

Insights from the IncludeAge LGBT+ Pathway

LIFE COURSE INTERVIEWS: KEY THEMES

1 Belonging is Dynamic – Not Always Positive



- Belonging comes from being with people at the same life journey at that moment
- Needs and preferences change across the life course
- Belonging can be compelled and harmful in some spaces (e.g. school, family, religion, community).

It really was a sense of mutual understanding. A lot of these people...were going through the same journey as I was.

-- Cameron, gay man, 55-59

Other people who looked like me and felt like me...other people who just didn't fit.

-- Alysya, bisexual trans woman, 65-69

South Wales. I was born there, I was brought up there. I learned at a very early [age] about narrow attitudes. And I couldn't wait to leave.

--Charlotte, lesbian trans woman, 65-69

2 Representation & Norms Shape Inclusion



- Growing up with little or no representation had a lasting impact.
- Cis-heteronormative expectations shaped lives and identities.
- Norms also operate within LGBT+ spaces (e.g. 'right way' to be gay, trans, lesbian etc.)

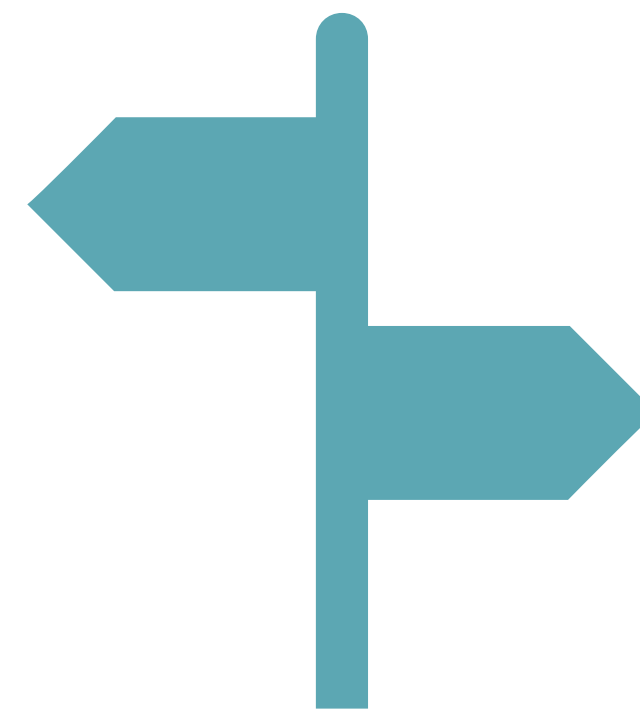
I had no representation...I had to scour the library for books and stuff.

--Effie, lesbian, 50-54

The narrative in terms of trans is that you're only properly trans if you have kind of gone through the whole works.

--Sylvia, bisexual trans woman, 70-74

3 Transitions Impact the LGBT+ Life Course



- Closure and transformation of LGBT+ spaces over time.
- Growth of digital and hybrid forms of contact.
- New and alternative spaces emerge (e.g. sober events).
- Pride and similar spaces offer important, temporary inclusion and belonging.

It's so sad because there was a community around.

--Bow, gay man, 65-69

I feel that the togetherness is not as strong as before.

--Tokunaga, gay man, 40-44

4 What Makes Places & Spaces Feel Inclusive?



- Visible signals (flags, symbols, pronouns) matter.
- The presence of 'people like me'.
- An atmosphere of non-judgement and ease.
- Care and attention in the design and interactivity of a place.

Visible Signals
Flags, symbols and cues send powerful messages.

People Like Me
Seeing oneself reflected in a place or space makes a difference.

Non-judgement
Feeling relaxed and able to be oneself.

Care & Attention
Being thought about and respected in practice.

I think what it was is just there was no judgement at all, nobody looked at anyone and thought, Oh God, look at them, or anything.

--Alysya, bisexual trans woman, 65-69

5 Inclusion Requires Ongoing Work

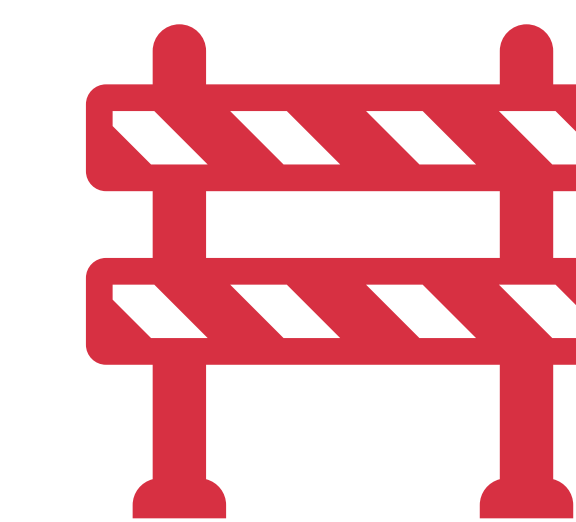


- Interpersonal connection is key to inclusion.
- Intergenerational exchange is valued.
- Concerns about regression in inclusion and hard-won rights remain.
- Inclusion is something to maintain, not assume.

It would be great if there were places and projects which encouraged communication between the generations.

--Thierry, gay man, 65-69

6 Persistent Barriers Remain



- Fear, anxiety and the continued need to remain vigilant.
- Worries about acceptance in care settings.
- Intra-community tensions and language divides.
- Ageing brings new vulnerabilities

PLACE STUDY FOLLOW-UPS: EMERGING INSIGHTS



Online Spaces

Offer connection but also toxicity and risk. Safe navigation requires active skill and vigilance.



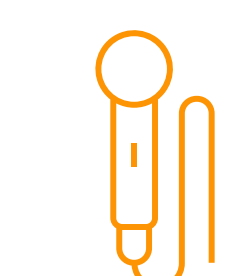
Caring for others

Unequal caregiving roles can create stress. Duty can override personal comfort in exclusionary spaces.



Public Places

Often impersonal and dehumanising (e.g. office spaces). Inclusion depends on visible care and signs of inclusion.



Culture, Memory & Visibility

Theatres and cultural spaces can support collective memory (e.g. Section 28) and identity. However, accessibility can be uneven.



Temporary Spaces

Value in not belonging permanently. Need accessible, recurring moments of inclusion (e.g. Pride).



KEY TAKEAWAY

Inclusion for mid-older LGBT+ people isn't fixed or guaranteed. It's relational and affected by time and place. It requires active maintenance across places and spaces and across shifting political contexts.

Richard Vytningu
rytningu@herts.ac.uk