



LGBT Health and Inclusion Project

Trans* Drug and Alcohol

Support Survey - Report



The LGBT Health and Inclusion Project

Brighton and Hove NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (BH CCG) and Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) have commissioned the LGBT Health and Inclusion Project at Brighton and Hove LGBT Switchboard to conduct a series of consultations and engagement activities with local lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people (LGBT) people. The aim is to use the information gathered to feed into local service commissioning, planning and delivery.

Please note, the following report presents information about the consultation and engagement work conducted by LGBT HIP, and should not be taken as a position statement of Brighton and Hove LGBT Switchboard, nor of any participating organisation.

Background

Pavilions is the new adult Drug & Alcohol Service for Brighton & Hove. It is available to anyone concerned about their drug or alcohol use, or for the families & carers supporting those struggling with substance misuse.

Pavilions has an LGBT Support Worker to support people from the LGBT community to access advice and support to address their substance misuse. Over the past five years, the LGBT Support Worker has developed positive links with many of the Cities LGBT services and is currently supporting a number of people from the Trans* community.

LGBT HIP and Pavilions identified the need to research Trans* people's use of drugs and alcohol, as well as experiences of finding and accessing support and services.

A local LGBT research project, Count Me in Too (2007), presented a number of important findings in relation to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans people's use of alcohol and illegal drugs or drugs without prescription/medical advice in Brighton and Hove and support services available.¹ The research found that alcohol and drug use are key issues for LGBT people and it recognises that sexual orientation/gender identities can play significant roles in understanding of it. The report suggests that sexual orientation and gender identity needs to be taken into account when designing LGBT alcohol and drug harm reduction messages and treatment services.

According to the reports, the vast majority (85%) of LGBT people in Brighton and Hove drink alcohol and half of respondents have taken illegal drugs or drugs without prescription in the past five years. The report compares findings from the British Crime Survey and indicates that every age group of LGBT people are more likely to use illegal drugs or drugs without prescription when compared to general population.

¹Count Me In Too – Additional Findings Report: Drugs, Alcohol and LGBT Lives ©2007 Dr. Kath Browne & Spectrum

According to Count me in Too report, “binge drinkers” within the LGBT community (19%) match the estimated percentage of “binge drinkers” in the general population in 2005. The research found that 21% of sample were hazardous drinkers and 5% were harmful drinkers, whilst 67% of LGBT people stated that they drink alcohol within or close to the recommended guidelines.

Count me in Too also found that only 2% (n 9) participants had ever accessed drug and alcohol support or advice services. This report indicated that 58% of respondents had not used alcohol services and were unaware of them. The same amount of respondents (58%) expressed a desire for an LGBT-specific service.

More recently, the Brighton and Hove Trans Needs Assessment (2015) found that 17% of survey respondents were drinking at increasing or higher risk drinking levels.² The report also cites a review of clients in drug and alcohol treatment in 2013, which found that fewer than five clients had indicated that they were transgender. Again, this indicates a low up-take of services.

Method

A survey was undertaken by LGBT HIP and Pavilions Partnership to gather opinions and experiences of Trans* people around access to drugs and alcohol services in Brighton and Hove.

The survey was designed by the LGBT HIP Project Manager and the Pavilions LGBT Support Worker as well as an LGBT HIP volunteer.

The survey was conducted on 25th of July 2015 during Trans* Pride Brighton at Dorset Gardens, Brighton. The survey was anonymous and all the survey data will be kept confidentially. The data was analysed and developed into a draft report by an LGBT HIP volunteer.

Sample

Twenty- five respondents are included in this consultation. The majority of respondents (24) identified as Trans*. One respondent skipped the question about their identity.

