



Experiences of and barriers to participation in public and political life for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people

Report to the Government Equalities Office

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Executive Summary

Background

As part of their commitment to improving equality of representation and involvement in public and political life, the Government Equalities Office (GEO) commissioned the Office for Public Management (OPM) to undertake independent research into the experiences of and barriers to public and political participation for lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) and transgender (T) people.

Primary research into the nature and extent of these participation experiences is rare. Recent evidence reviews on sexual orientation and transgender inequalities commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have found relatively little research into participation and representation among LGB and T people.

The overriding message from the literature is that participation behaviours are poorly understood and warrant dedicated research attention if equality of representation and involvement are to be realised for LGB and T people. An exploration of the facilitators and barriers to democratic participation is recommended, as is the examination of any anticipated fears and their justification.

Aim and objectives

The aim of the research is to generate primary evidence to illustrate the nature and levels of involvement of LGB and T people in public and political life, and the barriers to increased participation. The research objectives are to:

- critically examine the extent, nature and experience of involvement and participation in public and political life among LGB and T groups including the meaning and effects of being visibly LGB or T;
- explore the attitudes and perceptions of LGB and T people towards participation in public and political life and the nature of demand among these groups to participate more;
- explore the barriers to participation among LGB and T people and identify how to increase representation (including 'visible' representation).

Methods

Qualitative interviews were conducted with 79 LGB and T participants with sampling quotas used to ensure inclusion of a wide range of individuals. The interviews were spread relatively evenly across the lesbian (20), gay (22), bisexual (13) and transgender (21) subgroups. Three further participants described themselves as 'queer'. Three quarters of the sample (59) was considered 'active' in public or political life and one quarter (20) was 'non-active'.

Interviews were conducted by telephone and the transcribed data were stored and organised in NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package. Data were scrutinised against the research objectives and, whenever appropriate, connections were made across the data, providing an interpretive layer to the final analysis.

As findings from the interviews began to emerge, reference groups were arranged with experts from the LGB and T communities. These groups provided an opportunity to check for

'saturation' of points and perspectives, validate early findings, assist in their interpretation and help build recommendations.

Findings

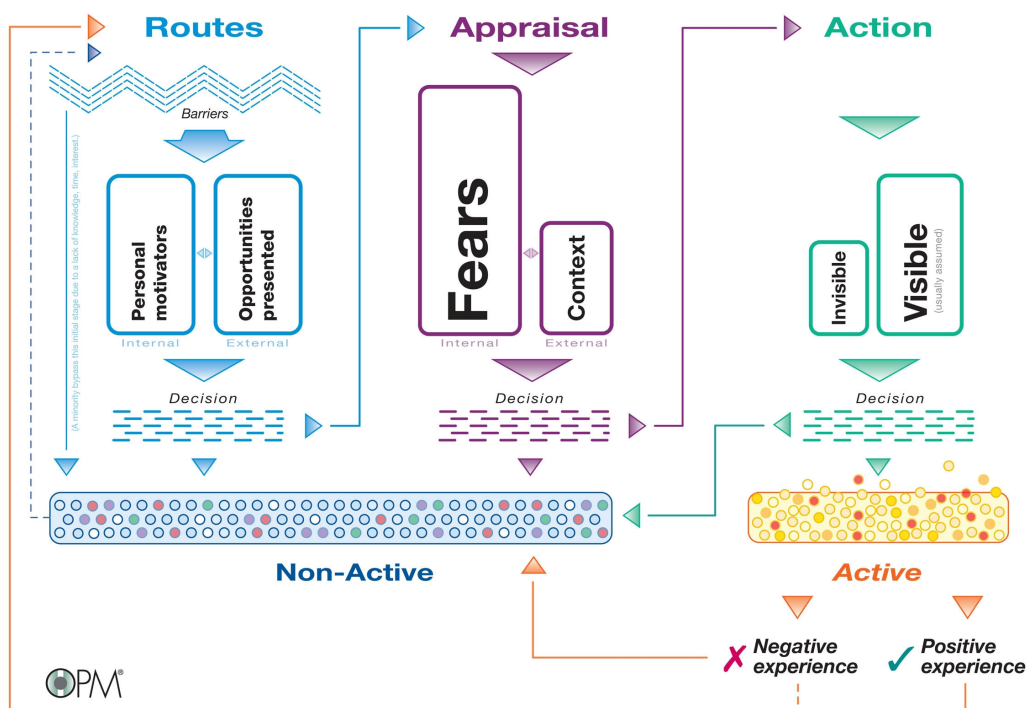
Types of participation undertaken

The 59 active interviewees had been involved in a range of public and political participation activities:

- Being part of a trade union
- Involvement with a local-decision making body, such as a council or health organisation
- Involvement with a community group, taking part in charitable work
- Being part of other campaigning organisations, such as a student union
- Being a member of, or working with, a political party (either voluntarily or through employment)
- Taking part in campaigning activities, including demonstrations and petitions
- Contacting a local political representative

Engagement in these activities was spread evenly across the four sub-communities with few discernible differences. However, individual activities and experiences within each of these types of activity varied considerably.

Interviewee experiences of the participatory process are presented as a conceptual model, which acts as a visual representation of the findings. The model describes 'pathways to action' through three broad stages; routes, appraisal and action. It brings conceptual clarity to the findings and provides a structure for their presentation and for associated recommendations.



Routes

Among the 20 interviewees who were defined as 'non-active' their main reasons were personal in nature, such as their disposition, lack of time or confidence. However, they also acknowledged not being aware of how to become involved. For those who do consider participating, their motives are mainly altruistic such as representing their community or working for equality. Some were moved to participate following a negative personal experience and some through the encouragement of others.

Among the active sample their main routes to participation had been through social networks, word of mouth and their workplace or profession. For some transgender interviewees, getting involved in public or political life was seen as much harder compared to LGB people.

Appraisal

When personal motivations and opportunities combine to present a route to participation there is a further decisional stage, or appraisal of the opportunity, that may or may not lead to participation. At this stage a significant challenge is the anticipated fear or anxiety many people have of the participation process. General concerns for homophobia, biphobia and transphobia were frequently reported as were specific anxieties such as being 'outed' and subject to public scrutiny. A notable number of interviewees from across the sub-communities suggested that fear as a barrier may be more about perception than reality. A few postulated that in reality LGB and T individuals had less to fear than they may think. These were often the reflections of active people.

Internal fears were the most frequently cited barrier to participation, but interviewees also cited numerous contextual factors that influenced their decision. Location, profession and workplace were important determinants. Teaching was frequently cited as a challenging profession for LGB and T people and rural locations presented more participation challenges than urban environments, though not always.

Another reported contextual theme is the influence of the media on society's perception of LGB and T people. Interviewees cited frequent negative media portrayals of LGB and T individuals, lifestyles and relationships. Societal perceptions also made many interviewees sensitive to the effects of public or political participation on their significant others. Some acknowledged this to be a significant barrier.

Action

There were a multitude of complex feelings, attitudes and experiences associated with being 'visible' when participating and the data varied considerably according to individual circumstances. Key themes for those who chose not to be visible were fears for safety but also a feeling that sexual or gender orientation is not relevant to the situation. Those who did choose to be visible did so in the main to represent their community.

Most interviewees did not feel that LGB and T people are adequately represented in public and political life and consider it important to have visible LGB and T politicians, councillors and MPs to increase representation, act as role models and challenge negative stereotypes. Though less prominent, a contrary view is that visible role models are not necessary since sexual and gender identity are private matters.

Interviewees reported a diverse range of experiences as a result of being in public and political life, some positive, some negative. Verbal abuse, vandalism to property and

increasing fears are consistent themes in the data but so too are positive reactions from others, increased confidence, improved well being and the chance to gain new skills. This striking contrast highlights the community costs of discrimination and prejudice.

Recommendations

Recommendations build on the ideas and suggestions of the research participants and are organised around the structure of the pathways to action model. A selection is included in this summary

Routes

- The participation of LGB and T people in both wider and formal public and political life needs to be 'normalised' through national and local awareness campaigns, and assertive outreach to LGB and T communities by public and political bodies.
- Guidance and support for individuals and groups of stakeholders to remove barriers, motivate the desire to participate and support the management of consequences resulting from participation as LGB or T should be prepared and made available.
- Monitoring of sexual and gender orientation is required nationally and locally in order to establish both the size of the LGB and T population and the outcomes of efforts to address gaps in LGB and T participation locally and nationally.

Appraisal

- Clearer information on LGB and T rights and protections should be made available.
- More overt support for and enforcement of LGB and T rights from government and public bodies is necessary.
- Mechanisms to uphold existing protections for LGB and T people via guidance covering the representation of sexual or gender identity in the media need to be strengthened.

Action

- Positive experiences of participation reinforce and increase the chances that an LGB or T individual will continue and/or broaden their participation. These should be captured and utilised in promotional campaigns.
- Visibility is a fluid characteristic that needs to be considered in light of other personal characteristics and identities. Further research is required to understand the effects of these characteristics on visibility and subsequent access to public and political life.
- Research is needed to explore how different forms of social capital can be nurtured within the LGB and T community, and how social capital can be harnessed to facilitate and aid greater levels of participation by LGB and T individuals and groups.

Many of the recommendations to emerge from this research require partners to build on existing good practice and call for reinforcement of existing protections, suggesting they are both practicable and achievable.

Introduction

The Government Equalities Office (GEO) has lead responsibility for sexual orientation and transgender equality across government. This involves leading on legislation and policy, advising government departments and agencies and producing research and guidance for both government and stakeholders.

As part of their commitment to improving equality of representation and involvement in public and political life, the Government Equalities Office (GEO) commissioned the Office for Public Management (OPM) to undertake independent research into the experiences of and barriers to public and political participation for lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) and transgender (T) people.

This report presents the results of that research. It begins by summarising what is known about LGB and T participation before describing the research methods. Findings are then presented and discussed, upon which a series of recommendations for the GEO and other relevant stakeholders are based. The report includes a number of technical appendices that provide further detail on the research methods.

Background

A starting point for this research was a scoping review of the literature to synthesise existing evidence on participation in public and political life among LGB and T people. The review was undertaken to inform qualitative fieldwork for the research by identifying key issues for exploration and guiding development of the research instruments. A scoping report that details the search terms, findings in full and references for the reviewed literature is available as a separate document¹. In this section key findings from the scoping review are presented as background to the research.

Primary research into the nature, extent and experiences of public and political participation among LGB and T people is rare. In a recent review of evidence on sexual orientation commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Mitchell et al² concluded that “*LGB people perceive barriers in various forms of democratic participation, but the nature of such barriers requires further exploration*”. Another recent evidence review also commissioned by the EHRC examined equality and discrimination in relation to transgender people. It found that relatively little research had been conducted into the participation and representation of transgender people in democratic processes³.

¹ OPM (2010) *Experiences of and barriers to participation in public and political life of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups: Scoping review*. Report to the Government Equalities Office. London: OPM

² Mitchell M, Howarth C, Kotecha M and Creeganet C. (2009) Sexual orientation research review 2008. EHRC Research report 34. http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/sexual_orientation_research_review.pdf

³ Mitchell M and Howarth C (2009) Trans inequalities review. *EHRC Research Report 27*. <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/fairer-britain/trans-inequalities-reviewed/>

Despite these overarching assessments of the evidence individual research reports provide important detail. For example, Stonewall Cymru⁴ in a survey of 403 LGB individuals in Wales, report that between one quarter and one third of respondents had participated in civil society on some level e.g. donating to charity or volunteering their skills and time. Conversely, in political life the participation levels of LGB people in more formal democratic processes is low relative to the participation levels of the heterosexual community.

Research findings by Stonewall⁵ based on a sample of 1,658 lesbian, gay and bisexual people from across Britain suggest that, despite significant advances in legislative equality, lesbian and gay people still anticipate that being open about their sexual orientation will hold them back from participating in political life. Hunt and Dick⁶ report that between 50% and 90% of LG people anticipate being discriminated against if they were to run for election as a member of a mainstream political party. One reason for this may be the availability (or lack thereof) of adequate political representation as evidence suggests that as a community, lesbian, gay and bisexual people remain under-represented in politics.

Work by Ellison and Gunstone⁷ confirms that type of employment is a key factor that can influence participation. In their sample, 40% of gay men, 32% of lesbians and 12% of bisexual people would not consider pursuing certain careers because of their sexual orientation. Employment in key public services such as the police, armed forces and teaching were amongst the most cited careers respondents would avoid.

Although some of this reported literature refers to the LGB and T community, much of the work tends to focus on sexual orientation and treats transgender issues rather more marginally. Increasingly however, transgender groups have received attention from researchers and valuable literature is beginning to emerge, though our understanding of the transgender spectrum and its many communities is still in the early stages.

Research by Whittle⁸ highlights the importance of the Internet for developing a sense of community amongst transgender people. According to Whittle, cyberspace provides a forum to experience the 'virtual self', leading to acknowledgement of an 'actual self'. Similarly, Hines⁹ emphasises the crucial role of support and self-help groups in developing and forming an identity and transgender community.

Based on findings from qualitative research with transgender individuals in the UK, Hines¹⁰ argues that the social marginalisation of transgender cultures has led to particular practices of care and methods of self-help which place a strong emphasis on shared experience. The

⁴ Stonewall Cymru (2007) *Counted in! Third All Wales survey of lesbian, gay and bisexual people - summary report 2007*. Cardiff: Stonewall Cymru.

⁵ Stonewall (2007) *The equalities review: Sexual orientation research review*. London: CLG

⁶ Hunt R. and Dick S. (2008). *Serves you right: Lesbian and gay people's expectations of discrimination*. London: Stonewall.

⁷ Ellison G. and Gunstone B. (2009) *Sexual orientation explored: A study of identity, attraction, behaviour and attitudes in 2009*. Manchester: EHRC.

⁸ Whittle S. (1998) The Trans-Cyberian Mail Way. *Social & Legal Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 389-408

⁹ Hines S. (2007) Transgendering care: Practices of care within transgender communities. *Critical Social Policy*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 462-486

¹⁰ Hines S. (2009) A pathway to diversity? Human rights, citizenship and the politics of transgender. *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 87-102

participants in her research understand their involvement in support groups as a means of 'giving something back' to the communities and groups from which they had received support, which represents one form of public participation.

Hines' research also demonstrates the heterogeneity of transgender communities. For example, having undergone gender reassignment, some individuals may no longer wish to identify with the transgender community, whereas others will try to maintain this link. Furthermore, some participants mark their identities as distinct from the binaries of man/woman, whilst others authenticate their gender by positioning themselves firmly as men or women.

These issues have important implications when considering the participation of transgender groups and individuals in public and political life. According to Monro¹¹, participative democracy that supports transgender citizenship would involve the enhanced development of structures concerning participation and would need to include legislative change, community development, consultation processes and equal opportunities initiatives.

The overriding message from this literature is that public and political participation behaviours among LGB and T people are poorly understood and warrant dedicated research attention if equality of representation and involvement are to be realised. An exploration of the facilitators and barriers to democratic participation is recommended, as is the examination of any anticipated fears and their justification. Against this backdrop research into the public and political participation experiences of LGB and T people is a timely commission by the GEO.

Aim and objectives

The aim of the research is to generate primary evidence to illustrate the nature and levels of involvement of LGB and T people in public and political life, and the barriers to increased participation. The research objectives are to:

- critically examine the extent, nature and experience of involvement and participation in public and political life among LGB and T groups including the meaning and effects of being visibly LGB or T;
- explore the attitudes and perceptions of LGB and T people towards participation in public and political life and the nature of demand among these groups to participate more;
- explore the barriers to participation among LGB and T people and identify how to increase representation (including 'visible' representation).

Definitions used in the research

Operational definitions for this research were drawn from the Equality Measurement Framework's 'participation in public and political life' domain¹².

¹¹ Monro S. (2003) Transgender politics in the UK. *Critical Social Policy*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 433-452

¹² Alkire S. Bastagli F. Burchardt T. Clark D. Holder H. Ibrahim S. Munoz, M. Terrazas P. Tsang T. and Vizard P. (2009) Developing the Equality Measurement Framework: selecting the indicators. *EHRC Research Report 31*. <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/fairer-britain/equality-measurement-framework/>

Public participation includes:

- Being a member of a local decision-making body;
- Being active in a local or national campaigning or solidarity organisation, e.g. community groups, lobbying/advocacy services and trade unions.

Political participation includes:

- Undertaking at least one of the following activities:
 - contacting a councillor, local official, government official or MP (other than in relation to personal issues);
 - attending a public meeting or rally;
 - taking part in a demonstration or signing a petition;
- Contacting an MP or MSP, government official or media outlet about a government action you felt was harmful or unjust.

It is acknowledged that these definitions encompass a variety of roles. For example, being a member of a local decision making body could include school governors and magistrates. Furthermore, different types of political involvement will be weighted differently according to the degree of participation e.g. attending a rally compared with one to one contact between an individual and a government official or MP.

'Visibility' or 'being visible' refers to people being open about their sexual orientation or open about their transgender history in the public domain, and the extent to which these people are identifiable as such.

The research adopted the EHRC definition for transgender. The terms 'trans people' and 'transgender people' are both often used as umbrella terms for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their birth sex, including transsexual people (those who intend to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process of gender reassignment to live permanently in their acquired gender), transvestite/cross-dressing people (those who wear clothing traditionally associated with the other gender either occasionally or more regularly), androgyne/polygender people (those who have non-binary gender identities and do not identify as male or female), and others who define as gender variant.

Methods

This section outlines the research methods used at different stages of the study. It describes instrument development, construction of a sampling frame, the recruitment strategy, interviewing process, data analysis methods and how reference groups were used to validate and help interpret the findings.

Data collection instruments

From intelligence captured through the scoping review a conceptual framework was developed to guide the research process (presented in Appendix 1). The framework outlined the main areas of inquiry that the study would need to explore and provided a template to guide instrument development, data analysis and the interpretation of study findings.

Two interview guides were developed with slight variations to reflect anticipated differences between those LGB and T people with active participation experience and those who would consider themselves to be non-active. Recognising the exploratory nature of the study the interview guides were open and semi-structured in nature rather than structured and closed. It was decided to allow the interviewees to narrate their stories and opinions on their own terms, steering them gently with questions and probes to ensure relevant information and experiences were shared. Appendix 2 contains the interview guides.

Sampling frame

Sampling quotas were used to ensure that interviews were conducted with a wide range of LGB and T individuals from across Great Britain¹³. The intended target sample was 80, with 20 individuals from each of the four groups (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender¹⁴).

Table 1 on the following page presents sampling quota targets and the primary variables against which participants were recruited (the final sampling quotas appear in the findings section). Self-completion by participants of an online screening tool at the recruitment stage helped to monitor how well the sample reflected the target quotas.

For each of the four groups, the project sought to sample 14 individuals who could be described as active in public and political life and six individuals who could be described as non-active in public and political life. In addition, the sampling aimed to ensure that both active and non-active interviewees included individuals based in urban and rural locations.

The active sample was formed to include individuals who were active through their affiliation with an LGB and T organisation (i.e. those likely to be active in LGB and T specific aspects of public and political life) and individuals sourced through outreach (i.e. those likely to be active in general, non-LGB and T specific aspects of public and political life). The non-active sample was recruited through outreach only. Tables 2 and 3 present sampling quotas for active and non-active participants, respectively.

¹³ As the GEO's responsibility is for Great Britain, the study focuses on England, Wales and Scotland, but not Northern Ireland.

¹⁴ In the 20 transgender interviews, we aimed to include both male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals as well as other individuals identifying as transgender, such as transvestites and cross-dressers.

Table 1: Overall sampling quotas (sample size n=80)

<i>Primary variables</i>	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Transgender	<i>Total</i>
Active: urban	11	11	11	11	44
Active: rural	3	3	3	3	12
Non-active: urban	5	5	5	5	20
Non-active: rural	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Total</i>	20	20	20	20	80

Table 2: Active sampling quotas (sample size n=56)

<i>Primary variables</i>	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Transgender
Active affiliated: urban	5-6	5-6	5-6	5-6
Active affiliated: rural	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Active non-affiliated: urban	5-6	5-6	5-6	5-6
Active non-affiliated: rural	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
<i>Total</i>	12-16	12-16	12-16	12-16

Table 3: Non-active sampling quotas (sample size n=24)

<i>Primary variables</i>	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Transgender
Non-active: urban	5	5	5	5
Non-active: rural	1	1	1	1
<i>Total</i>	6	6	6	6

In addition to meeting the sampling quotas outlined above, care was taken to ensure that the sample was diverse on dimensions other than active/non-active and urban/rural. Evidence

from the scoping stage of the research highlighted how intersectionality¹⁵ between sexual and/or gender orientation and other personal characteristics such as age, can impact on people's experiences as an LGB or T person. The research team therefore endeavoured to recruit a range of interviewees in terms of their:

- age
- country of residence (England, Wales or Scotland)
- ethnic origin
- religion/faith
- disability

The self-completed screening questionnaire asked potential participants to voluntarily offer information regarding these characteristics. From this it was possible to monitor the diversity of the sample and target the recruitment and outreach as required. The screening questionnaire is included in Appendix 3.

