



Strong in Southwark

27 June 2019

Event report

‘Strong in Southwark’ was a collaborative event organised by Healthwatch Southwark and the Southwark LGBT Network, which acted as a launch event for the [report on the Southwark LGBTQ+ Community Consultation 2018-19](#).

The launch event was used as an opportunity to share the research findings, invite feedback on the report and recommendations, and open up discussion on potential future work. It was attended by 65 people including members of Southwark’s LGBTQ+ community (some of whom had taken part in the survey), local residents, health and social care partners, voluntary and community sector representatives and other interested parties.

Opening address

The opening address was given by Councillor Victor Chamberlain, a councillor representing Borough and Bankside ward. Declaring Southwark officially the ‘[gayest and best](#)’ place to live in the UK, he said that 5% of Southwark’s population identifies as being LGBTQ+; if they were a nation, they would be the 223rd biggest in the world.

Cllr Chamberlain outlined some of the work taking place to make Southwark a better place for the LGBTQ+ community:

- Alongside Cllr Noakes, he put forward a motion for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) to be universally rolled out across Southwark, and called for the government to end HIV transmissions by 2025.
- He will seek assurance through the Southwark Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee that all schools will teach LGBTQ+-inclusive sex education, and stand up for every child’s right to inclusive education.
- Concern about the 66% decrease in LGBTQ+ spaces since 2006 has led him to write to the Night Czar regarding the future of XXL, the last LGBTQ+ night venue in the borough. Southwark Council has been asked to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment on its closure.

- The survey results, particularly on community safety, mean that the Healthwatch Southwark report will be taken to a future Overview and Scrutiny meeting.
- Cllr Chamberlain will recommend that Southwark Council adopt the report's recommendation to conduct a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment focused on the LGBTQ+ community.

Presentation of the Healthwatch Southwark report

Nathan Lewis, Engagement Officer for Healthwatch Southwark and Chair of the Southwark LGBT Network, delivered a short presentation on the survey results. This covered many of the themes within the report, including experiences of health and social care (particularly mental health and sexual health), diversity and intersectionality within Southwark's LGBTQ+ community, community safety and socialising.

- One attendee said that the report made them reflect on personal safety and added that it is sad that a borough with a progressive council, that has passed many motions regarding LGBTQ+ rights, feels so unsafe. The only place in the borough they had seen same-sex couples holding hands was Bermondsey.
- Another commented that many hate incidents go unreported as they are targeted at people who are invisible due to their legal/immigration status. This is an issue faced by many Latin Americans.
- Since the survey was completed, CliniQ have opened a Trans health and wellbeing clinic in conjunction with Burrell Street Sexual Health Centre.

Panel Discussion 1 - LGBTQ+ Health and Wellbeing in Southwark

There was then a panel discussion focusing on health and wellbeing, involving Rosie Dalton-Lucas and Jessica Leech (Southwark Council Place and Wellbeing), Jacob Bayliss (Pride in Practice), Susan Hailes (Metro Charity) and Dr David Hambrook (South London and Maudsley Trust).

The discussion was then opened up for audience questions:

- One person wondered whether the high levels of mental ill-health identified in the survey respondents (42% had accessed a mental health service within the last two years) was indicative of wider LGBTQ+ needs in Southwark. Dr Hambrook responded, 'It's hard to say as we don't have accurate figures regarding mental illness rates for LGBTQ+ people in Southwark. But we know it's higher for LGBTQ+ people overall, and would expect the same locally'.
- Another attendee felt that lack of awareness is a key reason Trans and non-binary people don't access services. Susan Hailes responded, 'I've supported a few Trans people who were told that they can't access IAPT [Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services], who were told they were too complex and left without anything. They were told to try PACE [a former LGBTQ+ mental health charity], but this doesn't exist anymore. People are waiting two years for GIC [Gender Identity Confirmation] after going to their GP. This is a reason for their mental ill-health, the wait. It's disproportionate and transphobic. If you're non-binary, it's hard to access care if every time they get your name or ID wrong every time you go.'

- One person said that sexual orientation wasn't taken into account in healthcare setting. They referred to lesbians in the survey who were assumed to be pregnant or to need contraception, when they had already given information to their healthcare provider about their sexual orientation. Dr Hambrook responded, 'I agree across health that we need to consider how well we ask these questions on documents. How this is done, I am unsure.'
- Another attendee referenced XXL as the only gay nightlife venue in the borough. They added that local residents aren't just interested in nightlife and drinking; people want safe spaces to socialise in the daytime too. They later asked what the Council are doing to support this and ensure that developers contribute to the community. Jessica Leech answered, 'Southwark Council is doing town centre research to map every facility. This will then be re-examined and aid policies about what makes a good place. It was interesting to read [in the report] that many didn't feel a connection to their neighbourhood, or to their local community.'
- Another attendee felt that it would be good to allocate funds from the Neighbourhood Community Interest Levy (CIL) to BAME, LGBTQ+ and other community groups. Cllr Noakes responded, 'At one point, Southwark had three gay bars. We've fallen behind. Lambeth have lost some, but maintained many. Regarding Neighbourhood CIL, we could discuss making it more flexible so it can support the needs of smaller groups. Currently, it can only be allocated to capital projects.'

Panel Discussion 2 - The diverse voices of Southwark's LGBTQ+ Community.

The second panel discussion focused on the lived experience of being a part of Southwark's LGBTQ+ community. All of the speakers represented lesser-heard voices within the community, which served to provide a more inclusive discussion on needs and experiences.

