

Community Development

*Code of Practice for CDPs, FRCs and RSA
Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and
Trans Communities*

CDP **Community Development Project**
FRC **Family Resource Centre**
RSA **Regional Support Agency**

**Network of CDPs, FRCs and RSA Supporting Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual and Trans Communities, West & Midlands Region**

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Definitions

A **Lesbian** is a woman who is romantically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women. (Many lesbians prefer to be called lesbian rather than gay, queer or homosexual because it reflects their separate experience).

A **Gay** person is a man or woman who is romantically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to people of the same sex. (Many gay men prefer to be called 'gay' rather than homosexual. Many women who are gay prefer to be identified as 'lesbian').

A **Bisexual** is a man or woman who is romantically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to people of both sexes.

Transgender is an inclusive, umbrella term used to describe the diversity of gender identity and expression for all people who do not conform to common ideas of gender roles. This includes:

Transsexual is a medical term describing people whose gender and biological sex do not line up, and who often seek medical treatment to bring their body and gender identity into alignment. There are several terms used to commonly describe transsexual people, including MTF (abbreviated term for male to female transsexual people), FTM (abbreviated term for female to male transsexual people).

Transvestite is a term used to describe people who dress in clothes associated with their opposite sex, as defined by socially accepted norms, but still identify with their biological sex. An erotic transvestite is a person who gets sexually excited by the dressing. A social transvestite, however, simply feels more comfortable in such clothes.

Definitions from *More Than a Phase: A resource guide for the inclusion of young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners* (Pobal, 2006) and *Transgender* (Beyond Barriers, 2004)

Implementing this Code



This Code of Practice will be discussed at the Voluntary Management Committee and amended as necessary before being ratified.

Once ratified, implementation of the Code of Practice will be undertaken by management and staff within the Project.

The Project will take full responsibility for providing the most comprehensive and up-to-date information on services and supports that are in place and available to LGBT people within the catchment area of the Project.

The Network of CDPs, FRCs and RSA Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Trans Communities, West & Midlands Region would like to thank GLEN (Gay & Lesbian Equality Network) for their help in drafting this Code of Practice

External Actions



The CDP / FRC / RSA will:

- Work to build and maintain a strong working relationship with regional and national organisations that have expertise in providing services for the LGBT communities.
- Contribute to other initiatives that are providing supports to LGBT people in our community and Region.
- Meet regularly with other CDPs, FRCs and the RSA to further our understanding of the issues affecting LGBT people and to work together to develop common responses to these issues that can be implemented at local community level.
- Raise the issues and concerns of the LGBT communities at other fora of which we are a part, for example Community Development Programme / Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme structures, County / City Development Board structures, etc.
- To actively support and participate in national awareness raising events such as Gay Pride Week.

“I am delighted, as Taoiseach, that our gay and lesbian community are taking their rightful place at the centre of our capital city’s cultural, community and civic life”, Bertie Ahern, 2006.

Introduction



“It is now widely acknowledged that approximately 10% of any given population is gay or lesbian...Additionally we know from national and international research that the general experiences of lesbians and gay men in terms of their exposure to discrimination, violence and harassment, bullying and isolation in a variety of arenas including home, school, work and social spaces has led to vastly disproportionate rates of suicide, poor mental health, low self esteem, homelessness, underachievement in the workplace and lower capacity to participate in decision making fora.” (www.glen.ie, 2007)

The most comprehensive research into the experiences of gay, lesbian and bisexual people in Ireland was commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency in 1995. This research found that:

- 66% of respondents stated that gradual awareness of their sexuality caused "many" or "some" problems
- Over half (57%) of those surveyed experienced problems at school because of their being lesbian or gay and 8% left school earlier than anticipated as a result
- More than a third of those who had been on training courses experienced bullying because of being gay and almost half of respondents experience harassment in the workplace
- Many respondents’ job opportunities were severely narrowed because they avoided work for which they were qualified (21%) or categories of work (39%) through fear of discrimination
- 25% said they had been punched, beaten, hit or kicked because they were assumed to be lesbian or gay. The vast majority (84%) of respondents knew somebody who had been verbally harassed, threatened with violence or physically attacked because they were assumed to be lesbian or gay

Combat Poverty Agency (1995)

International studies have indicated that LGBT young people are up to 6 times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual young people (Remafide, 1999, Sexual orientation and youth suicide. *Journal of the American Medical Association*).