Participant recruitment

Two main routes were used to recruit participants: through LGB and T organisations and through outreach.

LGB and T organisations

Twenty-four of the 80 interviewees were recruited through LGB and T organisations. This accounted for five active urban interviewees and one active rural interviewee from each of the four groups (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender).

The Consortium of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Voluntary and Community Organisations (The Consortium) negotiated access to eight organisations/groups (four in England and two in Scotland and Wales), half of which had a national profile and half a local profile.

Organisations were initially invited to complete an expression of interest form followed by a more detailed questionnaire about their purpose, functions, location, membership and whether they had the infrastructure necessary to manage the requirements of this study. From this information a geographical spread of lobbying/policy, employment and social groups was selected. Once access had been negotiated, OPM staff worked with each organisation to support the identification and sampling of individuals against the quotas.

Outreach

The remaining 56 interviewees were recruited via wider outreach. This accounted for six active urban interviewees, two active rural interviewees, and all the non-active interviewees from each of the four groups (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender). Multiple routes of access were used to reach potential participants including:

- advertising the study in magazines
 - The study was advertised in a magazine aimed at people active in political life. This route was used to recruit politically active LGB and T people who were not 'out' or

¹⁵ Intersectionality is the cross-over between more than one of the protected characteristics.

who were out but not active in or associated with LGB and T organisations or the 'scene'.

- The study was also advertised in magazines targeted at the members of LGB and T communities. This route was expected to reach non-active and active LGB and T people who read community magazines socially, but were not affiliated with an LGB and T specific organisation or group.
- putting short introductions to the research project on internet websites and discussion boards whose users were likely to identify as LGB or T
- developing a bespoke project webpage providing more information about the research, the methods being used, potential involvement of participants and what that would mean, and an introduction to the research team. The webpage included a link to register an interest in taking part in the research and a screening questionnaire that provided the recruitment team with the sampling information needed.

Publicity and advertising included the URL to the webpage as well as contact telephone numbers for enquiries. A full list of the magazines, online forums and discussion boards used during recruitment can be seen in Appendix 4.

Halfway through the process the sample was reviewed to see whether more targeted recruitment was needed to meet the sampling quotas. Consequently, a sampling strategy was adopted where organisations were identified that were likely to attract specific groups of LGB and T people (e.g. in terms of their age and geographical location).

Interviewing process

Prior to the interview, all participants were sent an information sheet, which provided more details about the project and the project team. It also explained the purpose of the interview as well as the study's definitions of 'participation in public and political life'. The information sheet is included in Appendix 5.

It was recognised that there were limitations to the study's definitions and as such, participants were not restricted to these definitions. If their personal opinion of what it meant to participate in public and/or political life as an LGB or T person varied from the definitions, they were encouraged to speak about any experiences or opinions they considered relevant to the topic.

The interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes and were conducted via telephone by OPM research staff. Prior to the interview, all participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and that all the information they provide would be reported confidentially. The researchers also emphasised to the participants that they did not need to respond to questions they did not feel comfortable answering.

Every participant was paid £20 in appreciation of their time and the intelligence they shared. The payment was made via an electronic transfer or by cheque. As part of good ethical practice participants were given clear information about the payment, emphasising that it was not in any way an inducement to get them to respond to the questions in a specific way. It was also explained to the participants that the data would be used to produce a report for the GEO with policy recommendations. Each interviewee was asked, on completion of the project, whether they would like a short bullet-point summary of the findings sent to them via e-mail.

Data analysis

To meet the challenge faced when collecting large amounts of qualitative data, NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package, was used, in addition to manual analysis. Using NVivo enabled storage and organisation of the interview transcripts, which could then be coded to identify salient information. Coding facilitated efficient data management, allowing re-interrogation of the original source data and 'live' up-to-date analysis in light of newly emerging themes.

A thematic framework (or a 'coding tree') was developed based on the conceptual framework and interview guides. The interview data were then sorted, coded and assigned to their place on the coding tree before analysis commenced. 'Pre-determined' codes reflecting themes already identified for investigation (based on the interview guide) were complemented by 'free' codes based on emerging findings, which were used to structure responses. The following stage was investigative in that the data were scrutinised against the research questions and, whenever appropriate, connections were made across the data, providing an interpretive layer to the final analysis.

Reference groups

As findings from the interviews began to emerge, four reference groups were arranged with experts from the LGB and T communities. Participants were invited because of their particular expertise in, or background knowledge of, these communities. The groups provided an opportunity to check for 'saturation' of points and perspectives, validate early findings, assist in their interpretation and help build recommendations.

Groups were organised with one professional LGB organisation (the Lesbian and Gay Foundation) and one voluntary transgender organisation (the Trans Resource and Empowerment Centre, TREC). Additionally, one professional Scottish organisation (the Equality Network) fed in their views. Groups were offered a small collective or individual payment in appreciation of their time and expertise.

Findings

Sample

The research team secured 79 interviews, spread relatively evenly across the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender subgroups. The sample also includes three participants who identified as 'queer' (and hence refused to be categorised as either LGB or T). An overview of the sample is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Sample overview

	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Transgender	Queer	Total
Active: urban	10	15	10	13	3	51
Active: rural	3	2	0	3	0	8
Non-active: urban	6	4	3	4	0	17
Non-active: rural	1	1	0	1	0	3
Total	20	22	13	21	3	79

It proved difficult to identify bisexual interviewees, especially those living in rural locations. The bisexual sample also included more women than men, with nine female participants and four male participants.

The majority of transgender participants were male-to-female transsexuals (n=16) who either were in the process of transitioning (changing their gender from male to female) or had undergone male-to-female gender reassignment in the past. In addition, the sample included two female-to-male transsexuals, two transvestites/cross-dressers identifying as men and one transgender person not identifying with either gender.

The sample was relatively diverse in terms of religion. About two thirds of the sample (n=51) identified as non-religious, with a third (n=26) identifying with a particular religion and two participants not providing any information. Twenty-four of the participants reported that they had a disability.

The sample was less diverse in terms of region and ethnicity. While 55 interviewees lived in England and 18 lived in Scotland, only six were based in Wales. Despite a number of attempts to target Welsh participants through outreach, the response was poor. The majority of the sample (n=58) identified as White British.

There were 12 participants aged between 16 and 25; 25 participants aged 26 to 35; 30 participants aged 36 to 50; seven participants aged 51 to 65; four participants aged 66 or more; and one participant did not state their age.

Details of the sample composition based on the above variables can be found in Appendix 6.

Types of participation undertaken

This section summarises the experiences of the **59 active** interviewees. The feedback below speaks to the forms of participation made explicit in the study's definitions. It is worth noting that when interviewees spoke about their experiences and opinions, they understood the distinction between activities as publicly or politically focused, but many noted that for LGB and T people, boundaries between 'public' life and 'political' life are often blurred so that people's experiences of these two spheres often relate to and influence each other.

Where quotes from participants are used the sexual identity of the participant (as [L], [G] or [B]) or their gender identity ([T], [Q]) is referenced. Where contrasts in experiences between the different sub-communities are evident, the report makes these clear. The types of public participation outlined in this section include:

- Involvement with a trade union;
- Involvement with a local decision-making body;
- Involvement with a community group;
- Involvement with other campaigning organisations;
- Charitable work.

Types of political participation include:

- Membership, or work with, a political party;
- Taking part in campaigning activities, such as demonstrations;
- Contacting local officials or MPs.

Active sample participation breakdown

Active interviewees were undertaking the above activities in both LGB and T specific and non LGB and T specific ways. Table 5 gives a breakdown of these two types of participation for active interviewees overall and across each sub-community.

Table 5: Breakdown of LGB and T specific and non-specific participation (active sample)

<i>Type of activity</i>	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Transgender	Queer	<i>Total</i>
Only LGB and T specific	6	6	5	7	2	26
Only non LGB and T specific	3	4	2	3	0	12
LGB and T specific and non-specific	4	7	3	6	1	21
<i>Total</i>	13	17	10	16	3	59

Public participation

Involvement with a trade union

One of the main forms of public participation reported was involvement with a trade union. Some of the specific roles undertaken by interviewees within trade unions included:

- Being workplace stewards;
- Being publicity officers;
- Being committee members (on LGB and T groups, regional international committees, and policy committees);
- Holding employment tribunal seats;
- Attending trade union meetings;
- Being equalities officers;
- Being branch secretaries;
- Being union representatives.

Generally, interviewees that had been involved with a trade union reported very positive experiences, and unions were felt to be a supportive environment in which LGB and T people could participate. For some interviewees, initial involvement in a trade union also led to deeper forms of participation over time.

I've always believed in trade unions ... I started to attend meetings and gradually I started representing members – as a result of that I became more and more active. There were groups there that I identified with, so I started attending conferences, increasing my knowledge, and I became active regionally and finally nationally. But always at the back there would be people [encouraging] me – my colleagues understand what it means to be black and what it is to be gay. [G]

Involvement with a community group

Being involved with a community group was an extremely popular form of public participation for LGB and T interviewees. There was much variety in the type of groups and activities undertaken across the interviews, with differences not only in terms of levels of activity (from involvement in a strategic, founding or leading role, to involvement as a regular member) but also in whether the group was specifically for LGB or T communities or not.

Most interviewees involved in a community group were members of an LGB and T specific community group. These included local LGB and T support groups, leisure or social clubs, and music groups. Some specific examples included an adventure group for lesbians, a political and social group for gender queer people and a lesbian and gay orchestra.

The participants' experiences of these groups varied, and due to the unique set-up and function of each group it is difficult to conduct a comparison of such activities. But evidence from the interviewees indicates that these types of groups seem to exist more often in the lesbian and gay communities than the bisexual or transgender communities and in a few instances local organisations specifically for LGB communities, with exclusion of transgender people, were referenced.

Participation in non LGB and T specific community groups was also widespread among interviewees. One of the most common types of non LGB and T specific community groups

attended were women's groups, particularly for lesbian interviewees. Also popular were groups working with children, sports and social groups, and organisations focused on particular causes. For example, one interviewee was the trustee of an HIV/AIDS organisation and another was involved in a disability rights group.

Involvement with a local decision-making body

Some interviewees had experienced public participation through being a member of, or being involved with, a local decision-making body. This was a less common form of participation than experiences connected with trade unions or community groups, and tended to be associated with the most active interviewees, possibly due to the levels of commitment, time, and work such activities require.

Activities generally involved sitting on local groups for organisations including councils, the police force, health organisations, and residents' groups. There were a diverse range of roles associated with such activities, with many interviewees taking on lead positions such as a chair or secretary.

In terms of being involved with a **local council**, activities reported by interviewees included:

- involvement with local and regional equality panels;
- participating in LGB and T staff network groups;
- participating in inclusion groups;
- being a member of sexual orientation and gender identity advisory groups.

Interviewees involved with their local councils were more likely to participate in an LGB and T specific capacity, as the groups above reflect.

In comparison to council involvement there were fewer reported forms of participation within local **health** organisations. Where involvement did occur it was as either a member of staff or a service user. Interviewees were involved through their local primary care trust (PCT), local involvement networks (LINKs), or through LGB and T staff networks. These activities were therefore both LGB and T specific and non LGB and T specific.

Interviewees participated through the **police** force as staff or community members. Most of the activities engaged in were LGB and T specific. Reported activities included:

- participation in a police LGB and T advisory group;
- participation in a hate crime scrutiny panel (as an LGB and T representative).

Being part of a **residents' association or local tenants' group** was another form of involvement in local decision-making bodies. These groups tended to be non LGB and T specific.

Interestingly, none of the interviewees had participated as a magistrate, despite the fact that this is a common way for citizens to participate in local decision-making. Furthermore, magistrates were not referred to by any interviewee, which may imply a lack of awareness or these opportunities.

There were few differences between the participation of LGB and T sub-communities in local decision-making bodies and interviewees from all groups had some experience of these types of activities. There was, however, an observation worth noting in terms of levels of activity. The data indicates that those interviewees involved in public participation through a local body were likely to be involved in multiple ways/roles, i.e. not just through a council but

also with a PCT, police group or residents' association. This type of public participation therefore seems to be suited to the more active LGB and T members of society.

Involvement in other campaigning organisations

In addition to experiences in trade unions and community groups, some interviewees reported experiences of participating with other campaigning organisations. The most common was student union groups. Many interviewees had previous, or current, experience of engaging with LGB and T groups at university and for some interviewees this was considered to be an easy and effective way of getting involved in public life. The specific activities undertaken within student unions included:

- advocating LGB and T rights;
- making sure that LGB and T students feel safe;
- liaising with other equality groups within the union.

Interviewees from the LGB and T communities all reported undertaking activities such as these, and there was little difference to note between these sub-communities.

In addition to student union activities, LGB and T people campaigned through national LGB and T advocacy groups such as Stonewall, Spectrum and Gender Matters. Some interviewees were involved in non LGB and T specific advocacy groups, such as Amnesty International and Friends of the Earth.

Charitable work

Another way in which some interviewees had participated in public life was through working in a charitable capacity, and specific activities undertaken included:

- helping to organise social events;
- youth work and fundraising for children;
- being trustees.

Many of the interviewees involved with charitable work also had experience of participating in public life in other ways. Most charitable activities experienced were non LGB and T specific. Interviewees that were involved with LGB and T specific charitable work were involved with helping LGB and T children face problems and supporting transgender communities (see Box 1 over).

Political participation

Working with a political party

The main way in which interviewees had participated in political life was through an affiliation with a political party. This was usually through direct membership, although levels of participation within this varied from being in general support of the party (through voting and subscription) to standing as constituency candidates or representing the party as a local official.

Box 1: Participating in charitable work – interviewee account

I have worked for a charity in the West Midlands and surrounding counties. We engage with many different people and organisations to raise awareness of transgender issues and we also work on helping people to understand how issues of transgenderism sit within all equality strands. It's not a stand alone issue.

I see my role as raising awareness, in my private life as well as through my work. Providing information and raising awareness touches on everyone, so I work with public services and organisations, particularly the NHS. I'm quite vocal about the issues transgender people face, such as mental health problems and not having adequate levels of care.

I work in partnership with other third sector organisations in the local community. We need to make communities aware of what the issues are – the way to do that is to work with organisations that are already in the community.

Other reported membership activities included:

- attending constituency meetings;
- supporting politicians (for example, through providing administrative or practical assistance);
- helping with election campaigns;
- organising public meetings.

Interviewees belonged to a range of political parties including Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and the Green Party. Some interviewees were involved in an LGB and T specific capacity, such as organising group meetings for LGB or T people and being involved with the LGB and T branches of political parties.

A comparatively higher number of lesbian and gay interviewees were involved in participating through a political party than interviewees within the other sub-groups. It is not clear what the underlying factors affecting this imbalance could be, but given that the research sample contained broadly equal numbers of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender interviewees it is less likely that the higher rates of participation for some groups relate to a methodological bias.

Taking part in campaigning activities and demonstrations

Political participation in the form of campaigning activities were frequent experiences for many interviewees and the main activities reported were:

- attending marches or demonstrations;
- signing petitions;
- political lobbying.

These types of participation were experienced by interviewees across the LGB and T groups. Interviewees had attended a range of demonstrations and these were most often over non LGB and T specific issues including immigration, climate change, foreign relations and women's rights.

I took part in the protest in London when the Olympics took place in China – raising awareness of the breach of human rights. [G]

I attended an anti-deportation march about four and a half years ago in Manchester. [B]

In terms of LGB and T specific campaigning, pride marches were mentioned regularly by interviewees and were considered by many to be an important form of political participation.

Petitions were another common form of campaigning activity. Many interviewees reported experiences of signing them on some occasions over the last year.

In terms of signing petitions and things, I am socially aware and take part in them. I used to be a lot more political when I was younger, especially around environmental and animal groups. I sign petitions if I'm out and agree, also I get things through the internet and Facebook. I engage in that activity on a low level, but I'm not at the forefront. [G]

Most petitions were signed online and were sent to interviewees by social contacts. Specific examples referenced included No.10 petitions, petitions on voting reform and social injustice petitions. Most interviewees had experience of signing non LGB and T specific petitions.

In some cases other campaigning activities had also been undertaken by interviewees, including political lobbying, most commonly about legislation. Examples included campaigning for the Equality Act 2010 or against the ban on men who have sex with men donating blood.

Most recently I campaigned around the Equality Act and the speed of it meant we had to physically engage with political people (and encourage other people to do that) in the space of three weeks. We managed to empower people – we got them engaged through social networking. We managed to get 250 people to lobby their MPs – they also got very positive feedback [from MPs] and that was very encouraging. [T]

Contacting MPs, MSPs and local officials

The final type of political participation identified was contact with an MP or local official. These activities were generally less common and undertaken primarily by particularly active interviewees (i.e. those involved in multiple forms of participation).

Interviewees had experience in contacting their local officials about a wide variety of issues, both local (examples included poor postal services and noise in the area) and national (such as in relation to asylum cases, nuclear waste, or the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act). On the whole there was more contact made over non LGB and T specific issues.

In terms of political participation I have written to my MP as there is a lot of noise in the local area – I live next to a public car park. It's quiet at night but then noisy when the kids come in, especially within the last year. [T]

I've written to the Home Office and to Jacqui Smith regarding anti-deportation ... I'm part of the Cardiff No-Borders Group which campaigns around anti-deportation. It's not LGBT focused, it's just about freedom of movement in general. [Q]

Interviewees that had contacted local representatives in relation to LGB and T specific issues did so in relation to both personal issues (for example, one trans interviewee contacted an MP for support in gaining funding for her transition surgery) and local community issues, such as the withdrawal of LGB and T services.

I've certainly written to public officials on LGB and T matters, certainly written letters – my local council was going to withdraw funding from an LGBT advisory service so I wrote to my councilor and took him to my local gay centre. [G]

In terms of sub-group analysis, there were no differences to report. LGB and T interviewees all had experiences of contacting their MPs or local officials.

Summary of types of public and political participation

Forms of participation experienced by participants

Public participation

- Being part of a trade union
- Involvement with a local-decision making body, such as a council or health organisation
- Involvement with a community group
- Being part of other campaigning organisations, such as a student union
- Taking part in charitable work

Political participation

- Being a member of, or working with, a political party (either voluntarily or through employment)
- Taking part in campaigning activities, including demonstrations and petitions
- Contacting a local political representative

These activities were spread evenly across all sub-communities, with few discernible differences to report. The individual activities and experiences within each of these types of activity varied considerably.

Experiences of and barriers to participation in public and political life

The previous sections summarised the types of public and political activities being undertaken by active LGB and T interviewees. The following sections consider interviewee experiences of the **participatory process**, outlining the decisions an individual makes when they become 'active' or 'non active', the internal and external factors that influence these decisions, and their experiences of participation.

The process is presented as a conceptual model (Figure 1), which acts as a visual representation of the findings as outlined in greater detail in the sections that follow. The model, and its main component parts, emerged clearly through the thematic analysis of the data from the 79 interviews. The model describes 'pathways to action'. Its purpose is to bring both conceptual clarity to the findings and a clear structure through which to interpret the findings and make recommendations.

The model depicts the decision-making process an individual undertakes when considering participating in public or political life. The model is conceptualised as a linear pathway which runs from the point at which an individual finds out about the opportunity to participate, to the actual experience of participation itself. However, it needs to be recognised that it is possible for an individual to enter and re-enter this cyclical process at several points during their lifetime and that people can feasibly move through this pathway quickly. Broadly there are three main stages along the pathway:

- **Routes**

This section conceptualises the process by which an individual initially finds out about an opportunity for participation in public or political life. This can be due to internal motivation or external opportunity, or a combination of both. For some individuals there are barriers limiting access to the activity in question early on in the pathway due to a lack of personal motivation or external opportunities. For those that are motivated in some way and/or find opportunities to participate, a decision is made to either pursue this further and move on to the next stage in the model, or not to, in which case the individual would be 'non-active'.

- **Appraisal**

Having found an opportunity to participate, an individual may then consider a number of common internal and external factors influencing the decision to participate. The internal factors relate to fears and perceptions about participation in that activity as an LGB or T individual, external factors relate to contextual circumstances relevant to being LGB or T, which can influence decisions about participation. Individuals then take a further decision to either be active or non active, based on an appraisal of some or all of these factors.

- **Action**

Individuals that take the decision to be active and participate in public or political life through that activity may then consider their visibility as LGB or T within it.

