



Lesbian gay and bisexual awareness training Mike Lowe and Lesley Pattenson

During autumn 2008 Healthy Gay Life and Lesley Pattenson delivered a series of half day lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) awareness training sessions to 90 staff from all specialties within Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust (BSMHFT).

The training content included consideration of the lived experience of LGBs including multiple identities, living with a stigmatised identity, homophobia and discrimination and its impact on mental health of LGBs, improving service provision and delivering an inclusive and sensitive service.

Within this consistent overarching framework, each session was tailored to focus on the client group, geographical location and service environment in which the staff attending were operating. Mike and Lesley used a combination of input, large and small group discussion, exercises and case studies, and provided resource lists, references and contact details for other organisations.

The programme evaluated extremely well (see summary below) and we expect to continue the programme for the Mental Health Trust in the new financial year.

**Mike and Lesley would be pleased to discuss providing a tailor-made training programme for your organisation. Please contact:
michael.lowe@hobtpct.nhs.uk or lesley.pattenson@blueyonder.co.uk**

Summary of composite evaluation of all 2008 sessions for BSMHFT

Of the participants who returned evaluation forms:

96% said that the trainers had been very good or good in meeting the stated course objectives.

92% said that the course was very good or good in meeting their individual needs for information and greater awareness.

55% said the training had improved their confidence to work with issues regarding sexuality of their clients/patients including challenging discrimination and homophobia amongst clients/patients and staff a great deal and another 40% said somewhat. Those included a number who had identified or implied that they were LGB themselves, so to an extent this was a reflection of the initial level of confidence and awareness of some participants rather than a shortcoming of the course.

General comments included:

“It was a superb training workshop”; “The whole awareness training was very informative and helpful”; “A nice mixture of didactic information-giving, group discussion and small group exercises”; “Very clear and informative presentation style”; “Trainers were very good!”; “Interesting, well presented with a bit of passion thrown in!”; “Very useful and well articulated”; “Well structured and to the point”.

Participants were asked in what other ways they had benefited. Responses related both to greater awareness and understanding and to improvements in practice and included:

- Making us aware that people have different sexual orientations and need to be treated accordingly.
- My own understanding of lesbian and gay has become more liberal.
- Become more aware of gay/lesbian issues.
- Better understanding of problems which clients may experience.
- Being able to take information back to clinical area and discuss with colleagues. Applying new information to practice.
- Given contacts for support groups.
- Greater awareness round general issues for LGBT people and specifically around improving clinical services.
- Raising awareness of the issues pertinent to gay and lesbian clients; issues around being gay or lesbian and ethnicity were useful.
- I am more aware of some of the issues regarding LGB and mental health problems and how our service need/could think about this.
- Lots of signposting, service development ideas.
- Opportunity to reflect on potentially loaded issues.
- Clarity on recent legal changes and incidence on mental health problems within LGB groups.
- Knowledge gained around lesbian and gay mental health statistics.
- Highlighted need to include sexuality as part of offering effective support.
- Has made me think about how I can make it clear that I will be non-judgmental and accepting of them re sexuality as well as other issues
- Has made me think about giving new clients the Buzz leaflets at first meeting and other information.
- Made me think about being more proactive.
- To want to support LGBT clients more and challenge oppressive practice.
- Re-engaging with issues, linking them to mental health issues.
- Now able to identify some of the issues faced by staff on the wards.
- Made aware of what the Trust has implemented.
- Found out about Stonewall. Handouts / my notes I can look back at.
- Can talk openly to others about issues which now have Trust backing.
- Accessing further information to share in teams I work with.
- Made me more aware, new ideas for supporting someone's sexuality.
- Different perspectives from others in group and having lesbian / gay facilitators.
- Discussions/sharing views with people raised opinions I haven't considered before.
- Talk openly with colleagues about issues not normally discussed.
- Given me the space to reflect on some of the issues in broader depth.
- Being clearer in my own thinking in terms of preconceptions of others.
- General observation on how sexuality impinges on mental health.
- Never easy to directly challenge homophobic attitudes, but feel that this is now clearer in my mind and I wouldn't just 'let things go'.

Extending the training programme to others

Virtually all participants stated that they would recommend the training day to others, both within the Trust and outside. Within the Trust many participants felt that all staff / teams should receive the training, and some said that it should be mandatory training. Some also stressed that it should be not just professional workers but all staff in contact with patients. Students and trainees were also mentioned. A few even suggested the awareness training should be available to patients and families.

Organisations outside the Trust included all other NHS Trusts, social services staff, University staff and students including nurses and social workers, clinical psychologists; housing associations, sheltered schemes and care homes, police and emergency services staff.

For references or a full copy of the evaluation please contact: Lakhvir.Rellon@bsmhft.nhs.uk at Equalities Directorate, BSMHFT