More recently, the *Gay Community News* published its *Out Now 2007 GCN Ireland Gay Community Market Report*. This research revealed Ireland's gay and lesbian

communities are often well-educated, well-paid, well-travelled and living happily in relationships. However, the research also found that only 50% of those surveyed said they can be open about their sexuality at work. *Out Now* research in other markets shows that this compares with 51% in the UK, 61% in Australia and 66% of gay research respondents in the Netherlands who say they can be open about their sexuality at work (GCN, 2007).

The Advisory Committee on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Issues, established by the Equality Authority, published a report entitled *Implementing Equality for Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals* in 2002. This report examined a wide range of themes relevant to lesbian, gay and bisexual people including Community Development and Empowerment. The report stated that “many LGB people remain very isolated, without access to or knowledge of LGB community organisations, supports or social outlets for meeting other gay people. This has consequences, both in terms of the impact on the individual’s health, social wellbeing and personal development, and in terms of lost contributions to the broader community” (Equality Authority, 2002).

The report notes the successful work of the Community Development Programme in supporting disadvantaged communities and identifies the programme’s potential to “facilitate the participation of LGB communities, as with other communities of interest, in decision-making structures at local, regional and national levels. Capacity building is essential, and this involves the provision of resources, ongoing development and training supports to local LGB communities, and linkages to the wider supports available” (ibid.). This potential is shared by Family Resource Centres.

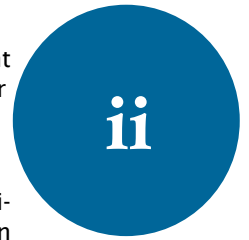
Community Development Projects and Family Resource Centres who comprise the Network of CDPs and FRCs Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans People have found it challenging to identify and work with LGBT people using the same methodologies employed when working with other groups experiencing discrimination and social exclusion. This can largely be attributed to the atmosphere of harassment and discrimination directed at the LGBT community that leaves many LGBT people reluctant to “come out” and organise around LGBT specific issues.

This Code of Practice provides CDPs, FRCs and the RSA with a structure within which they can frame their support for LGBT people. Adoption of this Code of Practice will influence the internal workings of a Project as well as how the Project acts within its local community.

(Name of Organisation) is committed to this Code of Practice because:

- As a CDP / FRC / RSA we are committed to addressing social injustices and working towards equality for all using community development principles.
- It is essential that all forms of discrimination and exclusion are regarded as unacceptable and are challenged by our CDP / FRC / RSA.
- The practice of inclusion should be relevant to all of the Project’s work.
- Implementation of this Code of Practice will contribute to the fulfilment of the legal obligations faced by our CDP / FRC/ RSA as a service provider.

Internal Actions



- One member of the Project’s Voluntary Management Committee will be given special responsibility for the implementation of this Code of Practice.
- The Project will recognise and address the discrimination and exclusion of LGBT people. This will be an integral part of the Project’s work and will be noted in the Project’s Work Plan.
- All Project staff and volunteers will be encouraged to undertake awareness raising training on this issue.
- The Project will recognise that not all LGBT people have ‘come out’ and will handle all queries, information requests, etc., in complete confidence.
- Project staff and volunteers will ensure that the resource centre is visibly LGBT friendly (through the display of posters, information, etc.).
- Homophobic language will not be tolerated within the Project.
- The Project will promote an LGBT friendly environment to other groups using the centre.
- The Project will maintain up-to-date information on where LGBT people can access specialised support (e.g. LGBT Helplines, etc.)
- Relevant publications will be available or on display in the Project’s resource centre.
- All existing Project activities will be proofed to ensure that they are LGBT friendly.
- The Project will endeavour to develop and foster an LGBT friendly ethos. This will be reflected in the recruitment of staff and volunteers.