Under One Sky

A Bristol LGB Forum report on the experiences and needs of Lesbian Gay and Bisexual people from Black and Other Minority Ethnic and Faith communities, in Bristol.

By

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Preface

This report is a small start towards redressing a long-standing gap in equalities provision. As such it is essential reading for all organisations within the LGBT\(^1\), BME\(^2\) and Faith communities it relates to, as well as funders and the wider statutory sector.

Although some are mentioned below, I would like to emphasise that the Project would not have been possible without the commitment and time invested by the Project Steering Group and participants, or the dedication of Leiza and Edson (Project Development Workers) and their colleagues, Toni Massari and Sarah Minter.

Thanks should also go to the funders, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, though they go along with a prod to fund work that would build on the findings of this Project.

The Bristol LGB Forum is committed to pursuing funding to build on this piece of work and to support BME-LGB and LG-B-Faith communities where it can within its existing resources. However, we are acutely aware that without action by you, the organisations within the LGBT, BME, Faith communities, the statutory and voluntary sector services for them and, most importantly of all, funders, this will be yet another instance of asking communities to engage only to fail to address the findings.

As you read this report, please remember that without action on these issues none of us can truly claim to be meeting our equalities commitments.

Laura J Welti
Co-Chair, Bristol LGB Forum

\(^1\) LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
\(^2\) BME: Black and Minority Ethnic
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Chapter One:
Introduction

The following report details the context and findings of the Under One Sky Project of the Bristol Lesbian Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Forum, henceforth referred to as the Forum.

Under One Sky was a year long project into the needs and experiences of LGB Black Minority Ethnic and LGB-BME adherents to a Faith resident in Bristol. These communities and individuals will be referred to as LGB-BME (or BME-LGB) and LGB-Faith throughout this report.

Over a series of headings and subheadings the report describes the context in which the research took place, the organisation of the project and explores the key research findings. The audience for this report includes LGB-BME individuals, BME, Faith and non-LGB service providers (both statutory and voluntary), LGB organisations, and academics working in the field. It is hoped that the report will guide readers to further exploration of the issues raised. To this end a further reading list has been included in the study.

Black Minority Ethnic is used in accordance with Office of National Statistics (ONS) guidelines to refer to people of non-White origin. White European ethnic groups such as the Gypsy and Traveller communities will be referred to separately. Faith is used to refer a system of religious or philosophical values. Arising from this a Faith community is a community bound by religious and or philosophical system of thought.

Why was the Project Undertaken?
In 2005 the Forum identified a lack of BME participation in Bristol LGB organisations as a priority issue for it to address. It also noted that there were no services targeting LGB-BME people in the city. The absence of BME participation and services has become all the more evident as Bristol’s Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual communities have become increasingly visible, albeit largely in terms of the commercial ‘gay scene’.
In 2008 Bristol’s Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Forum secured funding from the Equality and Human Rights Commission to research the experiences and needs of Black Minority Ethnic Lesbian Gay and Bisexual people and LGB-BME people of Faith. The Forum pursued this work in order address the low BME engagement with LGB organisations and activities in Bristol.

The Project was entirely consistent with the Forum’s Development Plan and ‘statement of purpose’ which states:

“We seek to

“provide a forum for all LGB people, communities and organisations, resident or working in the Bristol area, through which to discuss, challenge and take action intended to resolve issues that arise because of sexual orientation, and to educate and inform of legislation that protects against discrimination of any kind.”

The aim of the project was to:

1) Establish some snapshot, baseline data of the LGB-BME presence;
2) Needs, experiences and issues facing LGB-BME people;
3) the barriers to engagement in existing LGB provision;
4) the barriers to getting the needs of LGB individuals of BME or BME/Faith heritage within generic BME and Faith provision;
5) to provide recommendations for addressing the above and moving towards meaningful inclusion.’

The research was informed but not influenced by debate and discussion in Bristol in Spring 2008 when the public became aware of ‘No Outsiders’, a learning project designed for use in schools to educate young people on issues of diversity and anti-bullying. Two inner city schools had signed up to the Bristol Inclusion Standard - achieved by evidencing demonstrable efforts to take positive action in equalities and diversity - and implemented aspects of ‘No Outsiders’ as part of this. However, some of the materials depicting same sex parents were deemed unacceptable after protests by mostly Somalian Muslim parents.
When and how these withdrawn items will be reinstated remains unclear, largely due to the understandable request by the schools concerned, that other Bristol schools also introduce similar work - and the inability of the local authority to make schools do so.

