

Impact of the Spending Cuts on Public and Local Services, Charities and Organisations for LGBT People

About this Briefing

This research briefing brings together various reports, research and case studies that are beginning to appear, on the severity of central and local governments' spending cuts on organisations and support services which lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people use or may use.

This briefing sets out to map the situation by introducing the current crisis that budget cuts are having on public and voluntary services with a closer look at the impact that has had on some LGBT services across the UK. It then presents, in brief, some of the areas where the impact of the cuts and the ideological attacks are creating serious problems and detrimental life-changing consequences in such areas as families and the home, young LGBT people, transgender issues, justice, health, housing, immigration and education.

It is by no means an exhaustive summary but it does aim to present a picture of the scope and reality of the cuts for LGBT people and how it impacts on the lives of LGBT people, communities and organisations. Regarding LBT women's services and the experiences of LBT women in accessing those, including more specific services like those used by Black, disabled, young and older LBT women in the UK, these have been extensively and recently researched, for example, in the Women's Resource Centre's 'In All Our Colours' (2010: <http://www.wrc.org.uk/resources/>). It is an excellent source of information and is highly recommended.

Funding for Services

Most of the LGBT support services – such as HIV/AIDS projects, IVF treatment, support for young LGBT people in housing and education, LGBT info lines - are provided by the voluntary or Third Sector. They are often heavily reliant on grants, mainly from funds and budgets held by central and local government and their agencies and local Health Authorities. Right now, many of these have been or are being drastically slashed or cut completely as the government seeks to dismantle the public sector. We have already seen the growing body of evidence which is proving this ideological attack is creating inequalities in society, driving more people into poverty and unemployment, and making many homeless.

Such public, community and voluntary services are very vulnerable to closure partly due to funding sources drying up, but also because their profiles are often low-key. Getting widespread or even local publicity as well as trying to achieve greater accessibility for people who most need them, have become increasingly difficult and stressful. Such organisations have the worrying dilemma of where to make savings, often with little time to plan fully, and how to maintain accessible, fair and transparent services. Hand in hand with this are job, pay and pensions cuts and further economic and personal strife.

SOME KEY AREAS WHERE CUTS ARE IMPACTING ON LGBT PEOPLE

1. Families and the Home
2. General LGBT services
3. Health
4. Housing, welfare and benefits
5. Immigration and Asylum
6. Justice
7. Schools and education
8. Transgender
9. Women's Services
10. Workplace
11. Young People

FAMILIES and the HOME

Domestic abuse and violence:

Broken Rainbow UK - <http://www.broken-rainbow.org.uk/>

Broken Rainbow (BR) LGBT Domestic Violence (UK) was started in 2002 and became a registered charity in 2004.

BR's objective is to relieve the distress and suffering caused to LGBT people by domestic violence and abuse, in particular but not exclusively by doing the following:

- Raising awareness in the LGBT community and elsewhere of the impact of homophobic, transphobic and same sex domestic violence on the lives of LGBT people
- Offering advice, support and referral services to LGBT people experiencing homophobic, transphobic and same sex domestic violence
- Offering information, advice and training to people who are responsible for domestic violence policy and practice in mainstream and specialist organisations, or who are otherwise involved with the survivors and perpetrators of those suffering from domestic violence, with a view to increasing the physical safety and mental well-being of LGBT people who experience such violence or abuse.
- Running modular training project in partnership with Refuge and Leeway Women's Aid.

BR's main funding is supplied by the Home Office. Certain posts and specialised projects (like its modular training) are funded by The Nationwide Foundation. With the Home Office's budget cut by a third, funding for this organisation lies in the balance.

GENERAL LGBT SERVICES

There are many local LGBT consortiums which act as central hubs to a whole range of services, which are vulnerable to funding cuts. Some examples of community

projects and organisations where funding has been slashed, are provided below in the False Economy report.

Kairos in Soho, London, provides “space and opportunity with and for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and friends to gain support, grow, and affect wider social and strategic change” - <http://www.kairosinsoho.org.uk/>. It is a key partner with over 36 LGBT organisations looking for joint funding strategies that would potentially support the sector and identify new funding and diversify income streams.