Limitations

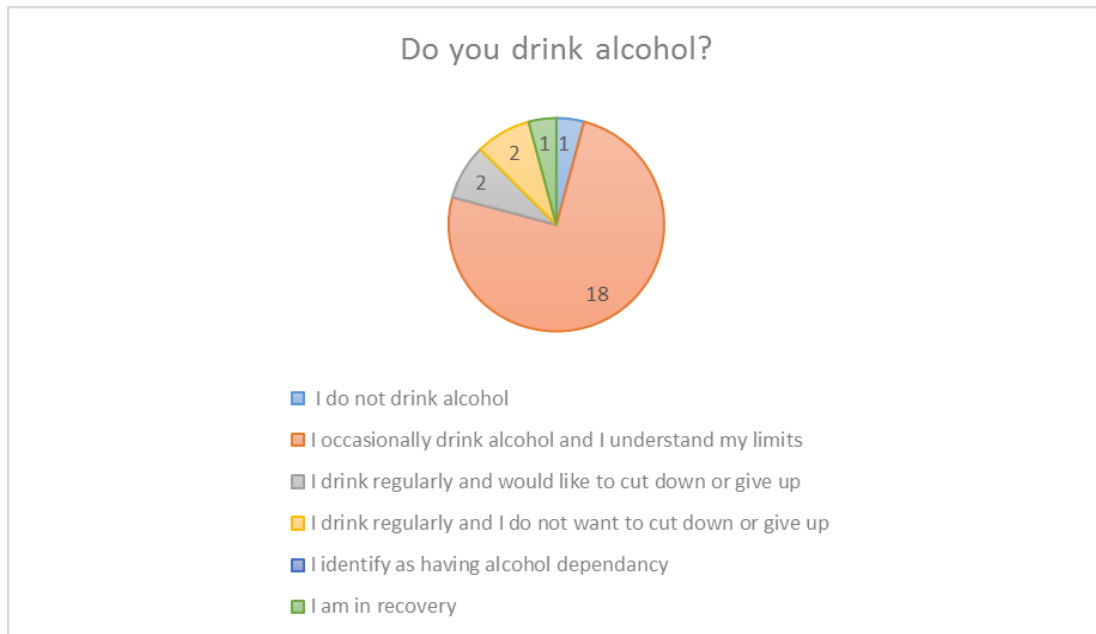
Due to the small sample size for this consultation, the findings should be viewed as a snapshot of this research topic and wider conclusions about Trans* people use of drugs and alcohol should not be drawn from this report.

² Brighton & Hove Trans Needs Assessment, 2015, Brighton & Hove City Council

Findings

Do you drink alcohol?

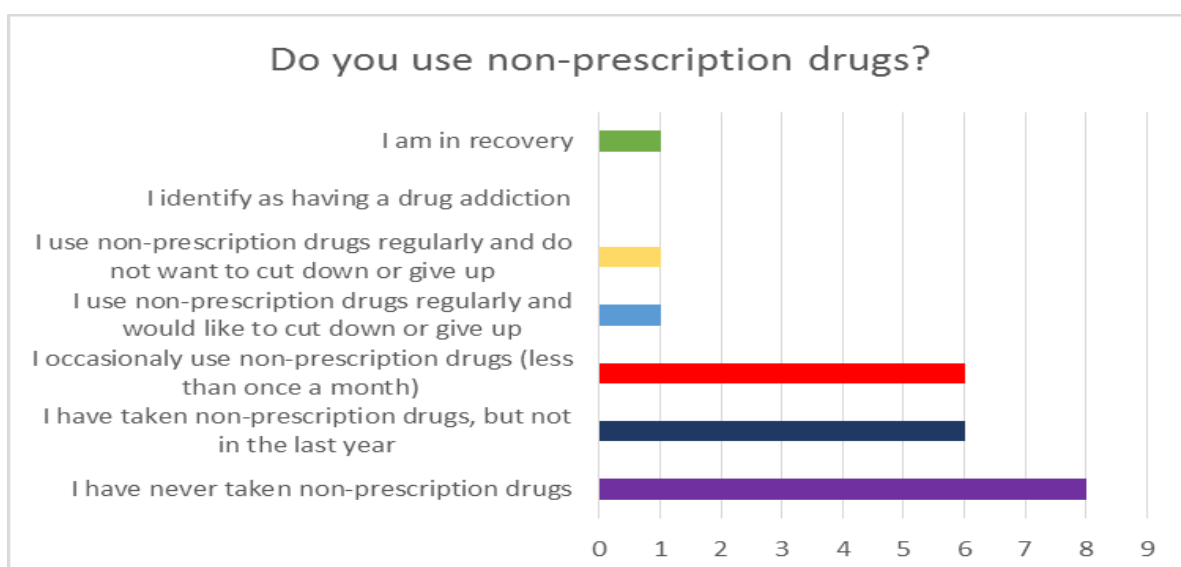
The findings show that the majority (72%) of respondents indicated that they occasionally drink alcohol and understand their limits. 8% of participants drink regularly and would like to cut down or give up, whilst 8% drink regularly and do not want to cut down or give up. One person stated that they do not drink alcohol, and one participant skipped this question.