Subsequent demands by local LGB people, the Forum and Voscur (a local infrastructure organisation) led to the drawing up a 15 point Action Plan by these stakeholders. The Forum and aforementioned partner are currently waiting for Bristol City Council to adopt the fifteen point plan in full.4

The protest has given added impetus to this study as it reveals the complexities of issues that address sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion.
Chapter Two: Executive Summary

The Forum prioritised increasing LGB-BME engagement and support in its Development Plan 2007-11 and set about discussing this with some LGB-BME people, including three BME members of the Management Committee. Finding very little background information on LGB-BME people’s needs, it identified research into this as a fundraising priority and successfully secured funding from the Equality & Human Rights Commission’s Interim Grants fund.

The project was led by a Steering Group and undertook background research, focus groups, one-to-one interviews, a household (and web-based) questionnaire and events for its primary target communities.

Its main findings are:

2.1) There are (approx) some 40,000 BME individuals living in Bristol and, even at a conservative estimate of five percent, there are at least 2,000 BME LGB people living in the city (recent national statistics obtained from the Department of Trade and Industry estimate that the LGB community is 7-10% of the British population).

2.2) In Bristol the pressure for BME-LGB people to conform to heterosexual expectations impacts strongly upon African as well as South Asian groups.

2.3) For most the journey towards understanding and accepting their sexuality involved a fear of social and familial reactions.

2.4) Most of the participants stated that, during their youth, representations of LGB people were either non-existent or overwhelmingly negative and none could recall seeing an LGB BME person depicted in the local or national media.
2.5) Levels of bullying, abuse, harassment and/or homophobic assault from non-LGB members of their ethnic and/or faith community were common however, not all participants felt that BME communities were more homophobic than the White community. Moreover homophobia from BME communities on the one hand was balanced against racism from White LGB and non-LGB communities.

2.6) The family lives of many our respondents were characterised by adherence to a religious belief and having experienced rejection/struggled against the internalisation of negative religious precepts, leading many respondents chose to abandon their places of worship.

2.7) A significant amount of development work will be required before there is likely to be a significant input into any consultation from South Asian, South East Asian and Muslim LGB-BME people.

2.8) There is a lack of LGB services generally and most respondents felt that the services to the LGB community that do exist are, in general, hard to find if not invisible.

2.9) Funding of local LGB services generally is woefully inadequate and there is no Bristol-based BME-LGB group, or support service that we were able to identify, or that national BME-LGB groups and organisations could direct us to.

2.10) With regard to services, Bristol most needs opportunities for BME/Faith-LGB to share experiences and support services – especially around coming out and being an LGB family;

2.11) Outside of the commercial LGBT club/pub scene, the vast majority of provision for any LGB people in the city is by small self-organised groups of individuals with no funding, who offer sports, leisure or social networking opportunities, and ‘recruit’ through website listings and ‘word of mouth’;
2.12) Whilst ‘the scene’ was highlighted as a very important part of ‘coming out’, most of the focus group participants did not engage with the scene in Bristol as they experience it as not very BME-friendly nor to have an inclusive approach to the music they play and/or events/activities they run;

2.13) That no arena currently exists for the Forum, in partnership with sympathetic Faith organisations and leaders, to provide and/or supports opportunities for informed discussion about Faith and sexual orientation – to ensure LGB-BME and non-BME people are exposed to a variety of Faith perspectives on sexuality;

2.14) That there is a definite need for, but distinct lack of, equalities training for LGB, BME and Faith organisations that addresses the issues faced by their BME/Faith-LGB constituency.
Chapter Three:
The Bristol Context

3.1 The BME Communities
According to recent ONS estimates Bristol is a city of 416,000 people. 11.9 percent of Bristol’s population are of Black Minority Ethnic background. In this regard Bristol is slightly higher than the national average of 11.8 percent.

Post-war migrant settlement came principally from Britain’s former colonies, particularly the Caribbean and South Asia. Over the last decade, they have been joined by migrant communities from East Africa, Central Africa and Eastern Europe. These new communities have significantly altered the demographics of the Bristol BME and non-BME community.

