mean age was 58.1 years with males (mean age 59.05 years, minimum 24 years and maximum age 83 years) being slightly older than females (mean age 57.77 years, with minimum and maximum age of 20 and 70 years respectively). The majority of individuals were aged between 35 and 64 years. Male and females aged 45 to 54 formed the largest group (see Table 1 below). Only two individuals identified as transgender, both of whom were between 45 and 54 years old.

**Table 1: Age categories by gender cross-tabulation**

Age Categories	Gender			Total
	Female	Male	Transgender	
Under 35	4	4	0	8
35-44	8	8	0	16
45 - 54	29	21	2	52
55 - 64	10	7	0	17
65 - 74	0	3	0	3
75+	1	1	0	2
Missing data	1	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100</b>

**Ethnicity**

The majority of the sample identified as white British (n = 85) with White Irish forming the second largest ethnic group (n = 7). Three individuals were Asian or Asian British Indian. All other ethnic groups (Black or Black British Caribbean and White European) recorded only one response each. Four participants failed to state their ethnic group.

**Sexuality and Marital Status**

Most respondents identified either as Lesbian (n=47) or as a Gay man (n=41). Six individuals were bisexual while a further seven participants did not provide data about their sexuality. The majority of Lesbians, Gay men and Bisexual people were single. Only 13 respondents (six Lesbians and seven Gay men) were in a civil partnership and one was married (see Table 2). Nine respondents lived with their partner. Of these, seven were Lesbian and two were Gay men. Ten participants failed to provide data about both their marital status and sexuality.

**Table 2: Marital status and sexuality cross-tabulation**

Marital status	Sexuality			Total
	Lesbian	Gay man	Bisexual	
Single	33	30	4	67
Civil partnership	6	7	0	13
Married	0	1	0	1
Divorced	0	0	1	1
Live with partner	7	2	0	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>91</b>

## **LGBT Accommodation**

### ***Interest in living in LGBT-specific accommodation***

The majority of respondents (n = 83) were interested in living in LGBT-specific accommodation. Of the 18 people who did not want to live in LGBT-specific housing, 13 gave an explanation for their choice. Eight respondents said they would prefer to live in a more integrated community.

*“Do not like to be constantly amongst LGBT people only. I do like variety”.*

*“My preference is to mix with a good group of people from all walks of life”*

*“I don’t mind housing being mixed as long as LGBT issues are recognised and particular needs are addressed”*

Two individuals were already home owners. One other respondent lived in a secure tenancy and one in an adapted bungalow. A further two individuals stated that they may consider living in LGBT-specific accommodation in the future.

Only the 83 participants who had indicated an interest in living in LGBT-specific accommodation were asked to complete further questions about housing facilities and services preferences.

## **Configuration of accommodation**

### ***Type, size, ownership and location of accommodation***

Despite being asked to tick only one response check box, nine participants gave a ranked preference in relation to the type, size, and location of accommodation, and their preferred ownership status. Where this has occurred, only the respondent’s first preference has been included in the analysis. Other respondents indicated several unranked choices about accommodation size and location. These responses were recorded and are noted below.

The majority would prefer to live in a low rise complex (n = 63) with only four individuals preferring a high rise complex. Thirteen respondents did not have any preference and another two participants would prefer to live in “other” accommodation but failed to specify the type. Only one person did not give any preference at all. In terms of the size of accommodation most individuals would prefer a two bedroom apartment (n = 45) or bungalow (n = 15). Fewer people would like to live in a one bedroom apartment (n = 7) or house (n = 3). Only one individual had no preference about the size of their accommodation. Twelve individuals ticked several options which are shown below in Table 3.



**Table 3: What size accommodation would you prefer to live in?**

<b>Size of accommodation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Studio apartment	0
One Bedroom apartment	7
Two Bedroom apartment	45
House	3
Bungalow	15
No preference	1
Studio/ One bed apartment	1
Two bed apartment or house	1
Studio/ one bed apartment/ bungalow	1
One bed apartment/ bungalow	4
Two bedroom apartment or bungalow	3
One bedroom/ two bedroom apartment	1
Two bed apartment/ house/ bungalow	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>

Most people would prefer to rent (n = 42) or buy (n = 36) their accommodation. Only three individuals would prefer a shared ownership arrangement and one person would like to either rent or share ownership. One person did not provide any ownership data. Regarding the location of the LGBT-specific housing most respondents would prefer their accommodation to be in the suburbs (n = 57). Only nine individuals would prefer their housing to be located in the city centre and a further five in a rural setting. Five individuals would like either a city centre or suburban location and five others would like their accommodation to be in a rural or suburban area. Only one person stated a preference for a city centre or rural location.

### ***Preferred characteristics of fellow LGBT residents***

Participants were asked with which age group and gender they would prefer to live. Data were cross-tabulated and analysed and compared with the respondent's own gender and sexuality. Results show that the majority of individuals, regardless of their own gender, do not mind with which gender they live (males n = 34; females n = 32 and transgender n = 2). Data according to respondent's own sexuality also showed similar results (Lesbian n = 27; Gay men n = 31; bisexual n = 6). However, there was a preference to live with older LGBT people (n = 53) rather than a mixed age group (n = 28). Data analysed according to the respondent's own age group shows that the majority of individuals aged 55 and above would prefer to live with

older LGBT people (n = 42). Individuals aged 35 years and below indicate a preference for living with a mixed age group.

***Accommodation facilities and services***

Participants were asked to rank, on a five point scale (“not at all important”, “not very important”, “not sure”, “quite important”, “very important”), the importance of living close to the shops and on a bus route. Analysis indicates that for most participants it is either quite important (n = 44) or very important (n = 32) that the accommodation is located close to the shops. In comparison only six individuals felt that this was not very important. Results were similar in relation to importance of being situated on a bus route. Thirty-nine respondents felt that this was very important and 35 felt it was quite important. Again only a small number felt that this was either not very or not at all important (n = 5 and n = 2 respectively).

Table 4 shows participants’ preferences for a range of facilities at the accommodation. Overall the majority of individuals would prefer access to a communal area and garden. Only slightly fewer would like to have a parking space or for the accommodation to accept a pet.

**Table 4: Preference for facilities at the accommodation**

<b>Would like accommodation to:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Missing data</b>
Have access to communal area	76	5	2
Have access to a garden	78	5	0
Have a parking space	66	14	3
Accept pets	67	10	6

***Delivery of future care provision***

Participants were asked, if in the future they needed care, where they would prefer this to be delivered. The overwhelming majority would prefer their care to be delivered in either their own LGBT-specific accommodation (n = 35) or LGBT sheltered accommodation (n = 36). Only a few individuals would prefer this to take place in an LGBT-specific residential care home (n = 6). Six participants failed to provide a response to this question.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings are based on a small sample and so cannot be considered to be scientifically indicative of the LGBT population of Birmingham as a whole; however, they do give a flavour of the needs and aspirations of LGBT people when considering their later life housing options, and can be used as a basis for further investigation.

The Birmingham Older LGBT People's Housing Group will continue to build on these findings and encourage older LGBT people and other stakeholders to debate the issues raised and seek to influence providers of housing and housing-related services to ensure that the specific needs of this demographic group are known.

## REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

Assessing current and future housing and support options for older LGB people, Joseph Rowntree Trust 2013

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