Do you use any non-prescription drugs?

32% of respondents indicated that they had never taken non-prescription drugs. 24% of participants have taken non-prescription drugs, but not in the last year, and 24% stated that they occasionally use non-prescription drugs, but less than once a month.

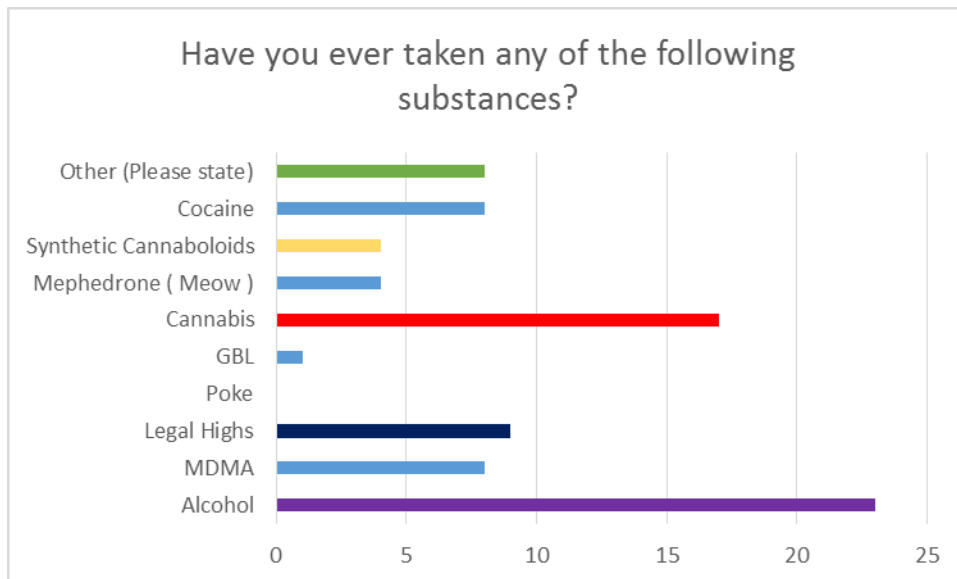
One respondent uses non-prescription drugs regularly and would like to cut down or give up, whilst one uses and does not want to cut down or give up. One respondent is in recovery.



Have you ever taken any of the following substances?

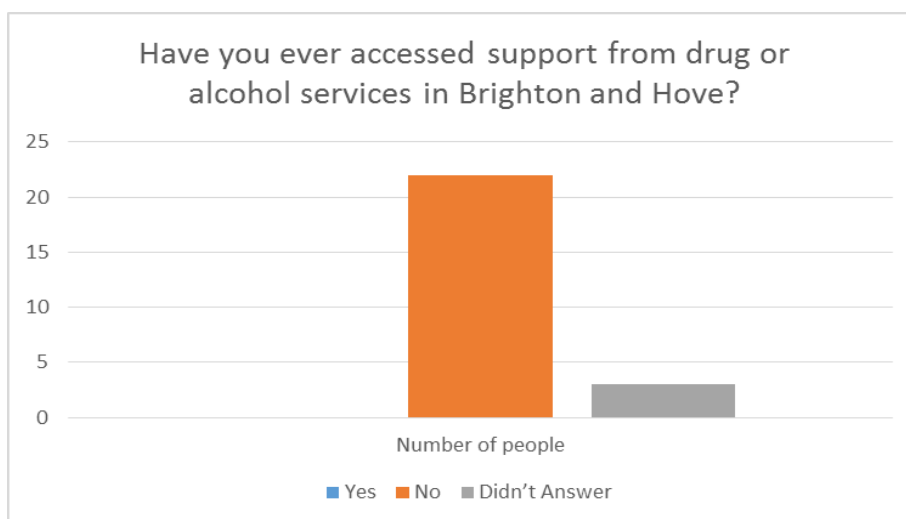
The majority (92%) of respondents indicated that they have used alcohol. The most used substances are Cannabis (68%), Legal Highs (36%), MDMA (32%) and Cocaine (32%).