HEALTH

HIV/AIDS

HIV prevention services in London face a funding cut of 43%, which follows the news that there has been a 70% increase in new diagnoses of HIV infections in gay men over the past decade. A number of groups, including Gay Men Fighting AIDS (GMFA), Terrence Higgins Trust and PACE, were told recently that the NHS primary care trusts (PCTs) which help to fund their work would be slashing their budgets. The groups are part of the Pan London HIV Prevention Programme, which is funded by PCTs and commissions a range of small organisations to tackle HIV in the capital.

They were told by Kensington and Chelsea PCT, which manages the programme, that although 21 PCTs in London wish to continue the work, only six-month contracts with reduced funding can be offered at present because PCTs are “not able to continue to commit at commensurate financial levels going forward.” (LGBT Labour report)

Another organisation has similar issues. Naz Project London (NPL) provides sexual health and HIV prevention and support services to targeted BME communities in London (<http://www.naz.org.uk/>). NPL is currently in alliance with Positive East and Positively UK looking at ways to bridge funding gaps. In their report ‘Securing Our Future’ (<http://www.naz.org.uk/news/SoF%20report%20FINAL.pdf>) some key concerns raised were raised about:

- 1) “moves that would limit access to and support from voluntary organisations which might result in a greater reliance on more expensive hospital-based services while not offering the same level and quality of provision particularly in the areas of confidentiality and trust.
- 2) women were concerned about wider HIV support needs that included the family, e.g., disclosure of parental HIV status to children
- 3) mental health impacts of an HIV diagnosis, and potential impact of a loss or reduction in access to mental health and psychological services”.

GMFA: <http://www.gmfa.org.uk/>

Naz Project: <http://www.naz.org.uk/>

PACE: <http://www.pacehealth.org.uk/>

THT: <http://www.tht.org.uk/>

HOUSING, WELFARE and BENEFITS

Currently, one in five gay and lesbian people believe they are likely to be treated worse than heterosexuals when applying for social housing, according to new research. The survey, carried out by LGBT charity Stonewall Scotland, revealed that the figure rises to one in four among young (18-24) and older (over 55) gay people.

The research also showed that lesbians believe they are more likely to be discriminated against when applying for social housing and only 16% of LGBT people think their needs are considered when delivering public services.

With equality impact assessments not being enacted as part of the Equality Act 2010 implementation, the situation for LGBT people is likely to worsen as their needs are once again not contemplated unless by good service providers.

Young People and Housing Benefit

A Unite rep has pointed out that the current housing benefit regulations put young people at a disadvantage. "Single Housing Benefit claimants living in the rented sector who are aged under 25 are classed in secondary legislation as "young individuals" for Housing Benefit purposes. When calculating the amount of Housing Benefit payable they are restricted to the shared accommodation rate (previously known as the shared room rate). Under Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rules, this is the rate appropriate to a dwelling where the tenant has exclusive use of only one bedroom and shares at least one of: a kitchen; a bathroom; a toilet; or a room suitable for living in."

He points out that this disproportionately affects young Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people with many of them forced to live in shared accommodation where they do not feel safe to live as out LGBT people. The Government's proposal then to increase the age limit to 35, means that some people may have to move homes, and face homelessness and other serious and frightening problems as a result.

See also 'Public Services' below.

IMMIGRATION and ASYLUM

Asylum

We know that as the cuts bite, minority groups are scapegoated. These include asylum seekers, some of whom are inevitably LGBT asylum seekers who have fled their countries to avoid violence, persecution, torture and death.

PCS supports the 'Still human still here' campaign. It calls for asylum seekers who have been waiting for more than six months for their cases to be concluded, or who have been refused asylum but temporarily cannot be returned home through no fault of their own (e.g. because removals have been suspended to their country of origin) to be given permission to work until their cases are finally resolved rather than being left in limbo. (<http://stillhumanstillhere.wordpress.com/>).

Legal Aid

The government plans to cut £350 million from the £2.1 billion legal aid budget, thus jeopardising the lives of some of the most vulnerable in society. Amongst these people are the LGBT asylum seekers who have fled their countries to avoid violence, persecution, torture and death for being or being perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender.

In the Women's Resource Centre's excellent publication, 'In All Our Colours', rightly states that for women:

“Access to appropriate legal advice that can support an asylum claim on the basis of sexuality or gender identity is rare and specialist immigration advice for LBT asylum seekers needs to be expanded”

For PCS members, the cuts to legal aid will mean a huge 547,000 less cases coming before the courts, and therefore the need for staff to process these cases is diminished and staff redeployment or redundancies are very likely.