Underlying trends suggest that Bristol’s BME population is increasing at a faster rate than its non-BME counterpart. This growth owes much to the migration of African and Eastern European groups in recent years. A report commissioned by Bristol’s Children and Young People’s Services identified the exponential growth in the BME population via changing trends in school demographics. Based on local data it found that that 22.5% of pupils are from BME backgrounds - as compared with an estimated 10.7% of the population as a whole. Pupils of non-White British origin comprised 27.4 percent of this figure. This is almost a 50% increase from the comparable 2004 figure of 18.5%. Furthermore the distribution of children by age points strongly to a continuing rise in the overall numbers of non-White British pupils: 36.5% of children in the city’s nursery schools are from non-White British backgrounds.

Black Somali children were the largest non-White group at 1,749 or 3.8% of all pupils, which compares with the 0.19% of Somalis recorded by the 2001 Census.
BME pupils are concentrated in particular schools in the inner-city’s Ashley, Easton and St George wards. Over 50% of nursery - year 11 pupils in the East Central area are BME. Somali pupils are among the most clustered of BME groups. In January 2008 there were nine nursery and junior schools in which over 25% of the pupils were of Somali origin. In addition to the Somali and Eastern European migration the report lists over 15,000 children from a diverse range of non-BME backgrounds. These include pupils of Turkish, Iranian, Kurdish, Romanian, Zimbabwean origin.

In addition to these new communities Bristol is an expanding university town of over 52,080 students drawn from the UK and overseas.

Bristol’s main BME organisations are located within the areas of BME settlement. Many of these organisations, such as the Sikh Resource Centre, The Bangladeshi Association, the Bristol Chinese Association, and Barbados Parents and Friends, service individual (country or religious) ethnic group’ needs. Others provide pan-ethnic advice support such as the Asian Arts Agency, Awaz Utoah, West Indian Parents and Friends. Few provide services to the entire BME constituency but these include the voluntary infrastructure group the Black Development Agency and Black Carers.

Given the growth of the BME population it is likely that the East Bristol and Ashley areas of the city will continue to be the most culturally diverse areas of Bristol.

3.2 Faith and BME communities
Post war migration has transformed Bristol into a multi-faith city. According to recent census data 62% of Bristolians describe themselves as Christian, 2.0 percent as Muslim, 0.4 Buddhist, with 0.5 Hindu, 0.5 Sikh, 0.5 Other religions (which includes Rastafarians).
The expression of faith in Bristol cannot be neatly drawn along ethnic lines but we can suggest that in Bristol, as elsewhere, Indian, Kenyan, and Ugandan Asian migrants have established Sikh and Hindu centres of worship. Islam has been embedded in the city through the migration of North African, Bangladeshi Pakistani, Middle Eastern, Somali, Kurdish and Turkish communities. The African Caribbean community is predominantly aligned to evangelical Christianity.

Migrant groups have established religious institutions within or close to areas where they initially settled. These institutions have reflected the inter- and intra-ethnic divisions between communities. For example, African Caribbean Christians have established a number of churches in the city. Similarly, Bristol’s mosques are used by different ethnic communities from across Asia, and North Africa. A similar pattern can be observed among Bristol’s Sikh community. Recent migration from Somalia, South Eastern and Eastern Europe has increased the size of Bristol’s Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox communities. New communities particularly African Muslims, Muslims from the Balkan states and Christian groups continue to establish centres of worship that meet their social, cultural and religious need.

Post-war White flight to the suburbs and slum clearance led to a decline in the expression of Faith in inner-city Bristol, as with elsewhere in Britain. Whilst Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism are relatively new expressions in Bristol, post-war migration has slowed or halted, if not increased, religious observance amongst inner-city Christian congregations. In some churches in Bristol’s Ashley and Easton wards the racial composition of the congregation has changed from predominantly White British to African and/or African Caribbean.