16% of respondents indicated that they have used Mephedrone (Meow) and 16% have used Synthetic Cannaboids. One respondent has taken GBL. 32% specify that they have been taken other substances including: LSD (3 respondents), Amphetamine (2 respondents), Estradiol (1 respondent) and Mushrooms (1 respondent). One respondent stated they had taken Speed, most uppers, Heroin and Crack. One respondent skipped this question.



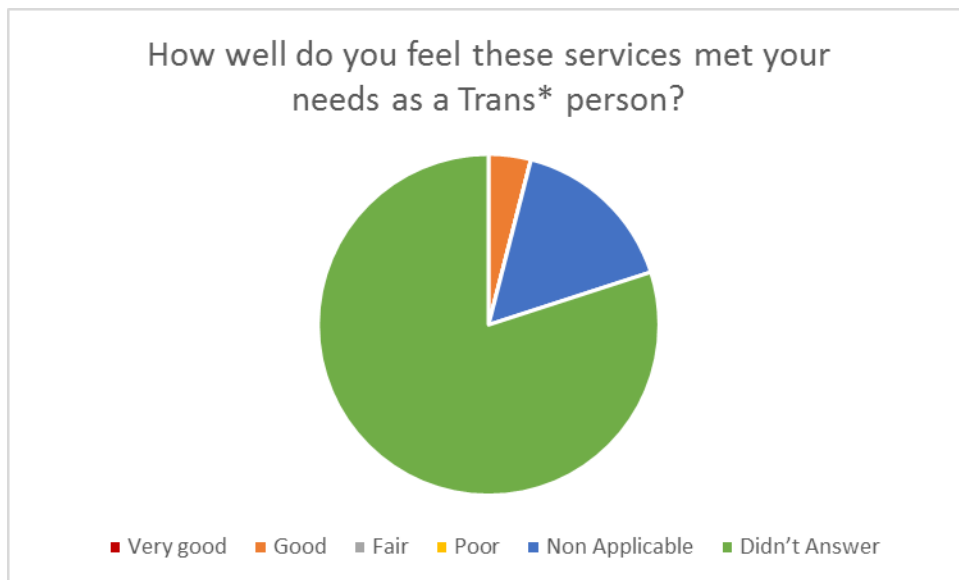
Have you ever accessed support from drug or alcohol services in Brighton & Hove?

Respondents were asked if they had ever accessed support from drugs or alcohol services within Brighton and Hove. 88% (n. 22) stated that they had not accessed any. Three respondents skipped this question. Respondents were also asked about any specific services that had been used in Brighton and Hove, however 100% participants skipped this question.



How well do you feel these services met your needs as a Trans* person?

The two previous questions showed that no respondents have accessed drug and alcohol services in Brighton and Hove. With this in mind, 80% of participants skipped the question, 16% (n.4) stated N/A, and one person feels these services are good.



Where you aware that there is an LGBT Support Worker at Pavilions Partnership?

Respondents were asked if they are aware of LGBT support worker at Pavilions Partnership, only 8% (n.2) are aware and 76% (n.19) stated that they were not aware 16% (n.4) skipped this question.



What changes do you think need to be made to ensure that Trans* people feel supported when accessing drugs or alcohol services?