The panel featured Daniel Lul (ParaPride UK), Carlos Corredor (The NAZ Project London), Christina Fonthes (Rainbow Noir/REWRITE London) and Dr Rob Berkeley (BlackOut UK).

After introductions about the support work each of the organisations do, questions were taken from the attendees:

- One attendee talked about the invisibility of lesser-heard LGBTQ+ groups:
 - Carlos Corredor responded, 'People don't officially appear so it's like they don't matter. It's important to reach them which is what he is doing. The authorities don't make enough effort to reach them. We need to implement a policy to find and support people under the radar.'
 - Daniel Lul responded, 'For people with disabilities lots of LGBT venues are not accessible. People assume disability doesn't exist or is not worth investing in because it's not required. This is something ParaPride is trying to change. Accessibility isn't just physical. Some disabilities like sensory, chronic illnesses, and learning disabilities don't allow people to be in busy places. It's important to create

awareness and move from old fashioned way of thinking that disability doesn't exist in the LGBT community.'

- Dr Berkeley responded, 'Everyone has the right to their anonymity, and this must also be respected. Not everyone wants to be visible all the time.'
- Another attendee asked about misconceptions that need to be addressed about Southwark's LGBTQ+ community. Christina responded, 'It's important we are safe. Whilst walking through Peckham, hand in hand with my girlfriend, another black person gave us verbal abuse. We need other black people, businesses and organisations to show that LGBT people are welcome there. Seeing the rainbow flag doesn't mean anything if you don't see black people. We need spaces saying 'You're welcome here'.'

Attendees' recommendations

We asked the event's attendees to write down whether the report and/or recommendations were accurate, and what further recommendations they would add.

People endorsed recommendations already in the report:

- Accessible information on LGBTQ+ services and venues within the borough, possibly from the Southwark LGBT Network
- Further work exploring the intersectional experience of being BAME and LGBTQ+
- GP training in Trans health and in misgendering
- Improved monitoring of sexual orientation, gender identity and other personal characteristics within both statutory and voluntary sector services
- More venues/spaces in Southwark which are:
 - LGBTQ+ specific
 - Inclusive
 - Alcohol-free.

Further recommendations were also made:

- 'I think it would be good to have a review of older LGBTQ people; to ascertain the level of isolation/loneliness and maybe thinking/develop some initiatives that are Southwark based in conjunction with Opening Doors London.'
- LGBTQ+ services should mutually promote each other
- Setting up of a new protocol to facilitate prescribing for Trans people who want hormones
- Using an Asset Based Community Development approach to identify and build on the strengths within Southwark's LGBTQ+ communities
- Potential intergenerational solutions to problems - for example to tackle both youth homelessness and older people's loneliness at the same time
- Funding to non-statutory settings
- Support for LGBTQI asylum seekers, migrants and refugees [who are unable to return to their home countries]
- LGBTQ+ specific substance misuse support services

- Work on housing and homelessness
- More celebration of the contribution and diversity of LGBTQ+ people in Southwark.

Event evaluations

65 attendees signed in and attended the event. 38 evaluation forms were completed.

- 97% felt that the presentations were excellent or good
- 97% agreed that the venue/location was excellent or good
- 80% felt that the food refreshment was excellent or good
- 97% said that the event as a whole was excellent or good.

As a result of the event:

- 79% felt that they knew more about Healthwatch Southwark
- 82% felt that they knew more about the Southwark LGBT Network
- 97% felt that they knew more about issues connected with being LGBTQ+ in Southwark
- 90% felt that they had had the chance to share their views.

There was much praise for the different speakers and panellists. Several people discovered useful information and one person said they had enjoyed networking. Examples of 'the best thing about the event' were:

'Hearing about initiatives that I hadn't heard about before.'

'Raising my awareness of all the issues facing this important community in Southwark.'

'The varied wealth of information from different stakeholders and members of the public in one forum.'

Seven people praised the wide range of views and speakers. However, another seven said the diversity of perspectives provided could have been broader (e.g. more Trans speakers, greater focus on the African diaspora, more grassroots perspectives, more mention of intersex and asexual people.) Another person praised the event and suggested a further event specifically for older LGBTQ+ people.

Due to a last minute room change, there was a problem with microphone provision so unfortunately not all attendees could hear the speakers as well as hoped.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to all of the panellists for giving up their time and to **London South Bank University** for the generous provision of the venue and refreshments, which significantly boosted our ability to deliver a welcoming and dynamic event.

Attendee demography

41 demography forms were completed.

People attended the event in these capacities (several attended in more than one capacity):

member of the public	24
voluntary sector	11
statutory body/Councillor	8
academic	2
not stated	4

Sexuality

gay	16
heterosexual/straight	9
queer	4
bisexual	2
lesbian	3
pansexual	1
straight/demisexual	1
bisexual/gay	1
not sure	1
not stated	3

Gender

male	15
female	8
non-binary	2
genderqueer	1
not stated	15

7 people said their gender identity was not the same as that they were assigned at birth.

Disability

not disabled	28
disabled	9
unsure/‘sort of’	4

Ethnicity (self-defined)

White/White British	9
Latin American	4
Black/Black British	4
African Caribbean	2
Black African/Black British African	2
White other	2
Black Caribbean	1
Black Other	1
British Asian (Indian)	2
British Asian	1
Irish	1
Mixed race	1
Mixed Caribbean/White	1
Mixed White/Chinese	1
White mixed	1
not stated	8

Age group

18-24	1
25-34	10
35-44	11
45-54	10
55-64	6
65-74	2
not stated	1