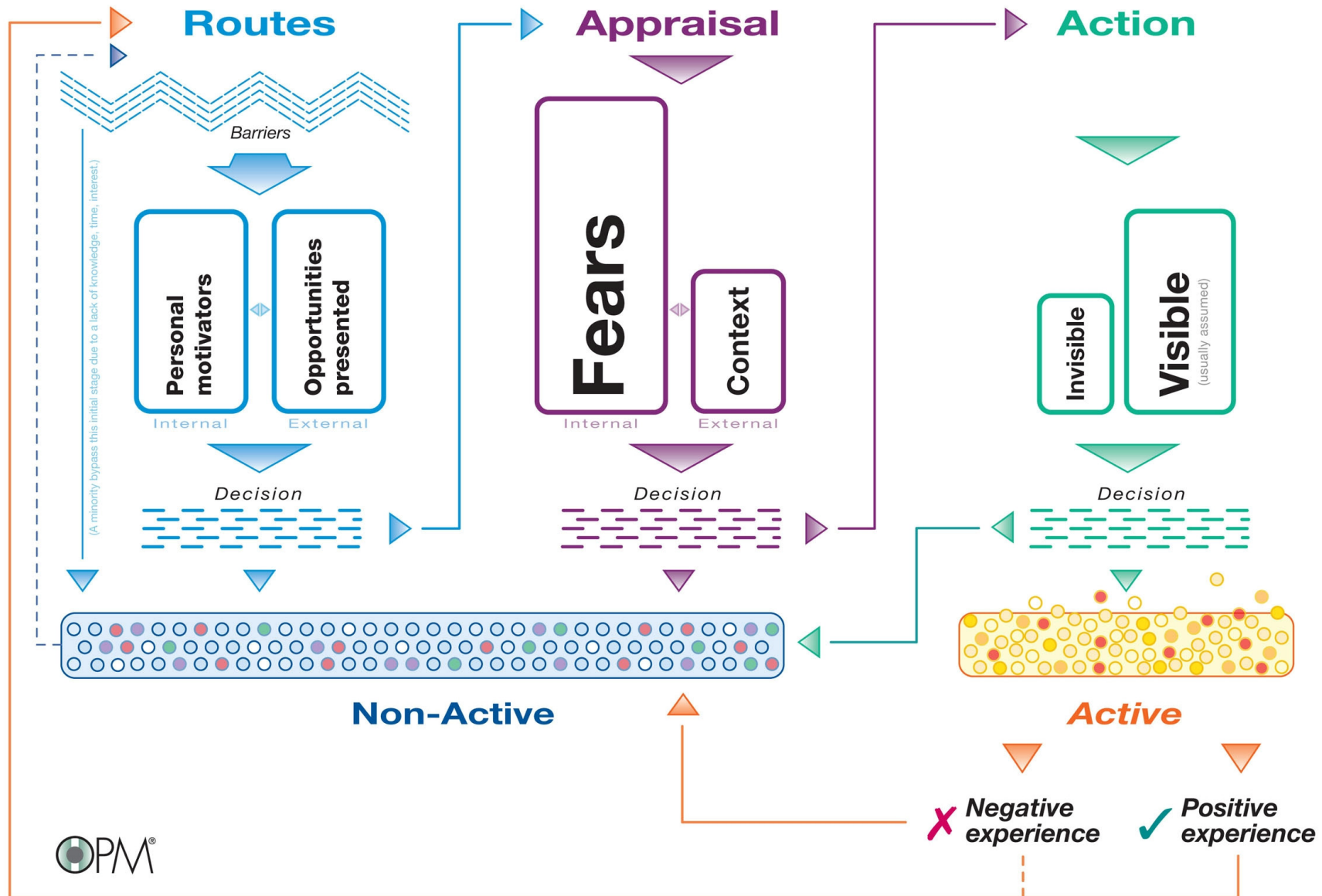
In addition to the three main stages, the model depicts the consequences experienced as a result of participation, which can be positive or negative. These are likely to affect future decision-making and the choices taken along this pathway when assessing other opportunities. Many of the interviewees became and remain active, but it is always possible that they return to being non-active, for various reasons. Thus, the diagram indicates that the pathway to participation can be cyclical.

The relative size of each component in the model reflects the weighting of the data. This is both in terms of the frequency of responses and in terms of a qualitative weighting (i.e. the strength or depth of particular themes).

Each stage of the 'pathways to action' model is explained in greater detail below. The sections draw out the nuanced findings and relationships from within interviewee responses. Unless stated otherwise each element of the pathway was identified by interviewees from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities. Any findings in the data that depart from the commonalities represented by the model, or differences by sub-community, are noted in the detailed reporting of the findings.

Under each of the sections below summary tables are included to provide an indication of the breadth and depth of reporting from interviewees for each finding. As the data is qualitative and has been gathered and analysed in this way, it is not possible to quantify responses. As such, the judgements about frequency are subjective but have been made with rigour and consistency in order to reflect the data set.

Figure 1: Pathways to action model



Routes

Barriers to access



Barriers

Interviews explored the reasons behind people's inactivity. Sometimes the pathway to activity is blocked very early by a lack of access to opportunities. This section outlines the **barriers to accessing participatory opportunities** that were outlined by interviewees. These findings relate to a lack of internal motivation and/or interest in public and political life, and a real or perceived lack of opportunities to get involved. Barriers discussed here are qualitatively different to those discussed later in the appraisal section, which apply to LGB and T people that want, and may have the opportunity, to participate, but are prevented or influenced by fears and contextual factors).

Explanations for not participating from non-active interviewees (n=20) were extremely diverse. For some interviewees it was a personal choice based on their interests and dispositions; for others external or contextual factors, including lack of time or knowledge of how to get involved, acted as barriers.

Personal reasons given by interviewees for not becoming involved centred on a lack of interest in public and political life (as defined) and/or the feeling that participation of this nature would not suit their personality. Personal barriers were believed to relate more to individual dispositions and characteristics than gender or sexual identity, and some interviewees noted feelings of apathy or a lack of engagement with the political system generally.

No, I'm just not very into it, it's just not my thing – it's more of a personality thing, rather than being about my [sexual] identity. [L]

I'm just getting on with my life and not interested in local politics or anything like that. [L]

I think it's a very individual thing, some people are entirely comfortable doing that and others aren't, it's very much an individual thing. [G]

Characteristics such as shyness, anxiety and a lack of confidence were all referred to as reasons not to participate in public and political life. However, such factors were not claimed to be exclusive to the LGB and T community – they were considered to have an impact on all people's willingness to participate generally.

However, for some interviewees their gender or sexual identity were thought to increase these emotions, and therefore the barriers to participation, particularly a lack of confidence, which was linked by some interviewees explicitly to negative public perceptions of LGB and T people.

The only thing that holds me back is myself ... I've got a general lack of self-confidence when it comes to my personal life - I'm sure it goes back to my childhood, when there was political oppression and laws preventing me from developing emotionally into a fully functioning adult. [G]

Personal stress was also highlighted as an internal barrier by some interviewees, particularly by transgender interviewees who felt that their wider experience of transitioning was too

emotionally or physically draining to leave time for participation.

The stress of coming out and living as a gender variant [is a barrier] – it is incredibly stressful, upsetting, time consuming, and undertaking any participation on top of that is one extra thing. A lot of people are too busy trying to live. [T]

Among interviewees that did cite external barriers to accessing participation opportunities, the most prevalent was not having the time or resource to participate, most often due to a busy job or a lack of social support (from family, friends and the wider community).

It is people with the free time that participate ... it is very much people whose circumstances allow them to [participate] in the trans community – there is so much holding people back in terms of emotional stress, economic inequality etc. [T]

When you start working and planning families you have less time for public roles and political activism. [T]

Not all interviewees could explain in detail, or elaborate on, reasons for not participating. In a number of instances participants commented that undertaking the interview for this study presented them with the opportunity to reflect on their participation and led them to self-identify as more or less 'active' than they had previously thought.

Some non-active interviewees associated their lack of interest or desire to get involved with their lack of awareness about how to do it, suggesting that they would have to have the motivation first to then find ways to participate:

It would have to be you looking [to participate] and being passionate and wanting to ignite into action over something – if you want to be active you would have to go looking. [Q]

Others suggested that LGB and T people who are more socio-economically deprived may be more likely to experience barriers to access because of a lack of social capital, internet access, work and opportunities for higher education.

Some participants believed that de-motivation stemmed from the absence of any support infrastructure to aid participation, both for the wider population and specifically for LGB and T groups. One cited an experience where a lack of adequate infrastructure and organisation on the part of the group they had contacted, acted as a barrier to access:

There is a lack of infrastructure, there isn't the support to engage with those people they need to ... I mean support groups, community groups. Community development needs to happen a lot more in the LGBT community. [L]

I am attempting to join local women's community of interest group, but they don't get back to you. [L]

Some interviewees highlighted the relative exclusion of LGB and T people, when compared to other equality strands.

Even though there are certain places where it is hard to get away with racism and disability prejudice, it is still easier to get away with transphobia. [T]

Some interviewees felt that the approach to equalities in recent years – which has seen the segmentation of equality groups into a series of equality strands – is a barrier to LGB and T participation; firstly because organisations prioritise certain equality agendas over others meaning LGB and T issues may not be addressed, secondly because the focus on equality strands can result in tokenistic engagement i.e. people only being consulted because they identify as LGB or T, this affects willingness to participate and experiences of participation.

Some interviewees felt that the definitions of public and political life used in the research did not match their own interpretation of these activities or their experiences. As such they identified as non-active, but did feel other actions and day-to-day choices they made reflected what it meant to them to be engaged on a public or political level. Examples included the use of local and national elections to vote for candidates supportive of LGB and T issues and the attendance at pride celebrations.

Perhaps I'm political in ways I didn't realise ... I do use my vote to protect LGBT issues and vote according to candidates' record on gay issues ... I do that automatically. [L]

Table 6: Summary of the themes relating to barriers to access

Barriers to access	Weighting
Personal disposition, including not having an interest or motivation	Medium
Not having the time or resources to participate	Medium
Lack of awareness of how to get involved	Medium
Low confidence, stress or anxiety	Medium
Lack of opportunities or appropriate infrastructure to aid involvement	Low
Socio-economic status e.g. not having Internet access	Low

Personal motivators



Active interviewees identified various reasons for getting involved in public and political life. Generally, these reasons were highly subjective and varied according to individual circumstances and the type of participation being undertaken. As a result there are very few distinctions to be made across sub-communities. This section outlines some of the personal motivators for participation in **any** kind of public or political activity based on the interview sample as a whole. These are:

- To represent LGB and T community and work for LGB and T equality**

For most interviewees involvement in public and political life was the result of a personal motivation to campaign for equality for the LGB and T community. This desire was often related to feelings that LGB and T people are misrepresented and mistreated in society, and the view that personal involvement could contribute to positive change.

I got involved because I felt LGBT people are underrated and not widely represented. [G]

Basically improving gay men's experience in the UK and London and also [the experience of] gay men more generally. [G]

- **To ‘make a difference’**

For some interviewees, the desire to participate in public or political life was related to a desire to contribute to society more generally, that is, not just in relation to LGB and T issues but for other causes. Examples cited included social justice, human rights and women’s issues.

Human rights campaigning – that’s what drew me to the X Party. [G]

- **To ‘give back’ to the local LGB and T, or wider, community**

Personal motivations to contribute to the LGB and T or wider community were also cited by interviewees. For those motivated to work within the LGB and T community, the importance of ‘giving back’ was highlighted, particularly in cases where they had felt supported by the LGB and T community in the past. Other interviewees with a desire to contribute to the wider community were often motivated through a sense of social justice or fairness, for example to help people in need such as the homeless.

Being in a town in Preston meant there was nothing going on for the gay community (we are swamped by Manchester and Blackpool on either side) so I thought about what a community group could do for people here. [L]

I’ve always been minded to give back what I get from my own experience and help others where I can. [T]

- **Response to a negative experience**

Another personal motivator expressed by some interviewees was the desire to instigate change as a result of a negative experience. This was usually because of a desire to help other LGB and T people that may have similar experiences or, in some cases, because participation could directly support an individual. For example, someone who joined a union might be able to receive help for problems at work. Participants’ accounts show that negative experiences can therefore act as both drivers and barriers to participation, and that the impact of other contextual factors and opportunities can be important determinants of participation.

What motivated me to do it... receiving certain forms of homophobia, some of them were quite frank [and direct], that made me feel that even if I had certain policies to protect me I still couldn’t experience equality. [G]

- **Out of personal interest**

For a few interviewees motivators leading to participation were believed to be inherent and part of an individual’s personality.

I just think it’s in me. I can’t remember there being a call for action – can’t remember being marginalised or cross, I just feel like that’s the sort of person I am. [G]

My political activism has been driven by my personal ethics. [L]

- **Support/encouragement from others**

Having social support and encouragement from others was another personal motivator for some interviewees. This encouragement was often linked back to upbringing and having motivated parents was referenced as a key driver towards participation.

My parents have always been such strong role models that they constantly remind me how proud they are. Having that support is a core strength – it gives me a compulsion to want to do things. [T]

- **Individual/personal situation**

A few interviewees believed that they were motivated to participate in public and political life due to specific circumstances, particularly in the case of contacting an MP, MSP or local councillor, which often occurred on an issue-by-issue basis. Other personal situations referred to were changes in an individual's work or home life, such as a new job or relationship.

I was mainly motivated through having an American boyfriend, which made me very interested in their politics and led me to wondering how we [in Great Britain] compared, especially on things like same-sex marriage. They are going backwards, not forwards, in the USA, and I started thinking about it here. [B]

Table 7 summarises each type of personal motivator cited by interviewees and its overall weighting in the data.

Table 7: Summary of themes relating to personal motivators

Personal motivators	Weighting
To represent the LGB and T communities and work for LGB and T equality	High
Desire to make a 'difference'	High
To 'give back' to the local LGB and T or wider community	Medium
As a result of a negative experience	Medium
Due to personality/personal interest	Low
Support/encouragement from others	Low
Individual/personal situation	Low

Evidence indicates that the presence of one of more of these personal motivators could act as reasons for getting involved in public and political life. However, they are not always sufficient in themselves and individuals that are non-active may also experience these internal motivations. As illustrated in the model, participation is not only affected by internal drivers but by external opportunities, that is, whether and how options to participate are available to LGB and T people. These opportunities are discussed in the next subsection.

Opportunities presented



Interviewees that were active in public and political life were asked about the opportunities for participation presented to them and the ways in which they became involved. As with

findings on motivations, there were many differences at an individual level and many of the routes in were uniquely related to personal circumstances and experiences. However despite this, some broad areas of commonality were identifiable and the main opportunities for participation are outlined below:

- **Social networks and word of mouth:** One of the main routes into participation identified was through social networks, and this was particularly important for participation in LGB and T specific activities. Interviewees often referred to the influence of friends or partners when getting involved in public and political life, and word of mouth was seen as one of the main ways of receiving information about opportunities to participate, particularly for community or social groups.

I have started turning up occasionally to Bi-Scotland and am looking at more [activities] now because I am spending more time around friends who are more actively involved with organised groups – I am aware of what is happening ... That is the main route – through other people. [B]

For a few interviewees, these social networks were centred around upbringing and early involvement in public or political activities. The influence of parents was cited both as an internal motivator (as referenced in the previous sub-section) and an external motivator, in terms of finding out about how to get involved.

- **Workplace or profession:** For some interviewees involvement in political or public life stemmed from opportunities presented through their employment, both directly (participating through the job itself) and indirectly (through getting involved in a trade union or work-based solidarity group).

In terms of political participation, employment emerged as a direct route to participation specifically for those involved in political work, such as parliamentary research. There were also some interviewees who were involved in public life directly through their jobs, for example those working for charitable organisations. Generally however, employment routes into public activities tended to be via more indirect routes, such as opportunities to join a union or staff network.

Certainly things like Unison is one way – getting involved with like-minded people and LGBT people within your union. [T]

Unison are very proactive and the TUC do a lot ... they provide great routes for people who are excluded elsewhere. [T]

- **University/education:** Several interviewees reported that their experiences of public and political life had been gained through their university life. For example, in terms of public experiences some interviewees became involved in community groups or student union work, and in terms of political experiences some interviewees began taking part in demonstrations or marches through being a student.

Being a student seems to be a powerful route into [participation]. In the NUS, although any trans person campaigning is a volunteer, we have a budget which is more than other trans groups. So getting involved in something like that will give you a huge amount of resources. [T]

[Participation] was accessible at university, there were always people involved and it was inspiring to see that and for them to involve me. [L]

- **Local outreach:** Some interviewees became aware of opportunities to participate in public or political life through local outreach. This was particularly the case for community groups, which people had accessed through advertisements in local libraries, public notice boards, or newspapers. This was also a route into public or political employment.

I'd never had a chance to work within my community. I would actually lie in bed and I couldn't believe when I saw the job advertised in the local press. My friend said, "did you see the job, you should go for it". [G]

However, whether opportunities are experienced through this route depends on how connected an individual is to their local community, and for some interviewees (particularly those moving around) local outreach was not a route into participation.

I've never settled in an area for a long time, so issues around and engaging with local communities, have never interested me. Maybe in the future it's something that will become more important to me. [G]

- **National outreach:** In addition to local outreach, national outreach was also a route into participation for some interviewees. This was both through publications (newspapers or magazines) and through events, such as Pride.

Well usually it's been when my attention has been snagged by an online or magazine [advert or] presentation by someone about something. [G]

I've tended to [see information] at big events like Pride, or through going to gay and lesbian tournaments and through my social life. People tend to lobby at those times. [L]

- **Internet:** Another important way of getting involved in public or political activities was via the internet – this was seen as the main entry route by many interviewees into both political activities (for example for finding out about demonstrations or receiving petitions) and for public activities (by enabling the organisation and mobilisation of local groups).

The internet has opened up massive amounts of stuff – being sent quick questionnaires, lots of stuff. [L]

The internet was seen as an important route for interviewees across all sub-communities, but it was seen as particularly valuable by trans interviewees and by interviewees living in more rural areas.

The trans community is very internet based as it is incredibly thinly dispersed. I [identified it] through student activism and the internet. [T]

The internet is the best way. Up here there are not many physical opportunities – internet, email and telephones, especially the internet, are the only means [of participation] because you can talk to people without giving personal details out and have contact on your terms. [T]

In terms of sub-community analysis, some interviewees saw differences between LGB and T experiences in terms of opportunities for participation. For example, for some transgender interviewees, getting involved in public or political life was seen as much harder compared to LGB people (see Box 2).

Box 2: Differences in opportunities for participation between LGB and T

I think there's a gigantic gulf between LGB and T. I mean, a lot of the so called 'gay scene' is LGB. If a trans person turns up they are the only one (or think they are) and the group finds it hard to deal with them; [this is both] in a club but also in a political campaigning group.

When you have an organisation like Stonewall being LGB-only, offering training and education, and other LGB-only groups doing the same, it means there are many more resources [for LGB] than for trans people at all levels of participation.

It is very hard to find trans groups – it can only be done using the internet really. A lot of the trans things happening that I'm involved in are new.

As outlined in the model, these opportunities work with internal motivators to determine whether an LGB or T person participates in public or political life. The existence of these external opportunities is therefore essential in enabling LGB and T people to become involved. Table 8 summarises these opportunities and their weighting in the data.

Table 8: Summary of themes relating to opportunities presented

Opportunities presented	Weighting
Social networks or word of mouth	High
Workplace or profession	High
University/education	Medium
Local outreach	Medium
National outreach	Low
Internet as a source of information and engagement	Low

Summary of barriers to access, personal motivators and opportunities presented

Barriers to accessing participatory opportunities:

- Personal disposition: not being interested in political or public life, or having personality traits or personal interests that make participation less appealing
- Not having the time or resources to participate, often due to other commitments such as work or social life
- Not knowing how to get involved; being unaware of the routes in participation
- Personal stress in other aspects of life, making participation an extra thing to worry about (for example for transgender interviewees going through transition)
- Lack of support structures to aid participation, for example not having appropriate groups available locally, or experiencing a difficult joining process
- A lower socio-economic status could lead to barriers, for example not having Internet access

Internal motivations for participating in public or political life:

- Wanting to campaign for change and improve equalities for LGB and T people
- Wanting to 'make a difference'
- Wanting to 'give back' to local and LGB and T communities
- As a result of a negative experience
- Out of a personal disposition towards, or interest in, public or political life
- Being encouraged by parents or family – due to upbringing
- As a result of another personal experience, for example through the influence of a social contact

External opportunities presented for participation:

- Social connections
- Through employment
- Through studies/university
- Local outreach
- National outreach
- The Internet

Appraisal

When personal motivations and opportunities combine to present a route to participation, the data suggests there is a further decisional stage, or appraisal of the opportunity, that may or may not lead to participation. This section explores the decision making process interviewees undertook when considering being 'active' in public and political life, and how their status as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender impacted (if at all) on their decisions about engaging and engaging as visibly LGB or T.

Interviewees were asked if there are contextual factors that inhibit LGB and T people's willingness to participate when a route to participation is being considered, and how these factors might differ from those faced by non LGB and T people. The responses from interviewees can be grouped under two themes: internal fears and external contextual barriers. The extent to which these factors influence, inhibit or prevent participation varies from individual to individual and is fluid as internal and external contexts change over time.