Respondents were asked if there are any changes that they think need to be made to ensure that *Trans people feel supported when accessing drugs and alcohol services. Twenty-one people answered the question and four people skipped it. Of the twenty-one people who answered the question, four said that they did not know of any changes, one stated not sure, and one N/A. The rest of the responses are in the table below:

Table 1: What changes do you think need to be made to ensure that Trans people feel supported when accessing drugs or alcohol services?*

<i>"Awareness of what it is to be transgender and correct use of pronouns "</i>
<i>"There should be a specific trans-friendly support group if there isn't already"</i>
<i>"More awareness spreading at LGBT+ youth groups "</i>
<i>"More awareness about the inclusivity of the service"</i>
<i>"Safety risk of STI's, HIV, Hepatitis. Non consensual sex"</i>
<i>"Inclusive atmosphere"</i>
<i>"Awareness of language, gendering "</i>
<i>"Make clear that you are inclusive of LGBTQI people"</i>
<i>"I have never accessed these services. Therefore, I do not think I am in a position to comments on possible changes"</i>
<i>"Where to begin? See also GIRES' e-learning for GP's (on the RCGP site) – it is suitable for other healthcare professionals now"</i>
<i>"Not asking about gender"</i>
<i>"I have never been to one, so I wouldn't know! I identify as genderqueer, for reference."</i>
<i>"Reassurance, kindness, public knowledge – advertising"</i>
<i>"Having experienced Transphobia and bigotry in (AA) meetings. More should/ could be done to help others understand diversity better within support groups".</i>

Conclusions

The LGBT HIP and Pavilion Partnership undertook the survey to gather information and experiences of Trans* people within Brighton and Hove.

The findings from this survey indicate that most participants drink alcohol occasionally and they have an understanding of their limits. Only 8% drinks regularly and would like to cut down or give up.

The survey shows that 32% of respondents have never taken non-prescription drugs and 24% occasionally use non-prescription drugs. Out of 25 participants, one person would like to cut down or give up, and one person is in recovery. The findings show that respondents use a wide variety of non-prescription drugs, and most popular is Cannabis (68%). In the small sample included in this survey, there is evidence of using non-prescription hormones. This is significant and may present specific health risks including risks around correct dosage, quality of the product and combining with drug and alcohol use.

The survey indicates that there is very low uptake of drugs and alcohol services in Brighton and Hove. There is also a lack of knowledge about the targeted LGBT support for people around drugs and alcohol.

The research shows a need for awareness raising about availability of LGBT drug and alcohol services in Brighton and Hove which are Trans* inclusive. There are also several indications throughout the consultation that Trans* people may experience barriers to accessing services due to historical negative experiences of transphobia, fear of misgendering and a lack of confidence in healthcare professionals.

Recommendations

Services should take steps to be more welcoming and Trans* affirmative. Trans* people need to feel assured that they are in a safe space, where they are able to be open about their gender identity, confident that they will be respected and supported and that their individual needs will be understood and accommodated. It is hoped that the following recommendations may act as a guide for Pavilion Partnership to review their services in light of the findings and ensure meeting the needs of Trans* people.

1. *Training*: All frontline staff and volunteers should receive Trans* awareness training. This should include clear guidelines on developing trans-inclusive services and practical ways to support Trans* service users.
2. *Awareness Raising*: Services may have to undertake additional work in order to compensate for negative historic experiences of accessing support around alcohol and drugs. Pavilions should consider raising awareness about the LGBT service to Trans people. In order to ensure that Trans* people are aware of the service, this may include Trans-specific publicity and outreach undertaken with Trans* community groups.
3. *Trans- Specific programming*: Consideration should be given to developing trans-specific services and groups within the LGBT service, including further work addressing self-medication through non-prescription hormone use.
4. *Inclusion*: Pavilions should actively promote volunteering and employment opportunities for Trans* people to work within the LGBT and wider services.

5. *Research*: Opportunities to support further consultation and research into the needs of Trans* people in B&H accessing D&A services should be explored. This should include identifying and addressing specific issues faced by Trans people where accessing Drug & Alcohol services.
6. *Workers Confidence*: Further consultation and research should be undertaken into the knowledge, understanding & confidence of Drug & Alcohol workers around service provision & support for Trans* clients.
7. *Policies and Procedures*: Local drugs and alcohol services should undertake a thorough review of current policies and procedures around supporting trans clients to identify and address potential issues, and to develop and demonstrate inclusive practice.

Acknowledgements

This report was written by LGBT HIP volunteer Karolina Pawlowska, with the support of LGBT HIP staff team. LGBT HIP is grateful to all participants who took part in the consultation and to Karolina for undertaking this piece of work.

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