

Understanding the Service Needs of LGBTQ+ Survivors of Sexual Violence in Wales

Key Findings & Recommendations

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Acknowledgement

We extend our deepest gratitude to the research participants who bravely shared their experiences of accessing sexual violence services. Your courage in recounting such personal and painful stories, as well as the insights you provided on the support you accessed or needed, is invaluable. Your voices not only have informed this research but will also contribute to creating more effective support systems in the future. This research will play a crucial role in improving the services available for LGBTQ+ survivors of sexual violence ensuring they better meet the needs of those they are meant to support. Thank you for your strength, trust, and willingness to make a difference through your participation.


We also wish to express our thanks to our Advisory Group, and Steering Group, whose invaluable advice and support, have helped shape the project from beginning to end.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge and thank the Home Office for funding this research project. Your support has been instrumental in enabling us to carry out this important work, and we are grateful for your commitment to improving services for LGBTQ+ sexual violence survivors in Wales.



The research project

This research project, undertaken by New Pathways in collaboration with Stepping Stones North Wales, Umbrella Cymru and OB3 Research, sought to understand the barriers LGBTQ+ people in Wales face to accessing Sexual Violence services.



It explored why LGBTQ+ people underutilise such services, identified gaps in current support mechanisms and how specialist sexual violence services could be improved so that they are more inclusive, accessible, and effective for LGBTQ+ people.

The following document provides a summary of the key findings of the research, alongside our recommended actions.

Key findings

- Only **36%** of respondents accessed a Sexual Violence Service, **28%** reported to the police, **24%** to a victim support organisation or charity, and **17%** to a service for LGBTQ+ people.
- Of those who reported to the police: **27%** felt the person supporting them was confident to discuss gender and/or sexual or romantic identity and **28%** felt the person supporting them had knowledge of LGBTQ+ people's experiences.
- Of those who accessed a Sexual Violence support organisation: **62%** felt comfortable to disclose their gender and/or sexual or romantic identity and the same number felt the person supporting them had knowledge of LGBTQ+ people's experiences.
- Only **44%** of respondents thought that sexual violence services were accessible to them. Non-disabled survey respondents (at **51%**) were more inclined to agree compared with disabled survey respondents (at **44%**) that sexual violence services were accessible to them. Similarly, cis survey respondents (at **51%**) were more likely to agree than trans respondents (at **37%**) that the services were accessible to them.

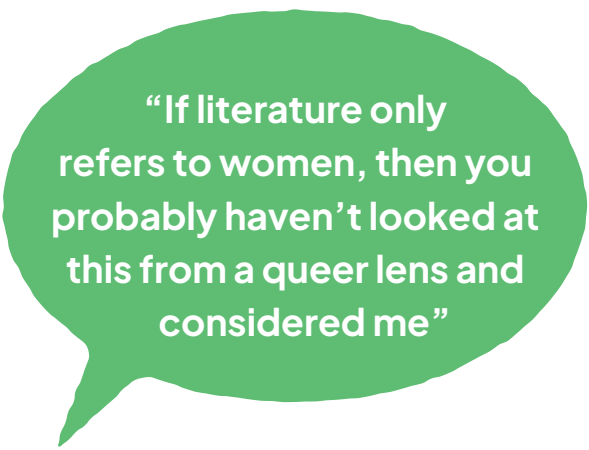
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- The main issues raised in relation to the accessibility of services were:
 - a perceived lack of LGBTQ+ representation
 - fear of discrimination
 - mixed experiences linked directly to the skills and sensitivity of staff
 - need for secure and discreet ways to access services
 - accessibility of services for people in rural areas
 - Participants highlighted a lack of accessible and representative information as a barrier to seeking support. Many participants did not know services existed, or that they were suitable to them.
 - Participants emphasised a need for greater respect for gender & sexual identities – a need for explicit recognition of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations across policies, practices and communications would make sexual violence services feel more approachable. Misgendering people or making assumptions about their sexual orientation were described as alienating, and at times, retraumatising.

Recommendations

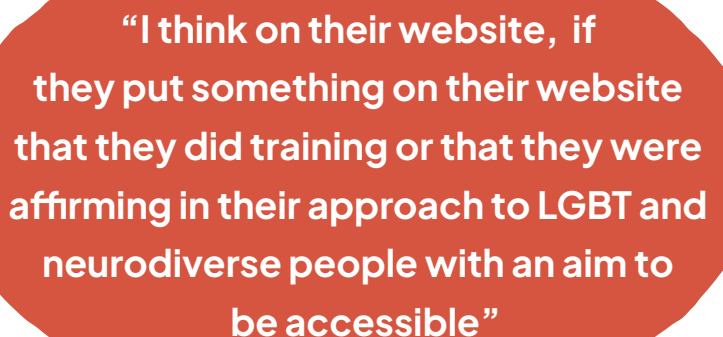
The findings highlight the need for increased visibility of services for LGBTQ+ people in Wales, and for practitioners to have better understanding and knowledge of LGBTQ+ people so that they can deliver more appropriate services to LGBTQ+ people who have experienced sexual violence. In particular, this report recommends that services:

— **Improve visibility of LGBTQ+ people in resources**

Organisations need to make it explicit in their promotional and communication materials, in language, and imagery that they are inclusive of and support LGBTQ+ people so that LGBTQ+ survivors know these services will be able to and are available to support them. This also includes making physical spaces visibly inclusive and welcoming.