JUSTICE

Galop - <http://www.galop.org.uk/>

Galop is a charity which works to prevent and challenge homophobic and transphobic hate crime in Greater London. Galop aims to reduce crimes against LGBT people and campaign for an improved criminal justice system. It has been providing support to LGBT people who are experiencing issues with safety and policing for nearly 30 years.

Funders, amongst a small handful of others, include London Councils and previously the Office for Criminal Justice Reform (now closed down by the coalition government).

Legal Aid - see 'Immigration and Asylum' section above.

Hate crime increases

During times of austerity, hate crimes increase. With the rise of far right organisations, the number of abusive and violent incidents against LGBT and other minority communities also increases. Right now, there are higher levels of homo-, bi- and transphobic violence and attacks, partly because people are looking for scapegoats for their own situation.

With under-reporting and under-funding for victim support the situation is likely to get worse for LGBT people as many crimes and their perpetrators go undetected. Lower reporting levels due to lack of support, capacity or strategy to help LGBT people to report hate crimes and incidents will ultimately lead to skewed figures about the real levels and types of hate crimes taking place.

Job and service cuts in the Justice Sector

The criminal justice system is in meltdown, according to unions representing workers in the justice sector. With at least 20% cuts and much higher in some areas, courts will experience backlogs, delays and adjournments, individuals will not be

represented in hearings, greater distances to travel to attend court, and there will be fewer police to deal with emergency calls and be visible deterrents on our streets.

For the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) there is a budget reduction of £2 billion which amounts to a 23% cut in spending. For PCS members alone, this translates to a cut of 15,000 jobs; 10,000 jobs are to go in National Offender Management Service (aka Prison Service, etc.), and around 4,000 are to go in the courts and tribunals service. There is to be a cut of 11,000 staff from frontline services, so much for only cutting the back office.

The court closure programme will leave many rural areas and inner city areas without a local court - ending the idea that justice should be administered and accessed locally.

- Increased privatisation, outsourcing and the involvement of private companies leading to some companies profiting from the justice system.
- Closure of the Youth Justice Board.
- 28,000 fewer police officers.

For more information, see PCS's Justice Under the Hammer campaign:
http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/ministry_of_justice/justice-under-the-hammer--save-our-courts/index.cfm.

PUBLIC SERVICES

The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) on 20 October 2010 was an unprecedented attack on the welfare state, public services, communities, jobs and benefits. These are the biggest cuts ever to public services and PCS is committed to campaigning alongside other trade unions to stop them.

Access to services is key to supporting people in rural areas. These cuts mean services will have less ability to travel and provide support. Isolation is already a problem for some LGBT people, particularly young LGBT people, in rural areas.

The scope of the attacks on public services goes beyond financial considerations. There are increasing numbers of bullying and harassment cases, more victimisation by employers of union representatives, and government attacks on the employment and trade union rights legislation too, joined in by some the media.

Privatisation of Public Services is also a great risk with profit coming before the needs and rights of individuals and groups. 'Public Services Not Private Profit' is a joint union campaign against the privatisation of public services which PCS fully supports and is involved in:

http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/campaigns/campaigns_we_support/public-services-not-private-profit.cfm.

SCHOOLS and EDUCATION

LGBT History Month: <http://www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk/>

Budget cuts to sponsoring departments of 'LGBT History Month' (e.g. the Home

Office, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Ministry of Justice, amongst others) are will very impact on the future of this high-profile, awareness-raising, celebratory campaign. It has been integral in helping to tackle homophobic bullying in schools and more widely, in educating pupils, workers and the public about the lives and achievements of the LGBT community and individuals. It can help bring local communities together at events throughout February each year, just as Black History Month does.

Tuition Fees

We know already, the cuts imposed on students and the rise of tuition fees will impact students who are not supported economically by their family – of which many LGBT students can be counted among that number. If that individual has 'come out' and the family has not accepted their child's sexual orientation or gender identity, there will be no chance of being supported in any way and so the opportunity of further or higher education and all that entails is lost for that LGBT person.

TRANSGENDER

Cuts and privatisation of the NHS – staff shortages, closure of wards and clinics, longer waiting times, profit before patient care, PCT budget cuts, etc. – would all mean that 'non-essential' or low-demand services would face the axe. These would inevitably be transgender services.