A comparison of responses indicates that the factors identified as influential are common to all sub-communities. These factors are presented below, with those that were referred to most frequently appearing first.

Fear of discrimination and prejudice



Previous personal experiences of homophobia, transphobia or biphobia and/or the fear of discrimination or reprisal because of sexual or gender identity were the most commonly cited factors affecting the willingness of LGB and T people to participate in public and political life.

Many participants reported the biggest barrier to their engagement was fear of the prejudice against LGB and T people which many feel manifests in a wide variety of ways within day to day mainstream society (institutionally, legally, via social norms) and at multiple levels (individually, locally, nationally). Interviewees reported that negative everyday experiences have a strong impact on their confidence and willingness to be visible and therefore act as a barrier discouraging LGB and T people from being active.

Many interviewees had experienced discrimination and feared violence or abuse as a result of being visibly LGB or T in society.

In general I am always 'out', but in the back of my mind I am always frightened of violence. On Friday night when everyone else is drunk and coming out of pubs, and my partner and I are walking down the street, I will not hold her hand. [L]

There are contexts that are felt to be more threatening than others, but this fear pervades decision making around participation more generally in society and as a result decision making around participation in public and political life.

In explaining why they feared participation, interviewees spoke of the 'fear of reprisal', 'fear of being judged' and the 'fear of harassment' in participatory situations, as well as the concern that their presence as an LGB or T person 'may create some awkwardness'. Also of concern

was the fear of being publicly humiliated or not taken seriously. Many interviewees felt that social prejudices make it hard for LGB and T people to be accepted and valued in political or public roles, and that this discourages participation because of the *'fear you're going to be seen as a lesser person by straight society'*.

Some interviewees had directly experienced discrimination during participation in a public or political activity, being verbally abused or threatened by other members of the public, others simply feared this would happen and that they would be 'at risk' if openly or visibly LGB or T.

People from the LGBT community would be scared to go to public meetings ... they'll be heckled out the room. [T]

It takes a brave person from the LGBT community to stand up and become active in any way. [T]

Concern for widespread use of the term 'gay' as an insult was a key feature of the data. It was commonly cited as reinforcing and evidencing fear of prejudice and misunderstanding on the part of non LGB and T people.

Interviewees suggested that the formal protections in place for LGB and T people and agreements about the rights of LGB and T people are not yet widely or consistently practised in their communities and that bullying, harassment and discrimination are still very real experiences for LGB and T people. Interviewees also reported the belief that homophobia, transphobia, biphobia and exclusion of LGB and T people, is not taken as seriously by authorities such as the Police or schools, or by national or local government, as for example is racism, or prejudice against those with disabilities.

It often seems that in organisations in public life, generally things are better [than they were]; but actually even though there are certain places where it is harder to get away with transphobia/homophobia ... it is easy for organisations to say 'this is too complicated, we are not going to listen'. So there are barriers facing LGBT people – you can ignore them and no one really cares. [T]

Personal choices around if, when, where and how to participate are influenced by these fears. Participation is dependent as a result, on the willingness of the individual to engage and to manage any negative reactions or consequences.

There's obviously still negative views out there around sexuality ... So I suppose you would have to be pretty brave to put yourself out there and face it ... I wouldn't choose to do it. [G]

I'm now more mature, grown up and nowhere near as concerned about what others think about me ... I have a deeper understanding of people and don't take it personally, but if I didn't, sexuality would be something else, it would be very difficult. [G]

The fears outlined by interviewees generate cautiousness around participation and engagement in public and political life amongst LGB and T people. This fear and/or experience of discrimination do not prevent involvement in every case (in some it results in a greater determination to be visible and involved) but it is a notable influencing factor.

When people get a negative reaction you can either want to change this, or want to hide. If it happens day to day it's very stressful, especially if your partner/family are also involved, you probably want to hide and be less visible. [T]

Interviewees who were not 'out' feared being 'exposed' as a result of participation. Participants noted that not being 'out' at a personal level, or not being accepted by relevant others because of sexual or gender identity, would have considerable impact on people's

willingness, ability and confidence to participate in public and political life. Even for those who were 'out' to their immediate social and family circles, there were concerns (particularly from transgender interviewees, but also from gay and lesbian interviewees) and decisions around whether to participate were influenced by the fear and assumption of forced visibility and the disclosure of gender or sexual identity more generally. The risks directly associated with participation in political life, were being scrutinised by others and having one's private life exposed, particularly if participating in some political activities (e.g. standing as an MP or for public office).

People cited a range of personal reasons for not being out or visible publically, including personal acceptance of self, family acceptance, religious background, ethnicity, organisational culture, local neighbourhood culture and wider social pressures and fear of reprisal.

I think the barriers people face from LGBT and BME backgrounds are much more complex ... experiencing prejudice in your own community is a much, much worse issue ... combined effects of being in multiple minority groups. [B]

You have to be brave to stand up and be visible when society makes you feel ashamed of who you are. [B]

If you're not feeling terribly sure of who you are, then it's almost impossible to participate under that part of your identity. [Q]

In terms of sub-community analysis, some transgender interviewees had particular fears over being exposed or 'outed', specifically those that wanted to be in 'stealth' mode. Some interviewees highlighted the diversity within the transgender community and claimed that for some people, often those post-transition, it would be highly undesirable to risk being identified as 'trans'. Transgender people who had completed their formal transition, and/or were living permanently in the opposite gender to that they were assigned at birth, felt that participation may lead to exposure of their past life and the revealing of what they consider to be both irrelevant and personal information.

Some interviewees also suggested that for some transgender people there was less choice about the disclosure of gender identity or history because they 'present less well'.

Box 3: Exposure of gender identity – interviewee account

The only thing that would hold me back from a role in the public eye is someone background checking me – this would expose me and it wouldn't be my choice. Because I'm not a 'public' person people don't do these background checks, but if I wanted to take a more formal role the 'knives would be out'.

Realistically if someone stands for public office either opposing candidates or their party, they will check who they are standing against. If your background could be used to discredit you, people will use it, so I would have to 'out' myself first and I'm not sure I would want that – I like to make the choice about who I tell and when.

I think being 'outed' in this way would be discrediting. You just have to look at how trans people are treated in wider society and you can see that it would be even more difficult in [public and political life].

I think there are a lot of people who, once they've gone through the procedure [gender reassignment] and start living in their new gender role permanently, don't want an external reminder that they're trans. My personal [view on this is different] ... if I'm going to be in public life, my trans history is always going to be with me ... but I see that it would be an issue for most people.

Some interviewees acknowledged that attitudes towards LGB and T people are improving. Greater awareness on the part of wider society of LGB and T identities is contributing to the ease with which LGB and T people can be active in their communities. However, many still feared prejudice and abuse and this fear acted as a barrier and/or hindrance to the will of interviewees to participate. Evidence from all interviewees suggests that there is still much progress to be made in terms of improving perceptions of LGB and T communities in society and opening up all societal domains (including public and political life) to these communities:

We have more legislation in equalities, but this doesn't reach hearts and minds and perceptions take longer, there is still a lot of [problems] such as people using 'gay' as an insult and a lot of jokes. [G]

This fear and perceived lack of respect was felt by interviewees from all sub-communities, but perhaps notably so by those identifying as transgender or gender queer. These interviewees felt that there was ignorance and a lack of understanding of their identities, which often left them anxious about involvement in political or public activities.

People feel worried that they're not going to be accepted in the gender that they identify as. They're worried about not being taken seriously. If there are things that are specifically men or women only, then there is fear of whether you will be included and accepted within that space or not. [Q]

I often wish I could come out ... but there's the fear that people would be judging you. [T]

Some transgender and bisexual interviewees highlighted that it is not only rejection by non LGB and T people they fear, but also rejection by lesbian and gay communities.

There is a lot of prejudice against bisexual people in the gay community ... the stereotypes of 'greedy' and 'indecisive' are still there. [B]

I have actually experienced verbal abuse in a gay club, which really upset me. [T]

Interviewees also feared and believed that prejudice towards people because of their sexual and/or gender identity is a barrier to being chosen for, or being prevented from, undertaking political/public positions or roles. Some interviewees noted that there are formal protections for LGB and T people to prevent discrimination at this level, but did not feel these protections as yet work on the ground in many cases. Others did not mention these protections at all.

Interestingly, a notable number of interviewees from across the sub-communities suggested that fear as a barrier, may be more about perception of potential negative consequences of participation. A few interviewees postulated that in reality LGB and T individuals had less to fear than they may think. As may be expected, this was often the reflection of active people on non-active people.

Table 9: Summary of themes relating to fears

Fears	Weighting
Fear of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia	High
Fear of discrimination, prejudice and hate crime	High
Fears of not being taken seriously or being rejected	Medium
Fear of being 'outed', exposed or scrutinised publically	Medium

Contextual barriers



An internal fear of discrimination and prejudice was the most frequently cited barrier to participation, but interviewees also cited numerous contextual factors that influenced their decision. These external factors are outlined below, with those most frequently reported cited first.

Location

The contextual factor that received most comment from participants was location and/or community. Location was mentioned by all sub-communities; however opinion about its influence and impact on participation varied.

The opinion dominant across the sample was that in urban areas and cities people are more accustomed to diversity therefore the participation of LGB and T people is more common and/or likely. Conversely, in rural areas participation may be harder and there may be a greater chance of discrimination, prejudice or exclusion.

Some interviewees currently living in an urban location had lived in rural areas in the past and had felt being 'themselves' and a part of the community to be difficult. Others had not lived in a rural area, but perceived that participation in public and political life in such locations would be more problematic.

I think the main problem is not in the city areas, where people are naturally more tolerant, the problem is in the areas [that are more rural]. [G]

I came from quite a small town, and it definitely was an issue there ... it's that small town mentality, which is why I look forward to coming to a more bohemian cosmopolitan city with a mix of backgrounds, a more mixed and hopefully tolerant environment. [G]

I've mostly felt comfortable revealing [my bisexuality], but I've always lived in cities with diverse people. I'm sure a lot of it has to do with exposure – in less liberal parts of the country it must be hard. [B]

In Inverness there's no gay bars or gay coffee shops or anything, up here it's not really LGBT friendly ... people want to keep a low profile ... it's a joy when you go to places like London and Glasgow. [L]

However the urban/rural affect was not clear cut and there were notable exceptions to these experiences and perceptions. A number of interviewees reported feeling unable to participate as an openly LGB or T person in local public and political life in urban locations, because of fear of abuse or reprisal. The desire to maintain privacy in larger urban communities and the impact of living in more diverse communities, where there are larger populations of ethnic or religious groups, was noted by some interviewees.

I am involved with a local tenants group where I live. There are two lesbians who know I am gay and one or two others, but I won't be openly gay. I live in a block of six flats and

no one else knows. This is a barrier to my participation because I can't feel comfortable ... but at the same time I'm old fashioned and appreciate my privacy. [G]

Others reported participating in public or political life in rural locations and meeting very little opposition to their sexual or gender identity.

We live in a small town where everyone recognises us as the [local] 'trannies' - it's quite a poor town ... so you may think it's not a good environment to live in when you're trans, but apart from some small problems, we've had [a very positive reaction from our local community]. [T]

The impact of community mindset and culture was suggested by a couple of participants as the influential factor (rather than the geographical setting of the community). They felt that it can be harder in small and rural communities for LGB and T people to participate if the general view is not one of acceptance; however, the opposite can also be true.

I think location probably does impact. I think it probably is harder in a rural environment because they tend to operate as tighter communities, whereas in an urban environment people do not interact in that way. But I've lived on farms in the past, my girlfriend and I rented a cottage and we were out from the start ... and it wasn't an issue. When we moved, another lesbian couple moved in – maybe we paved the way? [L]

When I lived in my home village I was involved in raising money to get new tennis courts and I was involved in local politics. It was not different because of the context – I think you live somewhere and if you're happy living somewhere you adapt to the people around you – lifestyles, attitudes, ways of life ... that's what communities are. They are a collection of individuals with broadly similar lifestyles but as you change, attitudes change, the propensity to do things changes ... There is plenty of evidence from my friends in the country or suburbs that it makes no difference. For example I have [gay] friends in suburbia who recently organised a street lunch – some would say that was very brave. [G]

The weight of interviewee responses does suggest that LGB and T people do find it easier to participate visibly in urban locations, however the locality in which people live and the attitudes towards LGB and T people of that community have a notable influence on people's willingness to engage in public and political life.

Profession and workplace

The next most frequently cited contextual consideration was profession and/or employer. This had a notable influence over interviewee decisions to participate in public and political life. Interviewees were concerned that the exposure, or emphasis, of their sexual or gender identity as a result of participation, would impact upon career progression and work life (or even lead to job loss). This impacted upon interviewees' choices regarding participation in a number of ways; choosing not to participate at all, being very cautious when participating about visibility and/or choosing carefully what form their participation in public or political life took.

I'm in the banking sector and homophobia still exists – I'm 100% sure it still does in the majority of workplaces. That would stop people from becoming involved politically and publicly. [G]

For me I suppose I worry about the backlash in my occupation. That's my main barrier having experienced discrimination in the past, but it does depend on what your job is. [L]

One interviewee recalled an experience when trying to participate in a workplace LGB and T group, where they felt their manager was proactively hindering their engagement with this group.

With regards to the people I know who work for this PCT, I would say it depends where you work. A lot of LGBT network members work in X and their managers have obstructed direct participation in the LGBT network meetings by scheduling other work. [L]

The profession cited as the most problematic by participants was teaching. Interviewees suggested that it would be difficult as a teacher if they were open about their sexual or gender identity elsewhere in the community, or if their identity were exposed through public or political participation.

In certain occupations you wouldn't want to be open, teaching especially. My friend, a female teacher in a primary school, has just had to move schools because the staff were not OK with her sexuality at all, even though the kids were. [L]

I don't know a single teacher who is 'out'. The staff are nice, they aren't a problem, but then parents might find out and you wouldn't risk that – most would probably cause trouble for me. [L]

To be honest, I've always been reluctant to be too open because I'm a teacher of small children. I have done a lot of pride marches but as I grew older I became more reluctant. When I taught in a primary school abroad, some parents asked the school to remove children from my class! [L]

Interviewees talked positively about more 'progressive' and 'liberal' industries and employers, where all sexual and gender identities are acknowledged and even supported, with employees given the opportunity to be involved in workplace based LGB and T specific activities. Generally interviewees noted that participation in public or political life as an LGB or T person would be easier and more likely if they knew their employers and workplaces to be accepting of LGB and T identities.

Obviously it's essential that I don't face discrimination or barriers in work, but I think I'm lucky because the field we work in is by nature more socially aware and more forward thinking. I'm sure some professions would be very different but I know that it would never be an issue for me. [G]

Finally interviewees spoke about the fear that participation would result in exposure at work and that this could be particularly damaging in the current economic climate. A number of interviewees mentioned this and none of them referred to the legal protections that now exist to protect against workplace discrimination on the grounds of sexual or gender identity.

In this day and age, with jobs the way they are, it's just another excuse to sack you. [L]

The workforce is going to be shrinking and that makes LGBT people less likely [to be open about their sexual orientation], because discrimination is quite hard to prove. [G]

Well yes, I mean I think there are certainly some professions in which a person might well be scared ... for example medicine and teaching. There is a fear of being sacked, especially in Scotland, where there are many Catholic schools and where teachers do feel obliged to hide their sexuality ... [the] fear is, displaying sexuality in a public role may have a knock effect in their job. [G]

Media

Interviewees frequently highlighted the influence of the image of LGB and T people presented in the media, suggesting that negative media portrayals of LGB and T individuals, lifestyles and relationships, act as a barrier to people's participation in wider public and political life.

Bisexuality ... as a label would act as a barrier to participating in political life especially if it was something significant like running as an MP or councilor. I think it's a misunderstood identity ... and in the media (if it's something that's not immediately disclosed) it may serve as ammunition ... especially with bisexuality, there might be [stereotyping] like the person having two partners at the same time. The media play a large part in how it's portrayed, it wouldn't be an incentive [to participate in public and political life] ... it would play against you. [B]

Many interviewees believed that negative media portrayals of LGB and T people were widespread, and a range of examples were referred to including the treatment of LGB and T politicians or celebrities, newspaper reports highlighting irrelevant information about someone's sexuality or gender identity (indirectly suggesting an association between sexual/gender identity and the reported negative action) and television programmes that reinforce negative, trivial or harmful stereotypes.

The media are using [sexuality] for entertainment. [L]

I think the fact that [a politician's] sexuality is an issue at all and the media furore around it is a bad thing. [L]

Negative media portrayals were felt to be a barrier to participation in two main ways. Firstly, they highlighted possible bad social reaction to, or unfair treatment of, 'out' LGB and T people and therefore discouraged people from risking participating (in line with the points discussed above). Secondly, the negative portrayals made LGB and T people feel misunderstood and unable to challenge the negative stereotypes and negative public perceptions associated with their communities. Also noted was the role the media play in the negative sensationalisation of LGB and T lifestyles.

Box 4: Negativity towards LGB and T people in the media – interviewee account

It struck me in the 2006 [local] elections, when I worked in XX, there was a big front page story in the local press. One of the XX councillors had posted something on Gaydar [a gay social networking site] and the local media highlighted this and asked 'Is this the sort of person you'd like to have as your candidate?'. He suffered electorally, he lost quite a few votes – so that made me [more conscious of what effects there might be if you're not careful]. You never know if it's discrimination, would something like that have happened to a straight person.

Several interviewees speculated that ignorance and a lack of education about LGB and T people was often an underlying cause of negative public perceptions, and references were commonly made to the fact that most negativity came from people who had never met an LGB or T person. It was claimed by many interviewees that as a result of this lack of awareness there was little incentive for LGB and T to risk getting involved in public or political life, since they would have to 'battle' against the dominant social paradigm (i.e. that heterosexuality is 'normal').

The impact of the media on willingness to participate was experienced differently by interviewees across the sub-communities. For lesbian and gay interviewees it usually related to the negative examples of lesbian and gay people in the media and stereotypes associated with their behaviours (being 'camp' for gay men and 'butch' for lesbians). For bisexual interviewees, the issue was the lack of presence in the media at all and the consequent ignorance of bisexual people's existence and identity. For transgender interviewees, being misrepresented in the media (when covered at all) was linked to fear of being 'branded a freak'.

The media effect was reinforced by the lack of role models with low numbers of LGB and T people in the public eye making it harder for others to come out. There is more discussion of the deficit in LGB and T role models further on in this report.

Effect on significant others

Participants from all groups spoke of their concern that participating in public and/or political life as a visible LGB or T person would negatively affect significant others in their lives. The most commonly cited concerns were the potential or actual negative effects on children and/or LGB and T people's families. LGB and T people who are not 'out' to their family and LGB and T people who feel their sexual or gender identity might be a source of embarrassment for wider family members and loved ones are reluctant to participate at all for fear of exposure and certainly reluctant to participate as an openly LGB or T person.

I've only been to one pride parade, knowing how my family feel about it. It's a big circus and there are a lot of cameras and reporters, you don't necessarily want to be on TV, not because it's going to embarrass you, but out of the respect for your family, it can embarrass them. [G]

Family situation, whether you are out to your family and also your relations with family members; your sexuality is representing your wider family. Involvement in local community can affect your standing within it and your family may not wish to jeopardise that, if you are respected you might risk losing that [by participating as an openly LGB or T person]. [G]

Type of activity being undertaken

Particularly notable is the finding that the focus of an organisation, activity or group that invites participation, could impact upon a person's willingness to take part. Lesbian, gay and transgender interviewees stated their belief that LGB and T identities are still falsely linked to paedophilia by some in wider society and in the media. As a result interviewees had either directly experienced, or perceived, difficulties in participating in community activities or contexts where children are present.

Whether or not children are involved [affects my willingness to participate]. I have this perception that straight people always associate gay people with paedophilia, this leaves you vulnerable. [L]

I think it's mainly other people's reactions, and their preconceived ideas. I remember when I was working for the NHS, I was told by a member of staff that I was a danger to children [because of being lesbian] ... people [still associate being gay with paedophilia, it's ridiculous] ... [issues around] safeguarding children [are a very sensitive topic] ... I think that's what puts many people off. [L]

LGB and T communities and social capital

The level of individual social capital¹⁶ members of the LGB and T communities have and the context and position from which LGB and T individuals approach participation is also notable as a theme from the interviews. Social capital is reflected in the strength of an individual's support networks and relationships and is influential in participation and connectedness to wider community and society.

I think it depends on the person obviously, but I think in a lot of cases it depends how strong you are. [B]

I got good support myself, particularly from my church, when I was a trans person thinking about transition and about living in the wider community, rather than in just the LGBT community. There were [many] people who gave me support and some people after transition want to disappear ... I said I don't want that ... I want to be active in the trans community. [T]

Sometimes LGBT people isolate themselves ... I think it's very important to be active within your own community ... I think the only way progress is going to be made is if [LGBT] people engage with other people and I'm not convinced that it's happening on the scale it should be. [G]

Box 5: LGB and T social capital – interviewee account

It is hard for trans people to get involved, I feel I only do so because of being from middle class background. I think that where you live and what you do has a massive impact. Firstly most trans people I know are white, which reflects the cultural element and the racism in the LGBT community. Most will be middle class in some sense. If they are young it's normally with support from parents. It is people with the free time that participate, for example a lot of students. There are a lot of trans people unemployed and permanently disabled who do get involved, but it is very much people whose circumstances allow them in the Trans community and there is so much holding people back for example emotional stress and economic inequality.