In the Faith institutions founded by new and settled migrant groups the relationship with the values of the migrants society of origin is maintained by the recruitment of faith leaders from the ‘originating’ societies. Such values may conflict with those of secular, liberal Britain. However it is important to stress that values that are regarded as originating from Faith are in fact of cultural origin.
Although sharing a common Faith the interpretation of that Faith differs between ethnic groups. Each migrant group brings a new understanding of Faith to Bristol. Arguably, the social and theological impact of migration upon Bristol’s faith groups has yet to be fully ascertained. What, for example, is the social and theological impact of African Christian migration on the White population? The same question could be posited in regards to Bristol’s new communities. What, for example, is the impact of the rapid increase in African Muslims upon the predominantly Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim population in Bristol?

Faith groups offer a range of services such as senior citizen groups, youth clubs, and to their congregations and to the wider membership of the community. Their role as agents of community cohesion has been recognized in recent years national and internationally. This recognition culminated in the establishment of the Bristol Multi-Faith Forum in 2004.

### 3.3 The LGB community

There is little in the way of general mapping of the LGB community in Bristol. Crucially, the size of Bristol’s LGBT population has not been specifically ascertained but recent national statistics obtained from the Department of Trade and Industry estimate that the LGB community is 7-10% of the British population. Based upon that figure we can estimate that there are 26,000 LGBT men and women living in Bristol. Such a figure has to be treated with extreme caution as research also suggests people who engage in same sex activities do not necessarily identify with being LGBT and that, as with BME settlement, more LGBT people gravitate towards large towns and cities. However, we can conclude that there are some 40,000 BME individuals living in Bristol and that of these even at a conservative estimate of 5% there are at least 2,000 BME LGB people living in the city.

A 1997 study commissioned by the Forum found that a disproportionate number of lesbian women lived in the BS5 area, as compared to a disproportionate number of gay men who lived in BS8. The study also found that BS5 had the highest number of families with same sex parents.
The survey found marked differences in access to information on service provision, experiences of discrimination, and obtaining information on local LGB life between Lesbian and gay men, with women faring worse than their male counterparts.12

Generic LGB provision is distributed throughout the city and covers a range of needs. Since its inception in 1994, the Forum has advised the statutory sector on LGB equality issues. Via its newsletter and website the Forum is also a source of information on LGB services and current issues. In addition to the Forum a number of bodies offer advice and support to the LGB community, including Bristol City Council’s Rainbow group - which provides support, and networking for LGB(T) Council employees and campaigns on LGBT equality - Freedom Youth (a young people’s project) and the Bristol Lesbian and Gay switchboard (BLAGS). BLAGS is also open to friends or relatives who may have concerns over an LGBT person. There are also a range of self-organised groups such as Friends on the Hill (for LGBT people in Bristol’s eastern inner-city wards), Bristol Family and Friends a support group for the families and friends of LGBT people, the Gay Christian Movement which is the only Bristol Faith based group in Bristol for LGBT people, and Missing Lesbians a website listing events and groups within reach of Bristol. In addition to these groups there a number of smaller social networks, sports and leisure groups organised by LGB men and women in Bristol.

The Forum receives core funding for its main advisory role from Bristol City Council whilst the Rainbow group, like other Council self-organised equalities groups, receives a small amount of funding for basic, non-staff costs, only. The bulk of the remaining LGB provision in the city is unfunded.

The LGB social scene, as represented by pubs and clubs, is concentrated around the Park Street and Old Market, areas of the city. However there are various (largely monthly) social nights organised by LGB men and women themselves which are held at a small number of Bristol venues.
There are currently no services, social groups or venues that specifically target LGB-BME people in Bristol. The need for LGB-BME provision is likely to become more pressing given the exponential growth of Bristol’s BME population. The corollary to the growth in the BME population is a growth in Bristol’s LGB population. This is of course, not only a future trend but is an immediate need given the influx of migrants from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe in recent decades.

Same sex relationships and activity is outlawed in many of the countries from which migrants now come to Bristol. Among migrants coming to Bristol some are drawn from LGB communities, either as refugees or with their sexuality as a hidden motive for economic migration.

Freedom to explore or express their sexuality is sometimes an additional reason why students choose Bristol as a destination. Conversely, it is likely that non-LGB migrants brought up in countries where same-sex relationships are illegal may continue to entertain homophobic views. 13
Chapter Four: Review of the Secondary Literature

The questionnaire and focus groups were informed by the secondary literature. The secondary literature was used to identify areas of interest and gaps in research. The review focused on the generic LGB community, the BME-LGB and the BME community. The following section will provide a brief summary of key issues raised.

