



Community Research Proposal

Isolation, Rurality, & Experience of Homophobic & Transphobic Crime

Summary

The proposed new research will provide important hard evidence about (a) the risk factors for becoming a victim of homophobic or transphobic crime in the South West peninsula, and (b) the extent and nature of such crimes, the great majority of which are now known to be unreported. The survey will respond to some of the important new questions raised by analysis of Intercom's 2005 sub-regional survey (*A Firmer Foundation*, 2006). The results of the new research will be strategically significant for LAA teams (particularly Safer and Stronger Communities), for CDRPs, police and YOTs and other LCJB member agencies, for many agencies in the community and voluntary sectors, and for health service providers and initiatives dealing with the health-related effects of social exclusion.

Existing Research: *A Firmer Foundation*, 2006

Intercom's 2005 peninsular survey of a widely representative sample of LGB/T people has been professionally analysed and the results published in *A Firmer Foundation* (2006). This survey found a very high level of homophobic and transphobic crimes—far higher than was anticipated. Overall, it appears that 30% of LGB/T people in the rural peninsula have experienced a phobic crime against the person over the preceding twelve months.

However, within this overall crime figure there is a great difference between the experience of residents of those urban areas where there is a wide and varied LGB/T commercial scene, and the experience of residents of other, essentially rural, districts. (*AFF 2006* §5.3. The figures differ by a factor of 4.) No such difference was anticipated when the 2005 survey was designed, and new research is urgently needed both into possible causes of this difference, and into the kinds of environment in which such phobic crimes are being committed.

What are the causes of this difference?

It has been established (*AFF 2006* §4.1) that urban LGB/T residents and rural LGB/T residents have quite different profiles of Outness (that is, of being Out as LGB or Trans in their private lives, their workplaces, and generally within their local communities). It is possible that being more widely Out may make urban residents to a greater or lesser extent more vulnerable than rural residents, but we have as yet no evidence to enable us to answer this important question. The experience of crime may relate to other factors which have not yet been identified.



Other hypotheses are that the far higher level of phobic crimes in the urban districts might correlate (a) with a difference in geographical environment (e.g. phobic crimes targeting known LGB/T social venues), or (b) with some difference in social environment (e.g. a lower tendency to active phobic behaviour among rural residents), or (c) with key differences in behaviours or lifestyle between LGB/T residents of the two kinds of district.

The research results will include evidence that will enable all these hypotheses to be tested against the experiences and lifestyles of a broad social spectrum of respondents.

Research to identify local drivers of phobic crime

We propose to conduct a community-led in-depth study of the crime-related experiences of LGB/T individuals in Exeter and the three adjacent rural districts, Teignbridge, Mid-Devon and East Devon, using a confidential written survey and also a limited but demographically balanced number of face-to-face interviews conducted by skilled confidential community workers.

The written surveys will be designed to enable cross-comparisons with the *Firmer* Foundation survey results, and with the results of the face-to-face interviews. The community workers conducting these interviews will be able to get fuller details than a written survey can provide of the context of individual phobic incidents and crimes, and will be trained to record individual incidents in a format consistent with Home Office / BCS / police crime categories.

The target respondents will include people of all profiles of Outness, and will include both those who use the commercial venues to varying degrees and those who never use the commercial venues.

The study as a whole will correlate LGB/T people's experience of homophobic and transphobic crime with their degree of social isolation and/or other disadvantage, their use of the commercial venues, their access to other community resources and social activities, their place of residence (rural or urban), and with relevant local levels of crimes against the person. The results will also be analysed by gender, racial or ethnic origin or background, faith or other cultural background, age, ability, and mental and physical health status.

The study will also gauge the degree to which respondents have reported incidents in the past, and their readiness to risk outing themselves by invoking existing legislative protections currently covering employment, and any future legislation relating to the provision of goods and services.

Significance for planning and policy

We cannot anticipate the outcome, but there are certain obvious possibilities. If it were shown that there is a significant correlation between the degree of being Out and the experience of crime—that is, if it appeared that those respondents who stay most hidden experience least crime—then this would have major public policy implications. For example, any such finding would be an important indicator of how far LGB/T people could safely invoke relevant legislative protection within their workplace, or in relation to the provision of goods and services. If on the other hand it were shown that phobic crimes are predominantly associated with the neighbourhood around known LGB/T commercial



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venues at certain times of day or days of the week, then that would be immensely useful guidance both for the police service and for CDRPs. Again, there might be a significant correlation showing that LGB/T people who are identifiable as having a minority ethnic origin or a particular faith or cultural background are at added risk of homophobic or transphobic attacks in certain contexts: this again would have policy implications for local planners, and for our partners in local BME-led or faith-based community organisations.

Possible control study

We are currently at an early stage of trying to set up an in-depth local research project around social issues (including crime issues) affecting isolated LGB/T people in northern rural Devon, in partnership with another organisation. This would be funded quite separately from the current proposal. If it goes ahead, this local survey could be designed so as to provide a useful cross-check and sidelight on the responses we get in this study from rural residents in Teignbridge, Mid Devon and East Devon.

Costings

On the basis of the costs to Intercom and our stakeholders of the *Firmer Foundation* survey, we estimate the costs of this proposal as follows.

Design, consultation and piloting costs	800
Printing costs for 1,000 surveys	400
Distribution & promotion (direct & indirect costs)	600
Training community interviewers	300
Interviewers' time (25 2-hour interviews @ £40 each)	1,000
Interviewees' time & travel costs (25 interviews)	1,200
Consultant community analyst's fees	2,000
Report writing and printing	2,000
Launch event	3,000
	£11,300

Timescale

We estimate that the research phase could be initiated and concluded within three months of funding becoming available, and we should allow another four months to collate the data, analyse the results and write the report.

Michael Halls
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