¹⁶ Social capital has been linked to the success of democracy and political involvement. Robert D. Putnam, in his book *Bowling Alone* suggests that social capital facilitates co-operation and mutually supportive relations in communities (Putnam, R D, (2001) *Bowling Alone* New York: Simon Schuster). For further explanations of social capital also see Halpern, D, (2005) *Social Capital* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Table 10: Summary of themes relating to contextual factors

Contextual factors	Weighting
Location	High
Profession and workplace	High
Media	Medium
Effect on significant others	Medium
Type of activity being undertaken	Low
LGB and T communities and social capital	Low

Summary of appraisal

Fears:

- Fear of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia
- Fear of discrimination, prejudice and hate crime
- Fear of not being taken seriously or being rejected as a participant
- Fear of being 'outed' or exposed as LGB or T and/or being scrutinised publicly (notable for positions of power)

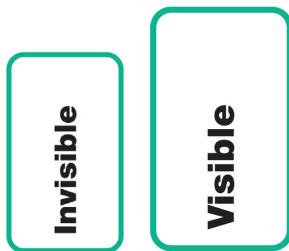
Context:

- Location: rural communities generally perceived to be less accepting and diverse, but exceptions to this; level of acceptance by local community may be more influential (urban and rural)
- Profession: concern that participation as a visible LGB or T person would negatively impact upon professional position and/or workplace relationships
- Negative stereotypes of LGB and T people in the media
- Social relationships: concern that participation may have a negative effect on significant others
- The type of activity being undertaken
- Lack of LGB and T social capital

Action

Interviewees were asked about their experiences of disclosing their sexual or gender identity when participating in public and political life. There were a multitude of complex feelings, attitudes and experiences associated with visibility, and the data varied considerably according to individual circumstances. The main considerations around visibility that affect an individual's decision to participate or not are outlined in this section.

Visibility



Interviewees had a range of thoughts and feelings with regards to visibility and the drivers behind decisions to be 'in' or 'out' were complex. The extent to which the sample as a whole could be said to be visibly participating in public or political life was not measurable, since for many interviewees disclosure varied with individual circumstance and the wider context surrounding the participation act in question. Broadly the data indicates that more LGB and T interviewees participated openly or visibly than 'hid' or kept their sexual or gender orientation invisible. The nature and extent of visibility, however, was extremely variable between interviewees. For some interviewees, being publically visible was never an issue and they would almost always decide to be out regardless of context.

I'm just who I am. Everybody who knows me knows I'm gay – in professional and public life. [G]

I'm not bothered about disclosing in social situations or workplace, it's fine, all the same. [L]

The reasons given for this approach were usually linked to personal and social values, i.e. feeling that being visible was important both at a personal level and for the wider LGB or T communities. On a personal level, visibility was associated with feeling at ease and being able to be comfortable 'being yourself', as opposed to having a hidden identity that could lead to feelings of shame or insecurity. In terms of benefitting the wider LGB and T community, it was believed that increased visibility could challenge negative stereotypes and present LGB and T people in a positive way.

Most interviewees made decisions related to visibility on a situation-to-situation basis, reflecting on the anticipated impact and appraising the consequences of being visible or invisible. These included consequences dependant on contextual factors and form of participation, for example, whether they were participating in an LGB and T specific capacity, whether questions around sexual or gender identity were likely to be asked and whether the participatory environment was welcoming and safe for LGB and T people.

Many felt that they would have to disclose their sexual or gender identity if faced with questions that would directly reveal their identities. Examples included being asked about

partners, children or work. For many interviewees these situations resulted in visibility because they did not want to actively hide or lie about their lives.

I do not always disclose when I deliver training, but if somebody asks me, I'm not going to lie ... I don't hide it. [L]

For some interviewees such situations made them choose to disclose their identity so as to represent and demonstrate the presence of the LGB and T communities and to challenge hetero-normative assumptions and the assumptions and stereotypes around LGB and T people and lifestyles.

However, for some interviewees questions about their private life prompted the decision not to participate, or the decision to participate but to be 'invisible' and actively hide sexual or gender identity. Equally, not being asked any such questions could lead to a decision to participate invisibly by opting out of offering the information voluntarily.

The other main factor influencing visibility when participating in public or political life is whether the involvement related in any way to LGB and T issues or, as many interviewees stated, whether sexual or gender orientation was 'relevant'. Most interviewees active in LGB and T specific ways were visible when doing so, but for interviewees taking part in more general or mainstream public or political activities disclosure was often less important (see Box 6).

For some interviewees, the view that visibility was only important when relevant to the activity being undertaken was sometimes connected to the opinion that in some cases too much of an issue is made of visibility, by both LGB and T and non LGB and T people.

I think visibility is important but ... one of the things my mum would say is, 'oh, gay people are so militant, they are so in your face'. And to an extent I would agree with her. Sometimes I feel like there is an invasion of others people's values, some people take that aggressive approach ... but if everyone was like that, I think it would be too much. [G]

Some interviewees believed that being too visible or 'in your face' in public or political life was not necessarily a positive thing, and that this was reflected by the way in which LGB and T people were sensationalised in the media for being visible. A common theme running through many interviews, therefore, was the importance of 'normalising' LGB and T people, and in this sense for some interviewees it was felt that the emphasis should be placed on creating conditions of *not having to be invisible*, rather than actively being visible.

Concerns around personal safety were also important for determining visibility in public and political participation. For some interviewees, a fear of experiencing negative consequences discouraged them from participating visibly. As a result, for these individuals, a decision was often made to participate invisibly or not at all.

Evidence shows that perceptions and thoughts about privacy also have an impact on participation. Some interviewees would make the decision to participate invisibly due to a desire to keep their sexual or gender identity private. In some cases not wanting to disclose what were felt to be personal details was the reason for not participating in public or political life.

Finally, some interviewees expressed the view that it should not only be 'out' LGB and T people that can make a difference in terms of improving equality, and that non-visible participation is equally valuable.

Box 6: Reflections on visibility in relation to LGB and T specific and non-specific participation – interviewee account

Generally [I only say that I am bi] to that extent it's relevant. I know the way it seems to me, there are people who treat their sexuality as if it's all about them, like a 'full-time bisexual person', that's the only interest in their personality, they're not interested in other dimensions.

I had a gay friend who ... would always talk about gay political causes. He was doing everything in that persona. I would say I'm always this kind of persona when I volunteer my time or my voice on the relevant issues. I'm a member of a social and political group for bisexuals ... and to some extent, like at pride marches, I engage with members of the public as a professional bisexual – as a bisexual person in a professional capacity. In those situations I disclose my bisexual identity but in most other political situations it's not an essential issue. I mean it is an essential part of me as much as my skin colour is, but it's not a signifier of my political views just like my skin colour isn't. It doesn't differentiate me from the mass of other members of public who may be gay, may be straight, may be trans, but don't see it as something that defines them entirely.

All of the considerations affecting visibility described above were reported by interviewees across all sub-communities. However, for some groups there were specific issues influencing visibility. For some transgender interviewees, decisions around visibility when participating were closely linked to the stage of transition they were at or the nature of their transgender identity and their physical appearance. Some interviewees – generally those that were not gender variant or were in the process of undergoing gender reassignment – expressed a lack of 'choice' around disclosure, due to their physical appearance. This was also felt to be the case where transition had occurred but the individual 'presented less well' in their lived gender than others who are able to live in 'stealth' mode.

I'm very open person, and because of my height and build, people are aware that I am Transgender, so I don't hide. [T]

For these transgender interviewees, participation in public and political life would almost always involve participating 'visibly' and the removal of this personal choice could lead to the decision not to participate at all.

For transgender interviewees who did feel their visibility was a choice, there were other complexities concerning decisions around visibility. Many would decide to be 'invisible' or 'stealth' as transgender when participating because of the desire to live completely in their adopted gender and to move away from being associated with the transgender community. Box 7 outlines some of these issues as explained by an interviewee.

Box 7: Privacy for transgender people – interviewee account

The trans thing is complicated. For some people it is a private thing, like for a cross-dresser who does that privately, for others it isn't. There's complexity around what people can and can't do and what is and isn't acceptable. I think trans people have a right to be open about being trans, but also have a right to keep their history private for their own security and peace of mind.

It is a strange thing – where people want to be 'out' as trans, people will ask them about whether they've had an operation and about the state of their genitals, which is private. There is disagreement about where this line is drawn.

Personally I think people have a right to privacy and to say 'it's none of your business', but equally it is their right to be public about what they're doing. They should have the right to be open and to say this was my past, but this is who I am now.

Issues around physicality were also important for lesbian, gay, bisexual and gender queer interviewees; particularly for those that dress, present or behave in ways associated with particular sexual or gender identities.

There were specific issues around visibility for bisexual interviewees; particularly when participating with an LGB and T specific organisation. For example one interviewee who was working for an LGB and T political magazine was out as gay, not as a bisexual, due to biphobia within the organisation.

I was out as gay, not bisexual, and the majority of people were LGBT anyway. There was quite a lot of biphobia there – a couple of people said they were bisexual away from the magazine but not there. [B]

Another interviewee had a similar experience. She was involved with the LGB and T branch of a trade union, but found that there were strong assumptions that she was lesbian, rather than bisexual or transgender, as described in Box 8. Difficulty in dealing with social assumptions about their identity could therefore make some people decide not to participate, or not to fully disclose their sexual or gender identity.

Box 8: Visibility with LGBT-specific participation – Interviewee account

When I joined the LGBT group, it had previously been just for lesbians and gay men, so there was a presumption I was lesbian. When I first met people at a national conference, some people took me under their wings – it was just assumed.

There were specific meetings for caucuses: for BME LGBT, trans LGBT, disabled LGBT, etc. early in the day. There were assumptions from the people showing me around that I wouldn't be going to them, and that irritated me – that people were making assumptions about me, albeit correct. I did not think that was very open or welcoming to these new minorities that had joined the group – trans or bi people. If I'd been bi I may have wanted to go to the bi meetings, but having had that reaction I might have been afraid to say so. It would mean I'd have to deliberately come out to them – if they'd said these meetings are open that would have been easier.

The data shows that these considerations around visibility are extremely important in determining whether an LGB or T person decides to participate in public or political life. For some interviewees, the thoughts and feelings associated with each of the points above would impact on their willingness to disclose their sexual or gender identity. They may lead to a decision to participate visibly or invisibly, or even to not participate at all.

There were many interviewees who made a decision not to disclose in their daily lives, for example with certain family members, colleagues, or when accessing services. For these individuals, the problems of visibility on a day-to-day basis often influenced their willingness to participate in public and political life more formally.

I do not think participating in political things would be any harder than being in the world in general. There is no difference between walking down the street and being at a rally. Being in the public eye at all is the problem rather than being active. [B]

Wider LGB and T visibility in Great Britain

Interviewees were also asked about the importance of visibility **more widely in society**. These comments relate to the influence of LGB and T visibility in the external environment, including LGB or T political representatives and role models, and the importance of sexual and gender identity monitoring.

Representation of LGB and T people in public and political life

As discussed in the appraisal section, the way in which LGB and T people are represented in public and political life was an important theme to emerge from the interviews. In particular, the data suggests that many LGB and T people do not feel that they are positively perceived by society, and in relation to this, the absence of LGB or T role models or representatives was cited as a key concern by many interviewees.

For most interviewees, these feelings were often specifically related to politics and the lack of LGB and T representation in local and central government. In relation to this, all interviewees were asked about the importance of having visible LGB or T politicians, councillors or MPs, and almost all interviewees believed it was highly important.

The reasons behind the need for LGB and T representation in politics were very similar to those associated with the importance of LGB and T more generally but, when thinking about politicians, interviewees emphasised the responsibility to represent the views and needs of LGB and T communities, which would otherwise not be recognised.

It's incredibly important, these are the people that are in the position of power; it sends a weak pathetic message to everyone else if they are not visible – to communities that might be marginalised. People of public influence should not remain closeted. It counter intuitively makes it into a massive issue. It's not actually that interesting, but if you go to lengths to hide it you make it into a massive deal when it needn't be – it causes massive negative attention. [L]

In addition to this, many interviewees argued that participation in public and political life would be easier for LGB and T people if there were existing role models to follow. According to the interviewees, this would reduce some of the barriers affecting their ability to get involved, specifically experiencing a negative public reaction and fears around personal safety or risks.

It's very important and points to them for doing it, you need everyone else to show that it's okay, you need role models and you need young people to say, 'you can get there on merit regardless of sexuality'. [L]

Interviewees spoke about the lack of openly LGB or T people in national and local politics and the negative influence this had on people's belief that they too might have a place in these structures. However, when pressed for examples of LGB and T people in formal political structures, some interviewees did note the existence of visible councillors, mayors etc., especially in more 'liberal' areas of the country such as inner-city London, Cambridge and Brighton.

As discussed in relation to these barriers, many interviewees believed that negative stereotypes in the media (examples included characters from the television programme *Little Britain*) made participation extremely difficult or stressful. It was therefore felt that the presence of official representatives would not only counter these negative stereotypes (by

positively representing the LGB and T communities) but also make it easier for other people to get involved and provide wider support for LGB and T people interested in politics.

However, many interviewees also acknowledged that in reality being an out or visible LGB or T politician would be challenging, both personally as an individual with a right to privacy and in terms of effecting real change. Some interviewees proposed that it may take a considerable number of LGB and T politicians to come out before we break down existing negative stereotypes and create a culture of acceptance.

Being an 'out' lesbian in politics must be pretty hard – there are still stereotypes [to tackle] like lesbians are 'butch' and gay men aren't capable of making decisions. Prejudices aren't admitted – but they are there. If I was a politician I'd probably be in the closet too. [L]

Interestingly, the few interviewees that did not believe that having visible LGB or T political representatives was particularly important had different reasons. Some adhered to the view discussed in the previous section that sexual or gender identity is essentially a private matter, and others were apathetic to the political landscape, and as such did not feel that it mattered.

I guess it's important to a certain type of person that actually follows politics strongly and would know whether people are out or not – but it wouldn't really affect me. I guess it raises awareness but only within a certain group who know about politics or who is out. A lot of people my age wouldn't follow politics enough to know if people are out and for them to raise awareness. [L]

Interviewees also had different views about whether they would engage any more or less with an LGB or T political representative. For some interviewees, having the shared experience of being LGB or T would make them feel more connected to a politician, but others claimed that they would be more likely to vote for an LGB or T politician in order to improve the balance of power.

In contrast, some interviewees did not feel that engagement would be any easier with an LGB or T politician because of the weight attached to specific political policies and personal values. Many of these interviewees still felt it was important to have more visible LGB or T politicians in order to represent the LGB and T community, but they did not think that this would impact upon their relationship with politics at a personal level.

No, it's more important what they represent – their policy. It's good that they are out, but that's not why I would engage with them. [L]

In terms of the weighting of these views, they were evenly spread between those people saying they would engage more with LGB or T politicians and those saying they would not engage any more.

Another interesting issue to emerge from the interviews was how LGB or T politicians would engage with non LGB and T people. For most interviewees, there was a gap between the ideal and real worlds: ideally, being LGB or T should not matter or impact upon a politician's relationship with the public, but in reality, due to widespread homo-, trans- and bi-phobia, it probably would be an issue for some people.

Monitoring sexual and gender identity

This issue of sexuality or gender identity monitoring divided the opinions of interviewees across all sub-communities and was connected to themes already discussed, including safety, visibility and privacy.

The majority of interviewees believed that monitoring should be conducted, and the benefits associated with it included: recognition of the LGB and T population, the opportunity to estimate their numbers, being able to understand their needs (to inform service provision) and to aid positive discrimination programmes.

However, many concerns were raised in relation to how and why this should be done. Many interviewees believed that gender or sexual identity monitoring was a positive thing, but that it would always be important to give people the option not to disclose their identity.

I think it's a really good idea but [there] should be a box that says 'prefer not to disclose'. [B]

I think we should try to get ... what the numbers are, I think we should try, but there are also reasons why people might not want to tell truth, e.g. if someone is married but actually thinks he's bisexual. [G]

This view was shared amongst interviewees from across all sub-groups, but some interviewees felt that there were limitations associated with providing the option not to disclose. They pointed out that it may mean the data provided by monitoring forms is only partial and not an accurate reflection of LGB and T population statistics. They therefore expressed doubts about the usefulness of such data.

People want evidence but at the same time there needs to be something written in to say these figures won't be accurate. [T]

Some other interviewees, although in favour of monitoring, had concerns about confidentiality. In particular, there were fears from some interviewees that the information gained would become 'public knowledge' or be shared between organisations. Such concerns about confidentiality were cited by interviewees who did not think monitoring should be conducted.

Well personally I would be worried that it's going to be kept on a database – it is a bit 'Big Brother'. [L]

Another common reason why some interviewees were not in favour of monitoring was because of the restrictive nature of the options on monitoring forms. For many, most notably bisexual and gender queer interviewees, gender and sexual identity were seen as too complicated to be recorded:

Ethnicity is obvious, age is obvious, sexuality and gender identity is not. I count myself extremely fortunate that I am in a body I can tolerate. I'm overweight but can cope ... I'm happy being called she, or female, and if people get it wrong I know it is due to how I present myself, it is just naïveté. The last thing you need is a tick box if you struggle with your identity. [Q]

Therefore, some interviewees did not object to the process of monitoring, but rather the limitations placed on people with complex or fluid gender and sexual identities. Similarly, a few interviewees objected to monitoring because they felt it would create divisions and barriers between artificial groups of people.

A notable number of interviewees were neither for nor against sexual and gender identity monitoring. These interviewees often expressed feeling 'torn' between being aware of the advantages of monitoring data and being concerned about sharing private information. This further reflects the diversity of opinion in relation to this theme.

Summary of visibility

Considerations around being 'invisible'

- Sexual/gender identity not relevant to the situation
- Concerns for safety, not wanting to discuss personal details or sexuality/gender identity
- Not being asked about sexual/gender identity

Considerations around being 'visible'

- Majority of LGB and T people who participate are out to some/all fellow participants – these are often LGB and T specific groups/activities
- Feeling that being visible in public and political life is important, desire to represent LGB and T community
- Being asked about partners/family
- Desire to challenge assumptions and stereotypes about LGB and T people
- Lack of choice due to physical appearance or presentation of self (especially important in the case of some transgender people)

Representation by others in public and political life:

- Most interviewees did not feel that LGB and T people are adequately represented in public and political life
- Most interviewees felt it is important to have visible LGB and T politicians, councillors and MPs to increase the representation, act as role models and challenge negative stereotypes
- A small number of interviewees did not feel it was important to have visible LGB and T politicians, councillors and MPs due to sexual and gender identity are private matters and feelings of apathy towards politics generally

Sexual and gender identity monitoring:

- Most interviewees believed that sexuality and gender monitoring should be conducted routinely to increase recognition of the LGB and T populations, estimate their number, inform awareness of LGB and T needs, and to aid positive discrimination programmes
- However there were also a number of concerns relating to monitoring including limitations of the data collected, concerns about confidentiality and the restrictive nature of monitoring questions, especially for queer people

Consequences of being active in public and political life

Active interviewees who worked their way through the model and made the decision to participate had a diverse range of experiences as a result of being in public and political life. This section will consider these experiences, both positive and negative, and the impact they have had on future decisions to participate. Unless otherwise stated, reference is made to those interviewees who had experiences as a result of participating **visibly**. These participants constituted the majority of the sample.

Negative consequences

X *Negative experience*

The main negative consequences of participation referred to by interviewees were discrimination, prejudice and abuse, and the fears associated with these. These were experienced across various types of participation.

In terms of actual experiences, interviewees reported various forms of **discrimination and homo-, bi-, or trans-phobic abuse**. These included both personal experiences and the observed experiences of 'out' LGB and T friends. Specific examples included being heckled out of a public meeting, receiving discriminatory or inappropriate comments and experiencing vandalism or other hate crimes.

I have had substantial verbal abuse over the years. I am not society's preferred view of 'femaleness'. [Q]

There is a lady who identifies as a lesbian and comes to the group with her partner but they have had a lot of problems where they live from doing that. For example, she had 'lesbian' written on her door and nasty comments made. [G]

For some interviewees, the impact of these experiences was to discourage them from participating or from disclosing their identity through concerns about experiencing the same treatment again in the future.

Because of people's reactions in the past, I don't take part currently. [T]

However, in a few cases a negative experience had the opposite effect. Some interviewees became more active as a result of experiencing discrimination through a desire to support other LGB or T people and to campaign for equality.