“If literature only refers to women, then you probably haven’t looked at this from a queer lens and considered me”



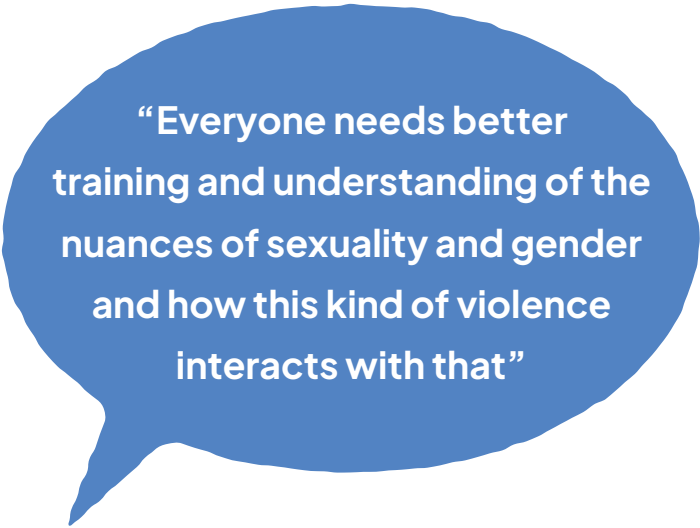
“I think on their website, if they put something on their website that they did training or that they were affirming in their approach to LGBT and neurodiverse people with an aim to be accessible”

– Engage in enhanced LGBTQ+ sensitivity training

Professional practitioners, including the police, need to develop the right skills and appropriate knowledge so that they can deliver appropriate services to LGBTQ+ clients. They need to engage in comprehensive training around working with LGBTQ+ people, with a focus on trauma-informed care, understanding intersectionality, correct pronoun usage, and the unique ways gender and sexual identity can shape experiences of sexual violence. Practitioners trained in these areas are more likely to make LGBTQ+ survivors feel respected and validated, and as such, be able to support them.



“Educate police and sexual violence services more on sexualities and gender identities, and reasons why LGBTQ+ people may be more prone to experiencing sexual violence and abuse”



“Everyone needs better training and understanding of the nuances of sexuality and gender and how this kind of violence interacts with that”

➤ Expand outreach

Services need to be better promoted to, and to increase outreach to LGBTQ+ communities. This includes targeted campaigns on social media, and a more robust online presence, but organisations should also have a physical presence at LGBTQ+ events and community spaces, advertise in health-care setting such as GP surgeries and raise awareness across educational settings. This would increase awareness and access to support for those who may not actively seek out services, but would respond to visible, accessible information. Services must understand that LGBTQ+ people are not a homogenous group, and as such a multifaceted approach to outreach is necessary



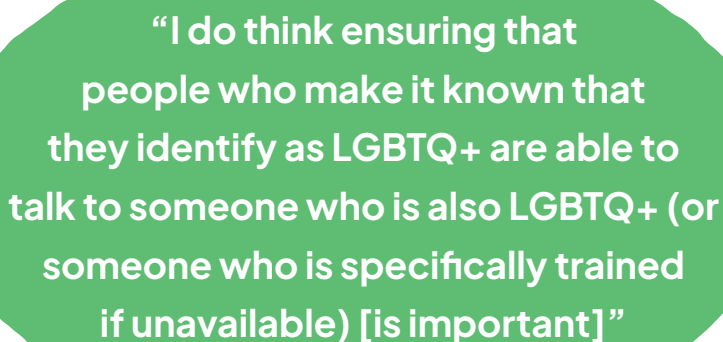
“Get out there more in the community, especially rural communities, let yourself known so we know there is a service available — make yourselves more easily open with small community events as well as large ones”

– Offer confidential and anonymous contact options

To address privacy concerns, especially in small or close-knit communities, many contributors emphasized the need for secure ways to make initial contact with services such as anonymous helplines, discreet online booking systems, and private chat functions.