WOMEN'S SERVICES

The Women's Resource Centre's (WRC) excellent publication, 'In All Our Colours' (IAOC, 2010: <http://www.wrc.org.uk/resources/>), clearly and concisely sets out the situation facing lesbian, bisexual and transgender women's services in the UK. WRC are justifiably concerned that:

- there are already very few services for LBT women across the UK, and only 1% of women's organisations in England actually provide support for LBT women
- LBT women's organisations are consistently underfunded
- such organisations led by and for LBT women are especially marginalised politically
- there is a lack of awareness of and information on the issues facing LBT women, their support needs and about the LBT population.

The scale and range of LBT women's services which have already closed due to funding issues are of profound concern. These include:

- Survivors of Lesbian Partnership Abuse
- Daz-Elle – drink and drugs service
- Young Lesbian Group, Lewisham in London
- Wirral Divas, was part of Terrence Higgins Trust
- Manchester Disabled Lesbians Social Group
- And "out of 11 groups found during [WRC's] research that worded with Black Afro-Caribbean lesbian women in the UK, only 2 are still running and many other Black lesbian and gay services have also closed." (p.16, IAOC, 2010:

http://www.wrc.org.uk/resources/wrcs_research_and_reports/lesbian_bisexula_and_trans_womens_services_in_the_uk.aspx).

WORKPLACE CONCERNS

Relocation fears

Moving from LGBT communities e.g. in cities to where work is relocated in rural areas: 'coming out' again issues, making new friends and establishing 'safe' friendships; would local justice services understand needs of LGBT people?; little or no access to LGBT services and social life.

Threat of work relocations means LGBT people may find themselves uprooted to areas less friendly than where they live in order to keep or find a job. Many LGBT people who live alone may become isolated there and have to deal with coming out issues again, with the potential for homo/bi/transphobia, violence and abuse, and health issues. Sexual Health and HIV services vary around the country and this could have a negative impact on the individual.

Redundancy Concerns

The Civil Service and the rest of the public sector have for some time been a 'safer' employment option for LGBT people. Despite legislation, discrimination is more prevalent in the private sector. Individuals will have to choose whether or not to go back in the closet to get a job and avoid discrimination. Redundancy criteria may be used to target LGBT staff as they have 'no families or commitments' which, although this is illegal, has been used to lever LGBT people out of jobs.

Many LGBT people live in big cities where attitudes are more cosmopolitan and generally accepting. Being unemployed in such cities, where the cost of living is higher, could well have a financial impact on LGBT people therefore.

Employer Disinterest or Non-Compliance

Some parts of the Civil Service are now dropping out of or losing their original commitment in promoting full equality and diversity for LGBT staff, by abolishing staff equality and diversity networks or no longer taking part, at this time, in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index e.g. HMRC).

In some cases, no equality impact assessing takes place and more often than not, LGBT issues are left off any assessment. Without this, we have seen an increase in grievances and complaints where some employers have been taking shortcuts and 'trying to get away with things' where they can and only prioritising gender, race and disability if at all.

YOUNG PEOPLE

Norwich Pride and Norfolk LGBT Project recently wrote to Norfolk County Council raising concerns over cuts to its budget which would impact on youth services, amongst other areas. They rightly stated that "youth services support LGBT people by:

- offering support to young people who want to come out or are thinking about the issues
- act as a bridging and signposting service for young LGBT people
- are non-judgmental and open to listen to young people's anxieties

The loss of such a service or offering more targeted support will mean a loss of this vital lifeline for our young people”.

Furthermore, cutting advice services for young people on health, housing, jobs and further education study options would be detrimental “for the most vulnerable LGBT young people who have no parents or guardians as a result of their sexuality or being told they cannot remain at home.” (Source: http://www.norwichpride.org.uk/media/County_cuts/Views_on_Council_Proposals_170111.pdf).

See also above ‘Housing, Welfare and Benefits’.