I just think if someone has a negative experience they then close up or back off. It either makes them stronger or weaker. [L]

In addition to actual discrimination or abuse, many interviewees experienced a sense of **fear as a result of participating**. This was believed to have a considerable effect on an individual's future willingness to participate, either at all or as visibly LGB or T. Specific examples of these fears included feeling exposed or unprotected when participating in LGB or T marches, or feeling afraid of being an 'out' member of a non-LGB and T group, due to witnessing the negative treatment of visibly LGB or T members.

These experiences caused a few interviewees to speculate that they were less likely to participate in future activities as visibly LGB or T, and some highlighted the importance of

making LGB and T people feel more secure when they are being active in public or political life, for example through a greater police presence at Pride marches.

Another negative consequence of participating reported by interviewees was people making assumptions about their lifestyle as a result of being visibly LGB or T. In contrast to direct discrimination or abuse, interviewees considered this to be a more covert form of hostility. Many linked it with the existence of negative social stereotypes associated with the LGB and T communities. Examples included experiencing inappropriate jokes about certain sexual acts as a result of being LGB or T.

Experiences in relation to these assumptions also included being bombarded with inappropriate questions as a result of participating as openly LGB or T. Box 9 presents an example of this, citing an account from one interviewee who disclosed her sexual identity and as a consequence faced invasive questions and assumptions.

Box 9: Disclosure of identity – interviewee account

The first time I went to a conference from my union branch there were other branch participants who didn't know I was gay. Myself and one other chap were the first to arrive from our delegation. We were chatting in a bar getting to know each other, then he asked me about my involvement with the union and it came out I was involved in LGBT work and was a lesbian. He was surprised and proceeded to bombard me with questions – he kept saying "I don't want to be rude, I want to understand", which I've experienced a lot, not just in the union but in all walks of life. People get on with you and then find out you're a lesbian and think they have the right to ask all sorts of personal questions which they would not ask a straight person. I'm not sure why they do that.

Some interviewees also experienced negative consequences of participating due to the **specific type of activity undertaken and the way it was organised**. An example of how a specific form of participation can lead to negative consequences was being involved in a local police group, due to the restrictions placed on members. This example is illustrated in Box 10.

Box 10: Case study of involvement with Police LGBT Group – interviewee account

The Police LGB and T coordinator came to a meeting at the gay and bi men's health centre to introduce herself; she wanted to set up an LGBT advisory group to the Police. I chaired the group for three years and am still involved now, but there were problems. It was meant to be led by the LGB and T community, but it became police-led and now there is a heterosexual Policeman chairing it, who is good but I'm not sure he understands the issues well enough, or people are comfortable with him leading it. LGB and T people also feel out-numbered as the presence by the Police (whom we are supposed to be advising) often outweighs representation by the community – it should be 70% community, 30% police maximum, but it is 60/40 most of the time. In some ways I don't feel comfortable with this as the majority of the police that attend are heterosexual and it can be uncomfortable talking about LGBT issues in that environment.

In addition to these difficulties developing, you have to apply to be a member of the group and this involves a quite probing application form and a CRB check; even those who were in the group at the time the recruitment policy to it changed had to then apply for a CRB check. We lost a lot of participants from the LGBT community because of this, especially older men; people who did not want to undergo a CRB and application because they were nervous about what would be dragged up from their pasts. I have [applied] because we need proactive people to be involved, but other people don't want to apply because they have to be CRB-checked and are concerned about bringing up past 'criminal' LGBT acts – a lot of people don't want to be scrutinised in this way.

These problems were unique to individual cases, but reflect some of the complex issues that can affect LGB and T communities, particularly issues around involvement in non LGB and T specific public activities.

In terms of sub-community analysis, there were also some specific negative consequences for bisexual and queer interviewees in relation to the reaction from the lesbian and gay communities. For example, some of these interviewees had taken part in lesbian and gay demonstrations or attended events at which they felt unwelcome or unaccepted as a result of being bi or queer.

Identifying as queer I wouldn't associate myself with the gay scene ... It is not necessarily queer friendly ... I feel quite alienated from the gay scene and politics. [Q]

Positive consequences

Positive experience

Despite the breadth of negative consequences associated with participating visibly, interviewees also reported many positive experiences. These generally concerned experiencing a positive reaction from others, which made participation seem worthwhile, or achieving progress on LGB or T equality issues. In almost all cases, these experiences reinforced the interviewees' willingness to participate in public and political life.

For many interviewees, receiving a positive reaction from others often led to feelings of increased confidence and acceptance. Positive reactions were experienced in various forms, including written or verbal feedback and more tangible effects, such as being asked to take on more senior or leading roles in groups or organisations.

I had a fantastic experience and people congratulated me for having the nerve to come out and I didn't get much hassle ... it was managed well. I sent them information about what trans was and the directors and staff were fantastic. [T]

Some of these positive reactions also challenged interviewees' assumptions about participation, particularly in terms of dissipating fear of negative reactions prior to getting involved (as discussed previously). For some interviewees, although a positive reaction from others was unexpected, it had a strong impact on their levels of confidence and increased their desire to participate further.

For the recent election in May I was out campaigning – helping in campaigns for our ward council. I think seeing that the world isn't as bad as the media makes it out to be made me feel energised to do more. [T]

Gaining new skills through participation was also cited as a positive consequence of participation for a few interviewees, both in relation to specific abilities such as public speaking or organising events, and more general social skills. Some interviewees also believed that participation had a direct positive effect on their mental wellbeing.

There are positive impacts on your mental health from getting involved in things – if you feel good about yourself it will improve your mental health. [L]

Interviewees also reported positive consequences through gaining a sense of achievement and making a tangible contribution to society. Often these interviewees were involved in LGB

and T specific activities, and participation was linked to a desire to instigate positive social change and improve the public representation of LGB and T people.

As a transgender person if you do good in the community, people appreciate the time you put into it and the transgender thing becomes secondary ... Voluntary work is a way of saying, 'I'm here for a good reason and I'm transgender' – so it makes it less of an issue. [T]

As with negative consequences, positive consequences were commonly experienced in relation to specific forms of political and public participation. In particular, interviewees involved with a trade union reported very positive experiences. Common perceptions were that unions were successful in pushing forward equality issues and therefore provided a welcoming space for LGB and T people to participate in.

I think certainly my biggest platform is ... the union route. It is very clear that whether you are a fire fighter, train driver, or in the police, your union allows you to go to a meeting as LGBT and know that people have heard what you have said. It's a way of getting used to people, hearing LGBT people and what they say (whether it's about LGBT or not) in the media. It gives you a voice, confidence, and that is the biggest training ground to be more politically active. [T]

Interviewees referred to unions as a strong source of support, and initial participation often led to deeper forms of involvement and the adoption of new roles over time. Other specific positive experiences included voluntary involvement with a political party, which often resulted in feelings of contributing to society and working towards positive social goals, and membership of community groups.

In some cases, interviewees experienced positive consequences associated with activities they had previously found hard to access, for example one transgender interviewee was involved with an LGB and T friendly church, and this was particularly positive given that she had previously been excluded from other churches. Her feelings and experiences of participating in this way are presented in Box 11.

Box 11: Involvement with a church group – interviewee account

I am a pastoral leader in the XX Church, and I get support from that. It was definitely an important step in transitioning because people were often unable to go to church – many of us have been rejected from mainstream churches for being seen as extremely sinful, or we were told we would be tolerated if we go to church but not accept communion.

Then being able to go to church and be accepted, being able to engage in the church community – I was very quickly encouraged to visit people at home, read in church, compose prayers, and later I even became a member of the board of directors. I thought 'wow!' I came from almost being rejected to being on the board of directors. That's very empowering to be in such a group, so I think the church was very important to me and still is.

Summary of consequences of being active in public and political life

Consequences of being active in public and political life

Negative consequences:

- **Experiences of discrimination:** including homo-, bi-, or trans-phobia. Examples included being subjected to verbal abuse, and experiencing exclusion (being heckled out of a public meeting).
- **Experiences of hate crime and/or violence:** including vandalism to private property. Such experiences were reported both personally and as observed experiences of LGB and T friends.
- **Increased fears as a consequence of visibility:** these were commonly associated with feeling unsafe or exposed whilst participating. Reports of these fears included feeling 'at risk' when participating in a non LGB and T specific activity because of the negative treatment of other 'out' participants.
- **Experiencing negative assumptions, stereotypes or questions:** interviewee accounts of these included exposure to inappropriate or offensive jokes, and being subjected to invasive questions as a result of being visible.

Positive consequences:

- **Experiencing a positive reaction from others:** examples included receiving positive written or verbal feedback, being promoted within an organisation to a more senior role, and having a tangible impact for others as a result of an activity (e.g. achieving a goal through campaigning activities).
- **Increased confidence and improved well being:** changes for individuals internally, in terms of improved emotional and mental well being, were often cited as positive consequences of participation. These feelings often challenged those fears commonly experienced prior to participation and reinforced willingness to participate in future activities.
- **A sense of achievement and contributing to a cause:** particularly for those interviewees undertaking LGB and T specific activities, which often induced feelings of progress on equality issues and of contributing to social change.
- **Gaining specific new skills:** including public speaking skills or social skills.

Reference groups

The research made use of reference groups at the end of the fieldwork phase to help validate the emerging findings and help interpret results. The material shared with the groups and participants can be found in Appendix 7 and the reflections from participants are briefly outlined here. The LGF, TREC and Equality Network Scotland all supported the study's methodology and its sampling frame. There was also broad agreement for the emerging findings, which they felt reflected their own knowledge of LGB and T people's experiences of participation. Expanding on and contributing to these findings, participants relayed the following messages.

- The concept of '**opting out**' is a very important one when looking at LGB and T participation¹⁷. LGB and T people very consciously make the choice to 'opt out' of certain activities, situations and services because of a real experience of, or fear of, discrimination, prejudice and rejection because of sexual or gender identity. This is compounded by a fear that if they do suffer discrimination or harassment, relevant authorities or other members of the public would not intervene or support them.
- Participation in public and political life is intrinsically linked to, and often situated in, the **local community**, which comprises neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces, local public services and organisations etc. Therefore, how these people are treated in these locations and spaces will determine the extent to which they are able, or willing, to participate in them.
- Few LGB and T people are **asked or encouraged to participate** and they are often excluded because others think 'you're not like us' and don't include them. However, the impact of face-to-face interaction between LGB and T and others can be revolutionary and make a big difference to preconceptions held about, and by, LGB and T people.
- Those who do participate openly as LGB or T will often be asked to '**let your people know**' that an avenue for participation is open to them. In this way, these people can be important for building networks and signposting people to participation opportunities. Such people, once known to others, can greatly simplify pathways into participation.
- When people invite participation or engagement from LGB and T communities they often approach established groups. Many of these groups are **social or peer groups, not consultative platforms**. As such they are not best placed to help people participate in political life and can in fact discourage people from further participation. Public agencies and organisations need to understand this when trying to engage with LGB and T people.
- Public agencies and organisations commonly reach out to local LGB and T networks, but not all areas in Great Britain have such networks in place. This can lead agencies to report that 'there isn't a local LGBT population', which may misrepresent reality. Where networks do exist at local level, it is either because of investment and capacity building, or the existence of active or supportive individuals and they can therefore disappear. We have to challenge the **perception that if a local area doesn't have an active LGB and T network or scene, there is no LGB and T population**. There is a requirement to

¹⁷ See research undertaken by Ecotec for the North West Development Agency, *Improving the region's knowledge base on the LGB&T population in the North West*, 2009, cited at <http://www.nwda.co.uk/areas-of-work/working-with-communities/equality-economic-inclusion.aspx>

engage with local LGB and T populations, but at present it is too easy for agencies and groups to suggest that there aren't any.

- There is a genuine **lack of role models** for LGB and T people in public and political life (particularly transgender people) and a lack of consensus about what makes a positive role model. Prominent and visible LGB and T people differ in their approach. Some suggest they are acting positively by not emphasising their sexual or gender identity, whereas others have felt it appropriate to openly advocate for LGB and T issues. All LGB and T people engaging visibly in public and political life have to try and find the balance between being an advocate and being seen as a single-issue campaigner.
- People in prominent positions worry that revealing sexual or gender identity might negatively affect their position and/or that they will be 'pigeon holed' because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. They are concerned about suddenly being seen as a **'spokesperson'** or as responsible for LGB and T issues, often feeling they are not the person best placed to take that role.
- The **media** have a significant impact on participation. Negativity and stereotyping surrounding LGB and T people notably affects participation – it reinforces fear of participation and can have a negative impact on the experience.
- Some experts believe that the LGB and T desire to participate and engage can be dampened by the **'gratitude factor'** (when people feel recent improvements to the rights of LGB and T people mean the situation is 'good enough') and/or a **lack of consciousness** about how far being LGB or T affects daily life, decision making and self-management.
- The notion of the **Big Society** currently being promoted by the Coalition Government will have an increasingly high profile over the coming years, and yet LGB and T people may be disadvantaged or discouraged by lack of previous experience or fear of discrimination, rejection etc. LGB and T people need to be encouraged to participate in the Big Society agenda and be involved from the outset.
- The localism agenda offers more opportunities for participation in public and political life. However, where LGB and T people do participate this could be invisible because of a **lack of monitoring**. As we don't know what the current LGB and T contribution is, we will not know whether it increases or decreases over time. It could also be hard to measure the impact of LGB and T participation in public and political life on individuals and communities as a whole without the tools to measure such outcomes.
- There is evidence regarding the **benefits of participation** for individuals and wider society, for example on health, mental health, well-being, employment etc. It is known that LGB and T people suffer greater inequality in these areas, yet these agendas are not joined up in the way they could be. Public agencies need to work together on shared outcomes.
- **Genuine accessibility and transparency**
Know who you are engaging with and whether this individual/organisation has an understanding of the LGB and T communities and will take individuals and issues seriously.

Recommendations

This section addresses the implications of the study findings for current and future practice. At the end of their interviews all participants were asked for their thoughts on what needs to be done to enable more LGB and T people to participate in public and political life. Reference group members made similar contributions. The recommendations presented in this section build on these ideas and the findings as a whole. Many of the recommendations to emerge from this research require partners to build on existing good practice and call for reinforcement of existing protections, suggesting they are both practicable and achievable. The recommendations are organised around the structure of the *pathways to action model*¹⁸ on page 23. Although they are presented in this way for structural clarity, it is likely that a number of specific actions would impact across the pathway.



Barriers

Despite there being no accurate figures available on the proportion of LGB and T people involved in public and political life, especially those people who are hidden from public services and civic life, there is general agreement that there is exclusion and under-representation of LGB and T people in public and political life.

- **Work should be undertaken to evaluate the costs to individuals and the state of this exclusion, and to establish the added value that could result from greater inclusion and participation in public and political life.**

LGB and T people need to feel that public or political appointments and related opportunities are open to them. Effective ways of doing this could include campaigns at a national level, raising awareness of the contributions that can be (and are) made by LGB and T communities, and tackling the direct or indirect exclusion of LGB and T communities.

- **The participation of LGB and T people in both wider and formal public and political life needs to be ‘normalised’ through national and local awareness campaigns, and assertive outreach to LGB and T communities by public and political bodies.**
- **Ensure that all mainstream mechanisms for community engagement, whether local authority decision making forums or formal consultations, are able to promote the direct engagement of LGB and T people.**

¹⁸ This model could be operationalised further if it were adapted and used as a planning tool at local level to tackle specific community priorities. The pathways to action model may also provide a framework from which to evaluate (ideally on an ongoing basis) the impact and outcomes of measures to address barriers facing the LGB and T communities. For the true scale of outcomes to be measured, we would concurrently need to collect clearer and more accurate information about the size and composition of the LGB and T population to understand the baseline from which we are working.

Personal
motivators

The pathways to action model shows the points at which individuals may take the decision not to participate.

- **Guidance and support for individuals and groups of stakeholders to remove barriers, motivate the desire to participate and support the management of consequences resulting from participation as LGB or T should be prepared and made available.**

Local authorities have an essential role to play in putting across positive messages to, and about, LGB and T people, and participation would be supported if local authorities were more welcoming to LGB and T communities.

- **Encourage local authorities to develop positive media and communication channels targeted at LGB and T participation.**

More generally, media campaigns aimed at improving public perceptions of LGB and T people will enhance personal motivations to participate.

- **Develop public media campaigns to improve public perceptions of LGB & T people.**

Monitoring of sexual and gender orientation is considered necessary with certain caveats.

- **Monitoring of sexual and gender orientation should be undertaken nationally and locally in order to establish both the size of the LGB and T population and the outcomes of efforts to address gaps in LGB and T participation.**
- **Explanation of why monitoring data is useful and why the inclusion of LGB and T populations in public and political life is important are necessary to encourage greater enthusiasm for participation.**

Opportunities
presented

The GEO has responsibility across government for sexual orientation and transgender equality.

- **Work is needed at the national and local level to ensure public agencies recognise the existence of their LGB and T populations and are equipped to meet their duty to engage with these communities and stakeholders.**

Public agencies will require support to increase opportunities to participate for LGB and T people. Specific suggestions in this respect included raising the profile of good practice and targeting rural areas where opportunities may be less easily accessed.

- **Guidance should be produced and circulated to public agencies which documents how to support the positive engagement of LGB and T citizens. This would include information about where and how to appropriately access local LGB and T communities or stakeholders, differences between and within the communities and examples of good practice in their engagement.**

Government can play a role in creating and maintaining networks of support for LGB and T people involved in public and political life. These networks could be both between individuals (for example, for LGB and T councillors) and between organisations.

- **Strengthening and maintenance of national and regional infrastructures to support LGB and T engagement is necessary.**
- **Consideration should be given to the equitable distribution of any resources to ensure support for high quality participation from across all four communities.**

In addition to providing support for local and regional LGB and T involvement there is a call for more direct consultation between these groups and national and local Government.

- **Consultation mechanisms between Government and local and regional LGB and T groups should be strengthened and used consistently.**

Less frequent participation of LGB and T individuals in *non* LGB and T specific activities suggests there is a gap in mainstream participation which needs to be narrowed.

- **Further research is required to examine this disparity and ensure representation of LGB and T people within mainstream public and political life does not worsen.**

Fears

Fear of abuse, discrimination, prejudice or reprisal because of sexual or gender identity is the most prevalent barrier reported to LGB and T people participating in public and political life, at both the local and national level.

- **Clearer information on LGB and T rights and protections should be produced and made available.**
- **Government should provide leadership in the implementation of existing and new LGB and T rights and protections against discrimination and abuse on the basis of sexual or gender identity.**

- **More overt support for and enforcement of LGB and T rights from government and public bodies is necessary.**
- **Mechanisms to uphold existing protections for LGB and T people via guidance covering the representation of sexual or gender identity in the media need to be strengthened.**

There continue to be organisations within the public realm that have a negative impact upon the willingness and confidence of LGB and T people to participate. Negative experiences whilst at school and/or in the workplace generate a fear of visibility that acts as a barrier to participation.

- **Equality and diversity training in educational and workplace settings needs to be appraised and strengthened in light of these findings.**

Context

A number of the recommendations already reported will support development of public and organisational contexts that promote LGB and T participation. However, restrictions on the rights of citizens in one area of life, because of their sexual or gender identity, impacts upon the will and confidence of LGB and T people to participate more formally in their communities and civic life.

- **Legal and statutory equality between LGB and T citizens and non LGB and T citizens is an important influencing factor on engagement with the wider community and mainstream society. Efforts must continue to ensure legal parity through legislation and its application.**

Invisible Visible

LGB and T people are a diverse group and the capacity to be visible regarding one's sexual and gender identity can be a fluid characteristic that needs to be considered in light of other personal characteristics and identities.

- **Further research is required to understand the effects of these characteristics on visibility and subsequent access to public and political life.**

Social networks including family, friends, carers and local community networks impact on the ability of LGB and T people to be 'out' and visible. Some LGB and T people lack personal

support and social capital, with people having vastly varying access to local support networks and friends that offer social capital.

- **Research is needed to explore how different forms of social capital can be nurtured within the LGB and T community, and how social capital can be harnessed to facilitate and aid greater levels of participation by LGB and T individuals and groups.**

Government has a role to play in promoting more opportunities for LGB and T individuals to work 'visibly' in public and political organisations.

- **Guidance to support positive role models in public and political life should be developed including appropriate mechanisms to offer protections against unwarranted public scrutiny.**

 **Positive experience**  **Negative experience**

There are many examples of positive experiences among LGB and T individuals when participating in public and political life and. Furthermore, fears or negative preconceptions about visible engagement are not always born out in reality.