– Consider LGBTQ+ specific support options

Services need to ensure that they have the knowledge and understanding to support LGBTQ+ clients. This might be facilitated by training (as above) and/or having dedicated members of staff. The provision of peer support groups for LGBTQ+ people and partnerships with LGBTQ+ organisations were also recommended by participants, to enhance service offerings, which would help to build trust and ensure a more culturally competent approach to support.



“I do think ensuring that people who make it known that they identify as LGBTQ+ are able to talk to someone who is also LGBTQ+ (or someone who is specifically trained if unavailable) [is important]”

Methodology

The research consisted of an online survey, 18 semi-structured interviews and 4 focus groups, which were informed by a literature review of the existing research. The research methodology was developed in collaboration with an Advisory Group of 'experts by experience' and a steering group of experts in the field.

Survey

An online anonymous survey, for LGBTQ+ individuals over 18, living in Wales, was carried out on Snap Survey.

The survey was live between June–July 2024. It was advertised on social media, via email networking and the use of targeted social media advertisements.

In total 116 survey responses were received. A small number of additional individuals started the survey, but their responses were not included in the analysis as they did not meet the criteria for participation: LGBTQ+ people, living in Wales, aged 18 years or over and had experienced sexual violence.

The questions used in the survey and in the interviews and focus group, were designed in collaboration with an Advisory Group of 'experts by experience' and a steering group of experts in the field. The survey asked respondents about their experiences of seeking support for experiences of sexual violence, what had prevented them from doing so (if anything) and what they would like to be different.



Semi-structured interviews

18 semi-structured interviews were undertaken. 15 Participants were selected through survey respondents who had expressed an interest in taking part. An additional three participants, who had heard about the research project from friends or partners, expressed an interest in taking part after the survey was closed. An overview of the questions were shared in advance of the interview, so that they had an opportunity to think about their answers. The questions used in the semi-structured interview were designed in collaboration with an Advisory Group of 'experts by experience', and a steering group of experts in the field.

Participants were offered the option of an online, telephone or in-person interview and all participants chose to conduct these remotely, via video call (Zoom or Teams) or on the telephone.

Interview participants received gift vouchers as a token of thanks for their time and contribution to the project.

Focus groups

Participants who had indicated in their survey responses that they were interested in taking part in a focus group, were invited to sign up for one of the scheduled focus groups. The focus groups were organised primarily by gender, and some were also organised by sexuality, according to the demographics of those who had expressed interest in focus groups. Focus groups were organised in this manner in the understanding that participants may feel more willing to engage when among people who share or have a similar identity, and such that we could better understand the particular experiences of the varying identities that fall under the 'LGBTQ+' umbrella (Stall et al. 202, p. 206). Participants who had indicated in their survey responses that they were interested in taking part in a focus group, were invited to sign up for one of the scheduled focus groups that aligned most closely and comfortably with their identity.

An overview of the questions were shared in advance of the group, so they had the opportunity to think about their answers. These questions were similarly, developed in collaboration with the Advisory Group and Steering Group.

All focus groups were conducted remotely, over Zoom. Focus group participants received gift vouchers as a token of thanks for their time and contribution to the project.

The qualitative data gathered via interviews and focus group discussions was analysed thematically, with the intention of presenting the key issues raised and discussed by the participants.

Profile of research respondents

The full sample was 119.

Age

81 responses

16–21	4.9%
22–25	37%
26–30	17.3%
31–35	16%
36–40	3.7%
41–50	12.4%
51–60	6.2%
61–65	2.5%

Gender

106 responses

Agender	1.9%
Genderqueer	8.5%
Gender nonconforming	2.8%
Intersex	0%
Man / Male	15%
Nonbinary	12.3%
Trans masculine / Man	7.5%
Trans Feminine / Woman	8%
Woman / Female	41%
In another way	3%

Orientation

112 responses

Asexual	7%
Bisexual	34%
Gay / Lesbian (or Homosexual)	39%
Pansexual	18%
Questioning	1%
Straight (or Heterosexual)	1%
In another way	9%

Gender Identity Same as Sex Registered at Birth

105 responses

Yes	64%
No	36%

Disability

103 responses

Disabled	52%
Not Disabled	48%

Ethnicity

112 responses

Asian	0%
Black	7%
Mixed / Multiple backgrounds	7%
Other ethnic group	0%
White	86%

Region

110 responses

Blaenau Gwent	3%
Bridgend	6%
Caerphilly	6%
Cardiff	25%
Carmarthenshire	2%
Ceredigion	6%
Conwy	3%
Denbighshire	1%
Flintshire	1%
Gwynedd	1%
Isle of Anglesey	0%
Merthyr Tydfil	0%
Monmouthshire	2%
Neath Port Talbot	4%
Newport	7%
Pembrokeshire	3%
Powys	2%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	13%
Swansea	9%
Torfaen	1%
Vale of Glamorgan	4%
Wrexham	3%



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