It is firstly worth noting the dearth of research both on both LGB and BME communities in Bristol. What is available mirrors much of the research currently available and undertaken on BME and LGB communities elsewhere in the UK.

Bristol’s BME community generally has been amongst the most studied of Bristol’s equalities groups. Studies such as Anthony Richmond’s ‘Colour and Class in an English City’, and Bristol’s Ethnic Minorities provide a useful overview of BME migration into Bristol. However most of the secondary literature has focused on Bristol’s African Caribbean community. This is partly due to the fact that the socio-economic isolation of the Ashley ward area, formerly the area of African Caribbean concentration, provided social scientists with a microcosmic view of deprivation. It is also due to the fact, whether through civil rights action or riot, the African Caribbean community has led BME protest against discrimination in the city. Recent publications such as ‘A Century of Migration’ consider the migration of various national and ethnic groups into Bristol.

In addition to the published literature there exist a number of unpublished undergraduate and postgraduate theses on a range of aspects of BME life. While the health, history and culture of these communities have been the subject of much scrutiny, there is a dearth of literature on the LGB-BME community in Bristol.

Turning to consider the national and international literature, what is in existence focuses on the medicalisation of BME-LGB communities through their over-representation in mental and or sexual health findings.
Experiences and fear of homophobic bullying at school and or at work is a recurrent theme in the literature. The ‘School Report’ produced by Stonewall found that 65% of young, lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils experienced direct bullying, rising to 75% in Faith schools.

‘The report also found that over 60% of young LGB people feel there is neither an adult at home or at school that they can turn to discuss their sexuality.’

Among adults, a 1997 Bristol survey into the experiences of LGB men and women found that 34.1% of a sample 253 respondents had experienced discrimination at work. This varied from ‘homophobic jokes in the classroom’, ‘not being included in social events’, and lowered voices and sniggering by some male colleagues, to a ‘lack of promotion’ and or ‘being passed over for promotion’.

Recent Bristol research suggested that little has changed. The 2008 Bristol quality of life survey found that lesbian, gay and bisexual people were among the main groups in Bristol to have experienced harassment and discrimination.

Studies undertaken elsewhere provide a similar picture of discrimination and harassment. For example, a study of Leicester’s LGB community found that 50% of respondents had experienced homophobic abuse, with 15% experiencing violent abuse.

However the Avon Constabulary Assistant Chief Constable John Long admits 68% of people nationally fail to report incidents of homophobia and only 23% report directly to the police.

Though evidence is slight, a UK study found that BME-LGB communities are disproportionately affected by homophobic violence, abuse and harassment.

Anecdotal evidence based on preliminary discussions, reflected the few national studies, which suggest that the isolation and discrimination often faced by LGB people are compounded by
racism in the case of visibly distinct members of ethnic minority communities. This is likely to be attended by alienation from their ethnic minority communities.  

The degree of alienation is likely to differ depending upon the extent of homophobia within BME communities. To the knowledge of the researchers there is little empirical evidence that suggests the differential rates of homophobia between BME groups. Yet, that such differences exist are evidenced by studies within the US. For example, after summarising the findings of a variety of studies, US journalist Joshua Lynsen noted that African Americans were the ethnic group least tolerant of same sex relationships. The National Black Justice Coalition report notes Asian-Pacific Islanders showed the highest rate of support for gay marriage or civil unions, at 55%. Support among White communities was at 46% among Latino communities 35% and among Black communities 23%.

Based on this and related evidence, the authors concluded that Black communities, “are virtually the only constituency in the country that have not become more supportive over the last dozen years” of gay rights. But to illustrate that this is not an issue solely for the American community, the study also mentions a protest by 6,000 Chinese Americans against gay marriage in the US.

We cannot easily extrapolate the US experience to that of the UK and Bristol. One may note the continuity of socio-economic, historic and theological experience between those of UK- and African-descent but there are significant differences of culture, experience and relationship to non-BME society. Furthermore the makeup of Britain’s BME communities, dominated by South Asian and African Caribbean groups, differs from that found in the US.