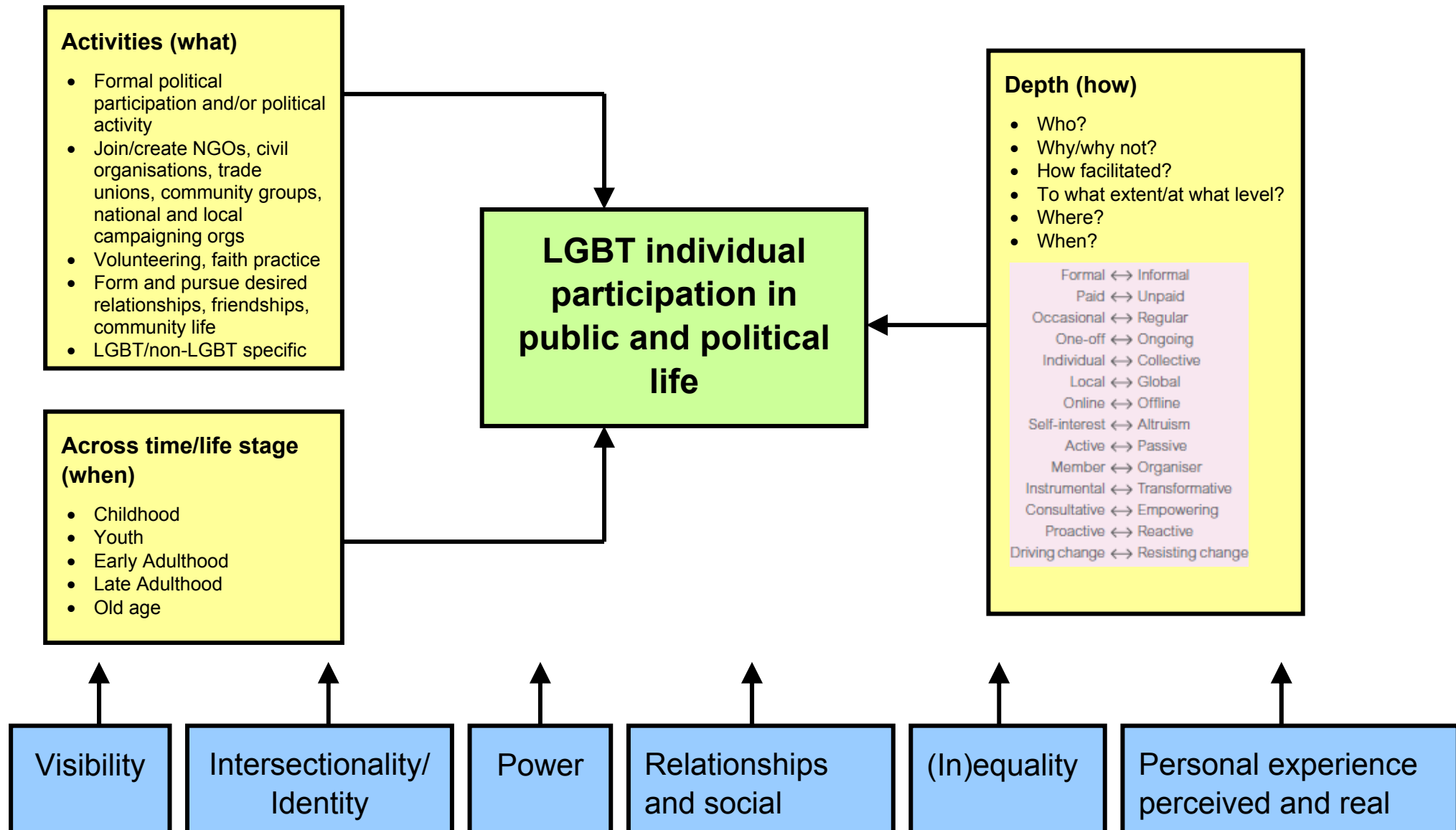
- **Positive experiences of participation reinforce and increase the chances that an LGB or T individual will continue and/or broaden their participation. These should be captured and utilised in promotional campaigns.**

Table 10 on the following page summarises these recommendations by returning to the original data. The table ranks each recommendation according to the overall weighting, or strength, with which the ideas behind it appear in interviewee accounts. The table therefore presents priorities for action from the perspectives of LGB and T people.

Table 11: Summary of recommendations for supporting participation

Recommendations for supporting LGB and T participation	
Recommendations	Weighting
Promote more LGB and T representation within public and political organisations	High
Enforce existing legislation and push for legal parity for LGB and T people	High
Develop positive media campaigns	High
Improve education around participation and LGB and T issues more generally	High
Raise awareness of opportunities for LGB and T people and promote role models	High
Provide more support for local and regional LGB and T groups	High
Consult more with local and regional LGB and T groups	High
Increase routes into participation for LGB and T people	Medium
Enable support networks for LGB and T people and organisations	Low
Implement equality and diversity training	Low
Encourage local authorities to send out a positive message	Low
Learn from existing good practice	Low
Raise political awareness of LGB and T people through schemes and interventions	Low

Appendix 1 – Conceptual framework for research and analysis



Appendix 2 – Interview guides

LGB and T: GEO Study Interview Guide – Active Interviewees

Background

- Introduce yourself and your role in the project
- Thank them for their input to the project
- Ask if they have had the participant information and if they understand what we are doing?
- The interview will last approximately 30-40 minutes
- All responses will be anonymised and information reported confidentially
- If, during the interview, there are any questions you would prefer not to answer, let us know and we can move on
- Similarly, if there are any terms you think are inappropriate to you, or you have a preferred term you would like us to use during the interview, let us know.
- *Check the information we have about them and their identity is correct. stress again, all of this information will be kept confidential*

Prior to this interview you gave us some information about yourself. You identified as.....**interviewer to relay information given**.....is this correct?

- Do you have any questions about this research or OPM before we begin?
- Have you seen the definitions of *public participation* and *political participation* that we are using as a baseline – *mention a few of the activities from each (see below)*
- *Into first question...*

Info if needed:

The Government Equalities Office or GEO has commissioned OPM to undertake research into the experiences of, and barriers to, participation in public and political life for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans¹⁹ people. In order to meet their commitment to improving equality of representation and involvement in public and political life, the GEO would like to better understand:

- the extent to which LGB and T sub-communities are under-represented in public and political life,
- what the barriers are to participation, and

¹⁹ Please note the EHRC's definition of "trans" is being used by the GEO. The terms 'trans people' and 'transgender people' are used as an umbrella terms for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their birth sex, including transsexual people (those who intend to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process of gender reassignment to live permanently in their acquired gender), transvestite/cross-dressing people (those who wear clothing traditionally associated with the other gender either occasionally or more regularly), androgynous/polygender people (those who have non-binary gender identities and do not identify as male or female), and others who define as gender variant.

- how those barriers could be overcome.

Terminology

By *public participation* we mean things like:

- Being a member of a local decision making body;
- Being active in a local or national campaigning or solidarity organisation e.g. community groups, lobbying/advocacy services, trade unions.

By *political participation* we mean things like:

- Undertaking at least one of the following activities:
 - contacting a councillor, local official, government official or MP (other than in relation to personal issues);
 - attending a public meeting or rally;
 - taking part in a demonstration or signing a petition.
- Contacting an MP or MSP, government official or media outlet about a government action you felt was harmful or unjust.

Section A: participation in public and political life

A1. What experience, if any, do you have of participating in public or political life in the ways defined above? **(If none go to question A5)**

A1a: What motivated you to participate in this way?

A2. How far do you disclose your identity to others when participating? **(If not at all go to A4)**

A3. Could you please describe a personal experience of participating in public/political life?

Probes if required:

- What was your route into this participation? i.e. what form this took; was it face to face contact, web-based, paper based, a group or one on one setting...?
 - What were your feelings about being open or visible whilst participating?
 - Did you have any preconceptions about the experience you would have because you were open about your sexuality/gender identity?
 - Why did you have these expectations?
 - How far were your expectations correct?
 - How did the experience leave you feeling?
 - Did this experience impact on your future participation in public/political life? If so, how? **(now go to question A5)**

A4. Could you briefly describe a personal experience of participation without being visible as an LGBT person?

Probes:

- What was your route into this participation? *Probe what form did this take i.e. was it face to face contact, web-based, paper based, a group or one on one setting...?*
- What led to your decision not to disclose your identity?
- Did you have any preconceptions about the experience you would have if you were open about your sexuality/gender identity?
- Why did you have these expectations?
- How far were your expectations correct?
- How did this experience leave you feeling?
- Did this experience impact on your future participation in public/political life? If so, how?

A5. Do there are specific contexts which affect people's willingness to participate in public as visible LGB & T people?

If yes why do you think this is?

Probes (only if not forthcoming):

- *Urban/rural locations or country*
- *Professional roles*
- *Life roles i.e. as parents, carers etc*

A6. What barriers, if any, do you believe there are to LGB & T people increasing their participation in public/political life?

A7: To what extent might barriers be different to those that may be faced by non-LGBT people?

A7. What routes, if any, into public/political participation do you think there are for LGBT people?

- What are these?
- To what extent are these different to the routes for non-LGB & T people?

Section B: Visibility

B1. How important is it to you to be 'out' or visible in public or political spheres?

- Why?
- What might the positive/negative impacts be?
- If yes, are there some contexts where this is more important to you than others?

B2. Do you think the degree to which an LGB or T person feels able to be 'out' or visible changes over the course of their life?

(Probes only if necessary as examples):

- *Personal influencing factors [age, relationships]?*
- *External influencing factors/ events i.e. changes in the law?*
- *Geographical location*

B2a: What might be the effect on people's levels of participation?

B2b: Have any such changes impacted on your personal levels of participation throughout your life?

B3. As an LGB or T person, how important do you feel it is important to have 'out' or visible politicians, councillors, MPs in the political sphere?

- Why?

B4: Would you elect or engage with visible politicians and councillors any more or less because they were visible?

B5: Do you feel a politician, councillor or public figure being visible might affect their relationships with non LGBT members of the public? If so to what extent?

B6. How far do you think that sexuality or gender identities are essentially private matters?

- Why?

B7. How far do you think sexuality/gender identity monitoring should be conducted routinely as with ethnicity, age, disability monitoring?

- Why?

Section C: Policy and Practice Recommendations

C1. How far do you think there should be **more** participation by LGB & T people in public and political life?

C2: Is it important that people participate in public and political life as an out/visible LGBT person?

C3: How far might the form this participation takes matter? i.e. what are the advantages/disadvantages of ...

- National
- Local
- face to face contact,
- web-based participation,
- paper based surveys i.e. census,
- group or one on one engagement...?

C4. Do you have any suggestions which might help support the participation of LGB & T people in public and political life?

C5: What could the Government Equalities Office do to help?

C6. Do you have any final points about LGB & T communities and their experiences?

Interview Payment

We would like to make a payment of £20 as a thank you for your time. We would like to pay you via electronic transfer directly into your bank or a similar account. For this we need your:

- Bank, sort code, account number and name of the account holder.

Alternatively we can send a cheque via secure mail for which we need your address.

Reporting

At the end of the project in a few months time OPM will write a report to the GEO outlining the findings from the research and our policy recommendations. The GEO will be putting this report on their website.

We cannot say when they might do this so we at OPM will also be composing a short bullet point summary of the key findings and points raised by participants and we will email this to all who have taken part and would like to receive it.

Would you like to? Do we have your email address?

THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME AND PARTICIPATION

LGB and T: GEO Study Interview Guide – *Non-active interviewees*

Background

- Introduce yourself and your role in the project
- Thank them for their input to the project
- Ask if they have had the participant information and if they understand what we are doing?
- The interview will last approximately 30-40 minutes
- All responses will be anonymised and information reported confidentially
- If, during the interview, there are any questions you would prefer not to answer, let us know and we can move on
- Similarly, if there are any terms you think are inappropriate to you, or you have a preferred term you would like us to use during the interview, let us know.
- *Check the information we have about them and their identity is correct. stress again, all of this information will be kept confidential*
- Prior to this interview you gave us some information about yourself. You identified as.....**interviewer to relay information given**.....is this correct?
- Do you have any questions about this research or OPM before we begin?
- Have you seen the definitions of *public participation* and *political participation* that we are using as a baseline – *mention a few of the activities from each (see below)*
- *Into first question...*

Info if needed

The Government Equalities Office or GEO has commissioned OPM to undertake research into the experiences of, and barriers to, participation in public and political life for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans²⁰ people. In order to meet their commitment to improving equality of representation and involvement in public and political life, the GEO would like to better understand:

- the extent to which LGB and T sub-communities are under-represented in public and political life,
- what the barriers are to participation, and
- how those barriers could be overcome.

²⁰ Please note the EHRC's definition of "trans" is being used by the GEO. The terms 'trans people' and 'transgender people' are used as an umbrella terms for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their birth sex, including transsexual people (those who intend to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process of gender reassignment to live permanently in their acquired gender), transvestite/cross-dressing people (those who wear clothing traditionally associated with the other gender either occasionally or more regularly), androgynous/polygender people (those who have non-binary gender identities and do not identify as male or female), and others who define as gender variant.

Terminology

By *public participation* we mean things like:

- Being a member of a local decision making body;
- Being active in a local or national campaigning or solidarity organisation e.g. community groups, lobbying/advocacy services, trade unions.

By *political participation* we mean things like:

- Undertaking at least one of the following activities:
 - contacting a councillor, local official, government official or MP (other than in relation to personal issues);
 - attending a public meeting or rally;
 - taking part in a demonstration or signing a petition.
- Contacting an MP or MSP, government official or media outlet about a government action you felt was harmful or unjust.

Please do think about your own definitions of public and political participation too – this is just a starting point to guide us.

Section A: participation in public and political life

A1. What experience, if any, do you have of participating in public or political life in the ways defined above?

A2. If none, are there any particular reasons that this is the case?

A3. What are your thoughts and general feelings about the participation of LGBT people in public and political life?

Probe either as 'visible' or 'non-visible' LGBT people

A4. Do you participate in other more general ways? *for example* in community groups, sports groups, church groups, social events

- *If yes, are these LGBT specific activities or not?*

A5: Are you aware of such activities in your area (either public or political in nature)?

- Would you consider getting involved in any of these?
- Why/why not?

A6: How do you feel about the participation of LGBT people in public and political life? Do you consider it important /not?

A7: How far do you disclose your LGBT identity when participating in other ways for example in the accessing of public services, in the workplace...?

- Why?
- What are your preconceptions?
- Are these normally proved correct?
- What are your feelings about this?
- Does this affect your participation in any way?

A8: How far do you disclose your LGBT identity in face to face or general public interactions?

- Why?
- What are your preconceptions?
- Are these normally proved correct?
- What are your feelings about this?
- Does this affect your participation in any way?

A9. Do you feel there are specific contexts which might affect people's willingness to participate in public/political life as visible LGB & T people?

If yes why do you think this is?

Probes as examples (only if not forthcoming):

- *Urban/rural locations or country*
- *Professional roles*
- *Life roles i.e. as parents, carers etc*

A10: What might you imagine are the routes into participation for LGBT people?

A11. What barriers, if any, do you believe there are to LGB & T people's participation in public/political life?

A12: To what extent might barriers be different to those that may be faced by non-LGBT people?

A13: Do you have any thoughts about what it means to participate 'politically' or 'publically', as an LGBT person?

Section B: Visibility

B1. How important is it to you to be 'out' or visible in public or political spheres?

- Why?
- What might the positive/negative impacts be?

- If yes, are there some contexts where this is more important to you than others?

B2. Do you think the degree to which an LGB or T person feels able to be 'out' or visible changes over the course of their life?

(Probes only if necessary as examples):

- *Personal influencing factors [age, relationships]?*
- *External influencing factors/ events i.e. changes in the law?*
- *Geographical location*

B2a: What might be the effect on people's levels of participation?

B2b: Have any such changes impacted on your personal levels of participation throughout your life?

B3. As an LGB or T person, how important do you feel it is important to have 'out' or visible politicians, councillors, MPs in the political sphere?

- Why?

B4: Would you elect or engage with visible politicians and councillors any more or less because they were visible?

B5: Do you feel a politician, councillor or public figure being visible might affect their relationships with non LGBT members of the public? If so to what extent?

B6. How far do you think that sexuality or gender identities are essentially private matters?

- Why?

B7. How far do you think sexuality/gender identity monitoring should be conducted routinely as with ethnicity, age, disability monitoring?

- Why?

Section C: Policy and Practice Recommendations

C1. Do you think LGBT people are adequately represented in public and political life? Why?

C2: What do you think about the way in which LGBT people are represented? i.e. is representation accurate, appropriate?

Probe

- In public life?
- In political life?
- Do you have any suggestions for how the **representation** of LGBT people might be improved?

C3: How far do you think there should be **more** participation by LGB & T people in public and political life?

C4: Is it important that people participate in public and political life as an out/visible LGBT person?

C5. Do you have any suggestions which might help support the **participation** of LGB & T people in public and political life?

C6. Do you have any final points about LGB & T communities and their experiences?

Interview Payment

We would like to make a payment of £20 as a thank you for your time. We would like to pay you via electronic transfer directly into your bank or a similar account. For this we need your:

- Bank, sort code, account number and name of the account holder.

Alternatively we can send a cheque via secure mail for which we need your address.

Reporting

At the end of the project in a few months time OPM will write a report to the GEO outlining the findings from the research and our policy recommendations. The GEO will be putting this report on their website.

We cannot say when they might do this so we at OPM will also be composing a short bullet point summary of the key findings and points raised by participants and we will email this to all who have taken part and would like to receive it.

Would you like to? Do we have your email address?

THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME AND PARTICIPATION

Appendix 3 – Screening questionnaire: LGB and T recruitment

Thank you for expressing an interest in this research.

We will be using this research to explore Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans experiences of participation in public and political life. We will investigate whether barriers exist to participation, how we might overcome these barriers and what the appetite is for greater levels of participation amongst Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans people.

In undertaking this research we are very aware that both between and within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans communities there is great diversity which produces great variation in experience.

To ensure we hear from and represent all groups, we need to ask potential interviewees some basic questions to gather a little background information; this information is only gathered to help us ensure we fairly represent each group across the available number of interviews.

We take very seriously our responsibilities to people who take part in research and will protect your anonymity; information will be kept confidential and will only be used by the immediate project team within OPM.

Should you go on to undertake an interview, the researcher you speak to will take a look at this information to help them tailor the interview so the questions they ask are relevant to you.

Essential information:

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Heterosexual
- Other, please state:

How would you describe your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Other

Additional comments:

Is this the same gender description as that recorded on your birth certificate?

- Yes

- No
- Don't know

How would you describe the location in which you live?

- Urban (please include small towns and suburbs in this category)
- Rural

Additional information:

What age bracket currently describes you?

- 16-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- 51-65
- 65+

In which country of Great Britain do you live?

- England
- Wales
- Scotland

Do you consider yourself to have any disabilities?

- Yes

Comments:

- No

Do you identify as part of a specific faith?

- Yes

Comments:

- No

How would you describe your ethnic origin?

White

British

Irish

Other

Mixed

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other

Asian or British Asian

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Any other

Black or Black British

Caribbean

African

Any other

Chinese or ethnic group

Chinese

Other ethnic origin

Not stated

Additional comments:

Appendix 4 – Full list of recruitment methods

Publications

Advertisements were placed in the June/July issues of:

- G3 Magazine
- Attitude Magazine
- Local Government First Magazine

Websites and online discussion forums

The following online groups and forums were contacted and used to advertise the research:

- Bi Community News
- Gingerbeer forum
- Queer UK
- BME LGB and T groups (including Safra for Lesbian Asian women, Imaan for Gay Muslim men)
- TransScotland
- Gay Dads
- Western Boys
- Western Girls
- Gay Youth UK
- Gay Cornwall
- LGBT BME Devon
- Gay Bournemouth
- Gay West
- queeryouth.org.uk

Other organisations

- 20 Rural/Welsh/Scottish University LGB and T groups: Aberdeen, Cardiff, St Andrews, Bangor, Aberywyth, Sussex, Brighton, Falmouth, Lampeter, Stirling, Strathclyde, Derby, Glasgow, Staffordshire, Keele, Bristol, Chichester, Lancashire, Paisley, Chichester, Bristol, Falmouth
- Rural LGB and T groups: LGBT Network Glasgow, Castro Café Glasgow, Transmen Scotland, LGBT Centre Dumfries and Galloway, Lancashire LGBT Centre, Bournemouth Over the rainbow centre, Edinburgh LGBT Centre for health and wellbeing

Appendix 5 – Participant information sheet

Researching the experiences of, and the barriers to, participation in public and political life, for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender sub-communities

About the Government Equalities Office

The Government Equalities Office (GEO) is the department responsible for equalities legislation and policy in the UK. The department was created by Parliament in October 2007. The GEO aims to improve equality and reduce discrimination and disadvantage for all, at work, in public and political life, and in people's life chances. The GEO has particular responsibility for and takes the lead on **gender issues** and on **sexual orientation and transgender equality policy**. This includes responsibilities for the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 which protect people from being discriminated against because of their sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services; the protections under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 for transgender people in employment, goods and services and across Government, and through the forthcoming Equality Bill to ensuring the continued protection for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people against discrimination.