False Economy's Report, Summer 2011

Research publicised in early August 2011 by False Economy (a union-backed anti-cuts campaign website - www.falseeconomy.org.uk - more on this below in 'Notes'), reported charities and community groups "face net funding reductions of more than £110 million this year, though the final figure is likely to be far higher given that some large authorities have not yet finalised where the cuts will hit." The list of charities facing funding cuts (based on the Freedom of Information responses from local authorities returned – some were not) includes:

- 382 children's and young people-related charities
- 151 disability-related charities.
- 142 elderly-related charities
- 112 adult care charities
- **6 LGBT charities:** These are summarised below:
 1. ***Birmingham LGBT Community Trust (equality organisation)***
Affected funding is for Birmingham LGBT Community Trust Forum, and for Shout project. It is Birmingham Local Authority supported and received a total of £69,233 in 2010/11; cut by a total of £37,533 in 2011/12 following cuts to Working Neighbourhoods' Fund. A 54.2% cut.
 2. ***Bristol Lesbian Gay & Bisexual Forum (equality organisation)***
This is a Forum dedicated to challenging the discrimination that lesbian, gay and bisexual people experience. It is Bristol Local Authority support and received £30,755 in 2010/11; cut by £2,155 in 2011/12. A 7% cut.
 3. ***Gay Advice Darlington and Durham (community organisation)***
This organisation provides a wide variety of services for the LGBT community. It is Durham Local Authority supported and received £12,750 in 2010/11; cut by £1,785 in 2011/12 - i.e. a 14% cut.
 4. ***East London Out Project (equality organisation)***
This is a Lesbian and gay centre offering social, emotional and support services to LGBT communities, including counselling and young people's services. From Waltham Forest Local Authority, it received £26,000 in 2010/11; cut by £11,000 in 2011/12 - i.e. a 42.3% cut.
 5. ***SHOUT Youth Group, London (children & young people organisation)***
This London group offers information and support to young Londoners on a number of issues affecting young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender or questioning their sexuality. It had Greater London, Merton Local Authority support and received £8,000 in 2010/11; no funding in 2011/12. A 100% cut.
 6. ***Nottingham & Notts. L&G Switchboard (info, advice and counselling)***

This switchboard provides information and support for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and trans people. It had Nottinghamshire Local Authority support and received £2,590 in 2010/11; no funding in 2011/12. A 100% cut.

Concluding Comments

As we can see above, there is evidence of cuts to LGBT support services. Where they exist, LGBT services may well be the first in the firing line to go. For LBT women, transgender people, young and older LGBT people, Black LGBT and disabled LGBT people, any specialist services they may be able to access are already few and far between and so probably even more vulnerable to cuts in funding.

Historically, LGBT people and rights have always been seen as 'poor cousins' in terms of equality legislation, being perceived as less important than other equality strands.

Significantly, there has traditionally been little or no monitoring of the needs of LGBT people and/or consultation with them about service provision, until fairly recently and even then really only in the public sector or in the hunt for the 'pink pound' in the private sector. If we've never been asked and do not appear on the national census then why provide services for us? It's a vicious circle that can reinforce some of the barriers to providing goods, services and facilities.

So, as communities and individuals compete for services, the equalities' hierarchy continues to exist and strengthen, not diminish. For individuals, families and society, the consequences of this can be far-reaching, costly in so many ways and regressive.

We know that by cutting support services the health, well-being and engagement within communities of LGBT people, both young and old, will suffer detrimentally.

Behind all of the statistics, political rhetoric and some media support for that, there are thousands of individuals and families who access these essential services and who are hard-hit when funding is cut or ends. It is essential not to forget them, join with and support them nor to forget to highlight their views and their experiences in whatever ways we can.

This is why it is essential to stop the erosion of our rights, our services, jobs, pensions and our communities, and we can start by sharing our experiences in any way we can and joining together.

Finally, if you have any comments, feedback, corrections and/or inclusions you wish to make about the impact of the cuts on LGBT people, then feel free to contact me (details below).

Carl Banks
PCS National Equality and H&S Officer

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NOTES

About 'False Economy'

The details of each individual cut are posted on the False Economy website - www.falseeconomy.org.uk - a resource hub for the UK anti-cuts movement.

It allows people to upload their own stories and find out about cuts in their local area, tell other people how they've been affected by cuts and learn more information about anti-cuts campaigns in their area. False Economy is backed by a wide range of online campaigns and campaigners, and largely funded by unions.

False Economy's campaign director, Clifford Singer said: 'These cuts go deep into the voluntary and community sectors. These are not just 'nice to have' groups but organisations providing vital services for older people trying to maintain independent lives, vulnerable children and abused women. And with so many of the cuts simply resulting in further pressure on the NHS or other statutory services, they are truly a false economy.'

'Ministers talk up localism and say services will be better shaped locally, but the huge front-loaded cuts to councils mean that local decision-making simply gives councils the choice of which vulnerable people they should make suffer for an economic crisis they did nothing to cause.'