

Warwickshire Pride's Health Survey for National Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Health Week 2017

WE ARE SUPPORTING

National
Lesbian &
Bisexual Women's
Health Week 
#LBWomensHealth17
The National
LGB&T Partnership

13TH-17TH MARCH 2017



National Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Health Week Survey

The first National Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Health Week took place between 13th - 17th March 2017. The aim of the week was to raise awareness about lesbian and bisexual women's health inequalities in order to make it simple for service providers to empower service users. The week was also an opportunity to celebrate, highlight and learn from the work of groups and services which provide dedicated support to lesbian and bisexual women.

Growing evidence demonstrates that lesbian, bisexual and other women who have sex with women (LBWSW) are experiencing a range of health inequalities and both face barriers to accessing health care and are have poor experiences when they do.

In support of the first National Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Health Week, we launched a survey and asked lesbian and bisexual women living in Warwickshire to anonymously tell us their experiences so that we can understand the needs of the community and use the results to inspire positive changes and progress within healthcare services.

During the survey period, 54 lesbian and bisexual women living in Warwickshire took part. While this is not a very high amount of participants, it does provide a snapshot of the views and experiences of lesbian and bisexual women in the county.

The results of the survey are included in this report, and we hope that the views and experiences of those who participated will be taken on board. We have also provided recommendations based on the feedback from participants.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of this report, do feel free to contact us by emailing info@warwickshirepride.co.uk and one of our team will be happy to assist.

Daniel Browne
Chair of Warwickshire Pride

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75% of lesbian and bisexual women living in Warwickshire have experienced a health professional assuming they are heterosexual.

A further 17% were unsure, and 8% said they hadn't experienced a health professional assuming they are heterosexual.

Comments from the people who have experienced health professionals assuming they are heterosexual include:

"Mainly at smear tests, but most of the time really."

"They asked me if I needed to get the implant as I was in a relationship and shouldn't get pregnant this young."

"I had a yeast infection caused by medication. In short, the nurse seemed to want my long term partner to use Canestan cream as hand lotion!"

"Asking me if I was being safe? And only giving me information on having relations with men. Asking if I had a boyfriend, not if I had a partner, etc..."

"Getting jabs to travel to Thailand, I was told to get extra if I was going to have sex with a man whilst abroad."

"At every Doctors visit, I get asked if I have a boyfriend and do I need contraception to use with my boyfriend? And it's like no, I'm gay."

"As I have a coil fitted, some professionals assume I am in a heterosexual relationship. I have the coil fitted to help with period symptoms, not to prevent pregnancy."

17% of lesbian and bisexual women living in Warwickshire have experienced a health professional appearing to be uncomfortable with their sexuality.

50% have not experienced a health professional appearing to be uncomfortable with their sexuality, and a further 33% are unsure.

Comments from the people who have experienced health professionals appearing to be uncomfortable with their sexuality include:

“They just became very closed off and looked at my mum as if she should be embarrassed. Other times they have just continually persisted on saying boyfriend.”

“New GP was uncomfortable to hear that I had a girlfriend and then proceeded to ask how lesbians have sex. She said I didn’t have to tell her, she’d just like to know.”

83% of lesbian and bisexual women living in Warwickshire have experienced, or are currently experiencing, mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.

Of those who have experienced, or are currently experiencing, mental health issues, 81% have tried to access support from their GP or another health professional. 85% say they would try to access medical support if they experienced mental health issues in the future. 17% are unsure.

Comments from the people who are unsure if they would try to access medical support if they experienced mental health issues in the future include:

“My anxiety makes it hard to talk to people face to face and to open up about everything.”

“I feel they would link it to my sexuality, not my lifestyle.”

92% of lesbian and bisexual women living in Warwickshire would feel comfortable disclosing their sexuality to their GP or another health professional.

8% are unsure whether they would feel comfortable disclosing their sexuality to their GP or another health professional.

Comments from the people who are unsure whether they would feel comfortable disclosing their sexuality to their GP or another health professional include:

“As a bisexual, I feel like my sexuality may not be taken seriously by medical professionals.”

Recommendations

After an analysis of the results the survey has produced, and taking into account the common themes the survey has presented, we have the following three recommendations:

Organise regular, comprehensive training for staff that focuses on LGBT+ awareness. This will help to ensure competency and develop confidence around working with LGBT+ people.

Display inclusive posters and literature aimed at LGBT+ people to help break down barriers and enable LGBT+ people to feel included.

Form partnerships with local LGBT+ organisations in order to provide a link to the community and establish referral pathways.



Warwickshire Pride

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Working to ensure that all people feel valued and included in society, regardless of sexuality or gender identity

Celebrating diversity in the community