About us

OPM is an **independent**, employee owned organisation that undertakes research to help develop public services. We work with organisations across local and central government, health, social care, children's services, the police and community safety, education, the media, the voluntary sector and commerce.

All the people we work with share a common commitment: a determination to improve the well-being of the communities they serve. You can learn more about OPM and the project team members on our dedicated website for this project, listed in the 'Contact Us' section below.

About this project and the interview

The GEO has commissioned OPM, in partnership with the Consortium of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Voluntary and Community Organisations (the Consortium), to undertake research into the experiences of and barriers to participation in public and political life for LGB and T people. In order to meet their commitment to improving equality of representation and involvement in public and political life, the GEO would like to better understand:

- the extent to which LGB and T groups are under-represented in public and political life,
- what the barriers are to participation, and
- how we might overcome these barriers

The themes we will be exploring in the interview come from the project brief and key themes, previous LGBT research, our interviews with LGBT organisations and experts and our internal knowledge of this subject and research.

Using the basic information we have about you from the recruitment stage, your researcher will do their best to tailor the interview questions to you individually. The interview will be approximately 30-40 minutes long and will be open and flexible. The interview will explore your experiences and perceptions of **public and political participation**, your views on **LGB and T visibility** and **any recommendations you would like to make** to the Government Equalities Office.

You don't need to do anything specifically to prepare. However, if you would find it helpful, you may wish to think about what ways, if any, you have been active in public or political organisations and to reflect on your experiences. Please keep in mind that it is also completely okay for the purposes of this interview if you have not been active in public or political organisations in the ways given below.

By public participation we mean things like:

- Being a member of a local decision making body;
- Being active in a local or national campaigning or solidarity organisation, such as community groups, lobbying/advocacy services, trade unions.

By political participation we mean things like:

- Undertaking at least one of the following activities:
 - contacting a councillor, local official, government official or MP (other than in relation to personal issues);
 - attending a public meeting or rally;
 - taking part in a demonstration or signing a petition.
- Contacting an MP or MSP, government official or media outlet about a government action you felt was harmful or unjust.

If, during the interview, there are any questions that you would prefer not to answer just let the interviewer know and he or she will move on. Similarly, if the interviewer uses any terms that you think are inappropriate for you, and/or you have a preferred term you would like us to use during the interview, please let us know.

Our values and practice

OPM is made up of enthusiastic members who care about people and public services and work within a strong ethical framework.

We take very seriously our responsibilities to those who are part of any research we undertake. **We are assuming implied consent to use the information you give us in our report if you agree to an interview. We will protect your anonymity and anything you tell us during the interview will be reported confidentially and will not be directly attributed to you as an individual.** If for any reason you wished to be acknowledged when we report the research we would still ensure we have obtained your explicit permission.

Our team and skills

The team we have put together for this research understand its importance and the sensitivities that surround the topic. We have a wide range of methodological expertise and the specialist knowledge and experience to ensure it is successful. Many team members have a personal, as well as professional, interest in this work and they will do all they can to ensure that those who take part know their contributions are appreciated and invaluable to the project.

Contacting us

To ask any questions beforehand or if you need to contact us about anything related to your interview, please call or email Kate Allman on 0207 239 7891 or kallman@opm.co.uk

To learn more about the project and our project team:

<http://www.opm.co.uk/lgbt>

To learn more about the GEO:

<http://www.equalities.gov.uk/>

To learn more about OPM:

<http://www.opm.co.uk/>

Appendix 6 – Sample breakdown tables

Numbers of active/non active, LGB and T interviewees:

	Active Affiliated	Active Non Affil	Non Active	Totals
Lesbian	5	8	7	20
Gay	10	7	5	22
Bisexual	4	6	3	13
Transgender	8	8	5	21
Other	0	3	0	3
	27	32	20	79

Age of interviewees:

Age	Active Affiliated	Active Non Affil	Non Active	Totals
16-25	4	5	3	12
26-35	4	13	8	25
36-50	16	10	4	30
51-65	2	2	3	7
66+	0	2	2	4
Not stated	1	0	0	1
	27	32	20	79

Regions of interviewees:

Region	Active Affiliated	Active Non Affil	Non Active	Totals
England	16	23	16	55
Scotland	8	7	3	18
Wales	3	2	1	6
	27	32	20	79

Ethnicity of interviewees:

Ethnicity	Active Affiliated	Active Non Affil	Non Active	Totals
White British	20	23	15	58
White Irish	1	0	1	2
White Other	0	6	3	9
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	0	0	0	0
Mixed White & Black African	1	0	1	2
Mixed White & Asian	1	0	0	1

Experiences of and barriers to participation in public and political life for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people

Mixed Other	2	0	0	2
Asian or British Asian	0	1	0	1
Black or Black British	1	2	0	3
Chinese	1	0	0	1
	27	32	20	79

Religiosity of interviewees:

Religion	Active Affiliated	Active Non Affil	Non Active	Totals
No	16	22	13	51
Yes	9	10	7	26
Not stated	2	0	0	2
	27	32	20	79

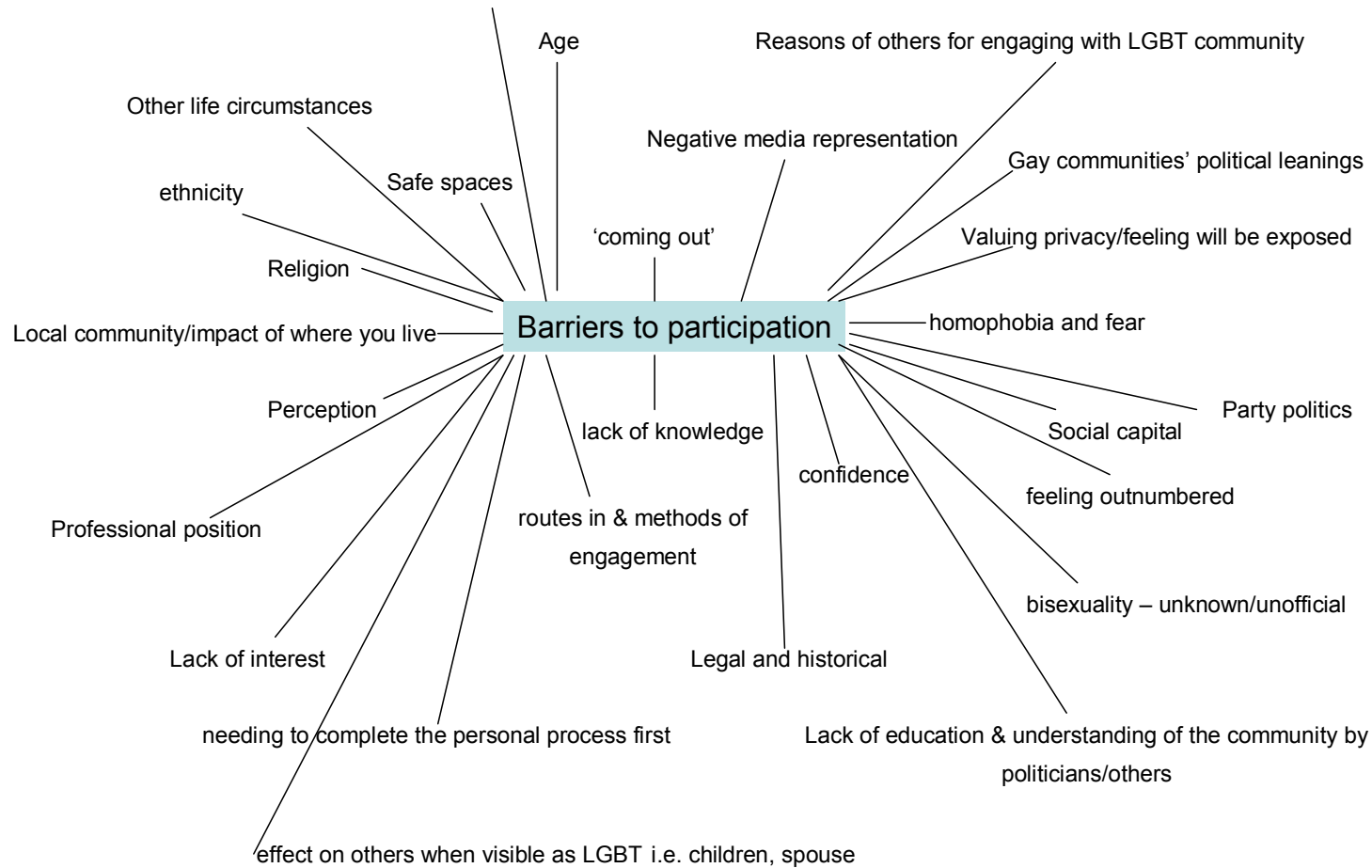
Disabilities of interviewees:

Disability	Active Affiliated	Active Non Affil	Non Active	Totals
No	16	22	15	53
Yes	9	8	7	24
Not stated	2	0	0	2
	27	30	22	79

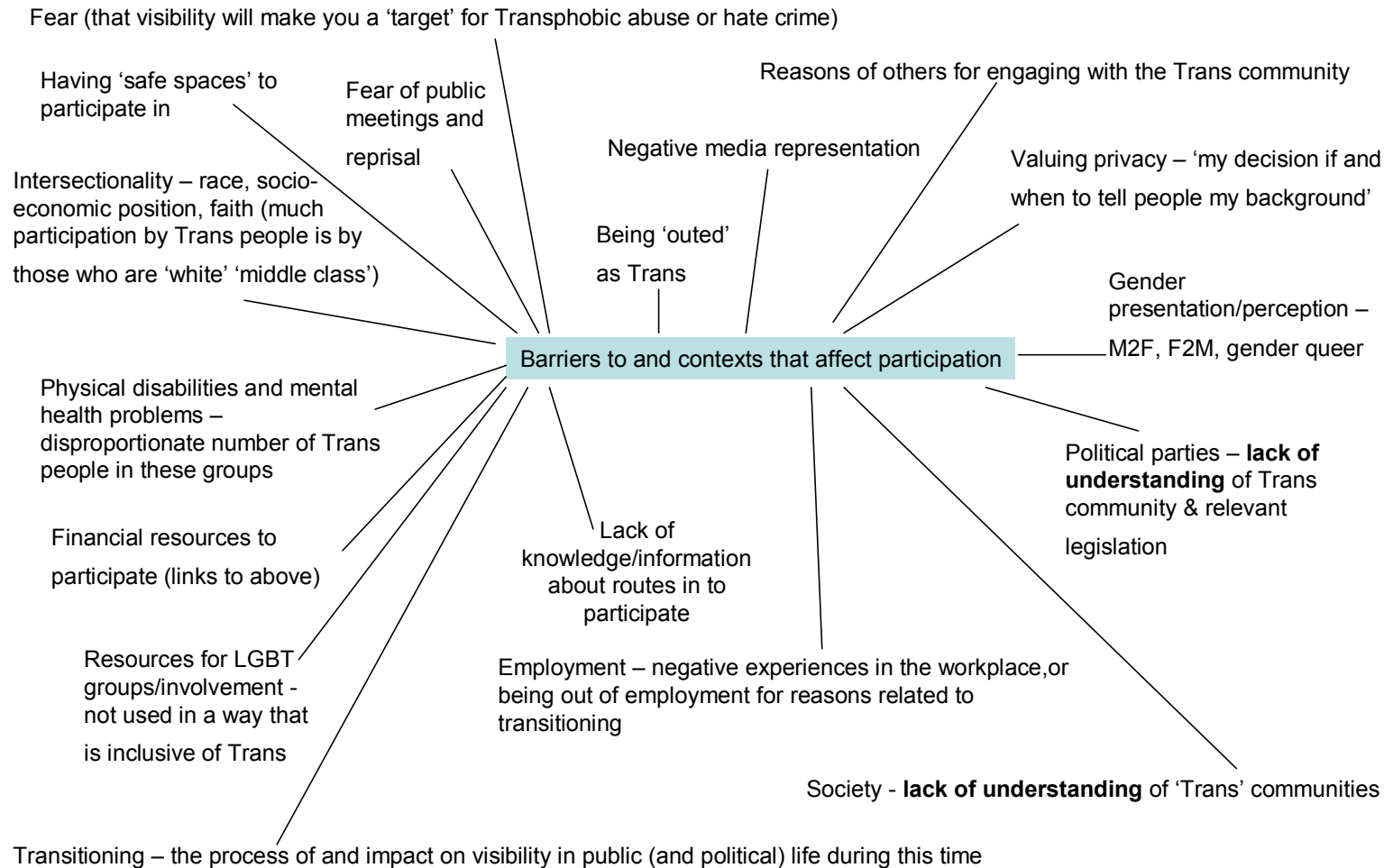
Appendix 7 – Reference group materials

Findings

Fear that visibility will make you a 'target' for other reasons i.e. redundancy



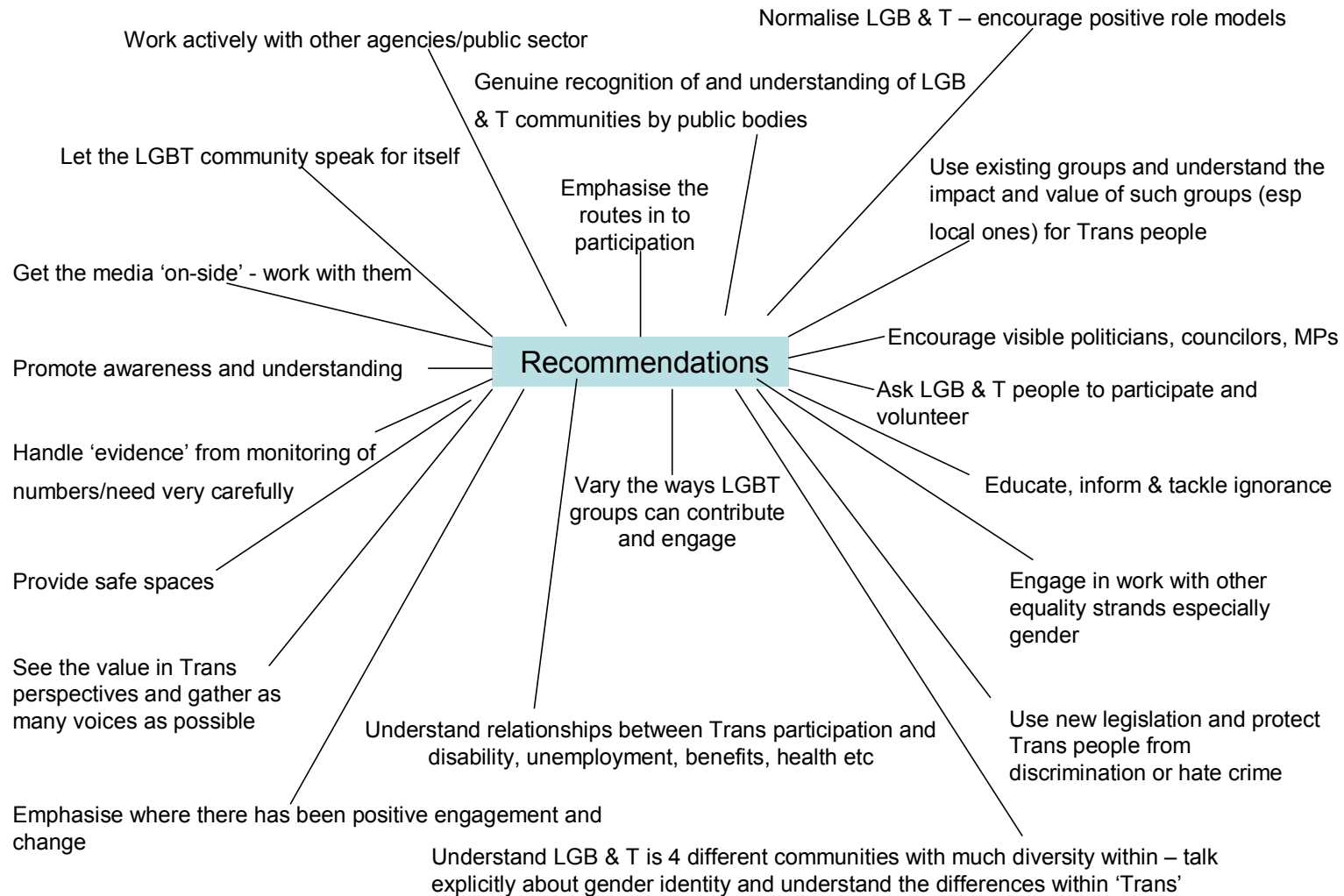
Findings



Recommendations from participants



Recommendations from interviewees



Appendix 8 - OPM and LGF reference group

Agenda:

Methodology:

- Brief explanation of how we have approached the research
- Any input from you on this methodology or gaps you can see
- Approach to analysis i.e. variables we might want to compare etc

Findings:

(see 'tablemats')

- Brief feedback on findings from interviews to date - specifically around barriers to participation and contexts that affect people's experience and willingness to participate.
- Checking this chimes with your knowledge and getting your input wherever you would like to.

Policy and practice recommendations:

- Where we might best take the findings in terms of recommendations
- Complementing policies and work in other areas relevant to LGBT communities i.e. health, mental health
- Potential 'quick wins' we could encourage policy makers with
- Medium and longer term work

Impact of current policy agenda:

- Broad discussion about how current policy themes may impact upon the LGBT community as a whole and on our recommendations to Government; in particular:
 - the vision for the 'Big Society' and how this idea will impact upon the participation of LGBT individuals and groups
 - public sector cuts and funding
 - social return on investment and proving outcomes (notably in the case of prevention work and small group work)
 - any knowledge you may have of discernable differences between the UK, Welsh and Scottish Governments in their interactions with and approach to their LGBT communities.

We would like to keep the discussion as open as possible and to get input from you all wherever you feel you can best contribute.

The intention is that you can act as a 'critical friend' around the findings and that we can share knowledge of current policy agendas.

Appendix 9 - OPM and Trans Resource and Empowerment Centre (TREC) reference group

Agenda:

Methods:

- Brief explanation of how we have approached the research
- Our approach to analysis
- Feedback from group on the methods used and/or our accessing of the Trans (and wider LGBT) communities

Findings:

- Brief summary of findings from interviews undertaken to date (see 'tablemats')
- Feedback from the group
 - How far responses to date speak to your knowledge and experiences
 - Your experiences and opinions of Trans participation in public and political life
 - Gaps in the data...?

Policy and practice recommendations:

- Brief summary of the recommendations from participants to date (LGB & T) (see 'tablemats')
- Feedback from the group
 - How far you feel these recommendations reflect the needs of Trans people...?
 - Recommendations you would make to the Government Equalities Office regarding the participation of Trans people in public and political life
 - Existing/on-going relevant work and examples of good practice
 - Potential 'quick wins'
 - Medium and longer term work

Wider policy and public sector climate and the Trans community:

- The 'Big Society' and the participation of Trans individuals and groups
- Public sector cuts and funding
- Discernable differences between the UK, Welsh and Scottish Governments in their interactions with and approach to their Trans communities.

Appendix 10 - Equality Network reference group interview

Terminology/definition:

We used a baseline definition of participation in public and political life to guide our interviews. This definition was adapted from the EHRC's Equality Measurement Framework.

By public participation we mean things like:

- Being a member of a local decision making body;
- Being active in a local or national campaigning or solidarity organisation e.g. community groups, lobbying/advocacy services, trade unions.

By political participation we mean things like:

- Undertaking at least one of the following activities:
 - contacting a councillor, local official, government official or MP (other than in relation to personal issues);
 - attending a public meeting or rally;
 - taking part in a demonstration or signing a petition.
- Contacting an MP or MSP, government official or media outlet about a government action you felt was harmful or unjust.

Background:

- Brief explanation of how we have approached the research
- Any input from you on this methodology/gaps you can see
- Approach to analysis i.e. variables we might want to compare etc

Discussion of findings:

(See 'tablemats' – they are a composition of interviewee comments re barriers to, and contexts affecting, participation in public and political life)

- Are the findings as you would expect?
- Which barriers identified do you think are the most notable?
- How do these findings compare to your organisations' knowledge? (Scottish examples?)
- Any input as an organisation/individual regarding the experiences of and barriers to participation in public and political life for LGB&T people?
- What knowledge is this based on i.e. background research, stakeholder feedback...?

Recommendations:

- Are the recommendations made by participants those you would expect?
- What do you feel is missing from the participant recommendations?
- How might new policy agenda's, such as Big Society, impact upon LGB&T participation in public and political life?

- What is the landscape in Scotland in terms of LGB&T participation?
 - Levels of?
 - Relationships between public/political bodies and the LGB&T communities?
 - Contrasts to England and Wales?
 - Examples of good practice?
- Where we might best take the findings in terms of recommendations?
 - Potential 'quick wins'?
 - Medium and longer term recommendations?
 - Existing work underway? (what, by who etc)

We would like to keep the discussion as open as possible and to get input from you all wherever you feel you can best contribute.

The intention is that you can act as a 'critical friend' around the findings and that we can share knowledge of current policy agendas.