Various studies note that the harassment and abuse suffered by LGB individuals as young people and adults can have a negative effect upon their mental and physical wellbeing. Yet studies such as ‘Diagnosis: Homophobic’ present a disturbing picture of
ambiguous treatment by mental health service providers. LGB people that engaged with the study also felt that homophobic attitudes by mental health staff affected the way in which they were treated. The report also noted that staff were sometimes insensitive to the particular needs of LGB individuals, especially when homophobic attitudes were operating between patients.\(^{25}\)

The treatment of LGB people by medical professionals also remains a live issue. A recent survey of 1,400 therapists found 17\% of mental health workers admitted trying to ‘cure’ their LGB clients of their same sex orientation.\(^{26}\) The greater incidence of African and African Caribbean men and women in the mental health system has long been noted and it is reasonable to postulate that their treatment by service providers is likely to be further compounded by responses based on their sexual orientation.

However the authors of one study stress that the LGB engagement with mental health services, particularly talking therapy, can also point to a desire to reach a positive sense of their sexual orientation and lives through therapy.\(^{27}\) The Under One Sky researchers did not find any articles on LGB mental health in the Bristol BME community.

As evidenced by the findings of a report into the experiences of LGB Disabled people in Leeds, it is not always clear when individuals cut across equalities groups, on what basis they are being discriminated against. The participants in that study experienced discrimination on the basis of their being a Disabled person or their sexual orientation, particularly when this became known to their assailants.\(^{28}\)

Divided loyalties were consistently mentioned in the secondary literature. The researchers investigated various online and printed, national and international, testimonies by BME people and BME of faith. These disclose the tensions that many have faced between their faith, their faith community, and their sexual orientation and identity.\(^{29}\) These testimonies are echoed by larger qualitative studies.\(^{30}\)

However, Dr Andrew Yip points to a more recent drive among LGB
Christians and Muslims to offer different interpretations of their Faith in ways that make it possible to integrate their religious and sexual identity.\textsuperscript{31} ‘Loving Thy Neighbour’ highlights significant differences between faith leaders and their congregations.\textsuperscript{32} The report suggests that congregations tend to have more liberal attitudes to same sex communities than that of their Faith leaders. This supports anecdotal local evidence which suggests that Faith leaders are often more conservative than those living within the communities they serve.\textsuperscript{33}

His research also indicates that the fear of being ‘outed’ and losing one’s community is an important reason why it is difficult for researchers and service providers to engage with LGB-BME individuals. Whilst guarding against essentialisation, secondary and anecdotal evidence suggests the pressure to conform to familial heterosexual expectations is greatest among Asian and African communities regardless of Faith. It is not clear whether this is due to culture or Faith, or both. It is worth noting that the authors of the Leicester study admitted that:

‘there are some under representations in the report, most notably among South Asian/British and Asian communities’

The writers went on to suggest:

‘undoubtedly pervading attitudes of homophobia made it difficult to identify and contact LGB BME in certain communities.’\textsuperscript{34}

In Bristol the pressure to conform to heterosexual expectations impacts strongly upon African as well as South Asian groups.

The literature provides a stark picture of isolation, and invisibility common to both non-BME and BME-LGB communities.
Chapter Five: Managerial Framework and Methodology

5.1 Management
The Project was managed by the Forum Co-Chair and fundraiser, Laura Welti, acting in a voluntary capacity. Using personal and professional contacts, she had recruited five BME-LGB and one non-LGB BME individual to form a steering group prior to the Project start. The majority of its members were of African Caribbean descent. Collectively, the Steering Group members possessed an array of skills and experiences drawn from years of employment in the voluntary, academic and public sectors. With support from the Steering Group, the researchers attempted to recruit additional members from different BME backgrounds but were unsuccessful. However, at least two of these contacts did offer invaluable input into the project whilst remaining external to it.

The Project workers reported to the manager at least once a month and meetings between the Steering Group, the manager and researchers were held every six weeks. The Steering Group acted as a consultative body naming, directing, advising and challenging the Project. In addition its members provided invaluable contacts.

5.2 Methodology: What Research Methods were Used and Why?
The research methods and their range were defined in the grant application to the EHRC and refined over the course of the 11 months in consultation with the Steering Group and researchers. The research included both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The questions used in the focus group and one-to-one interviews were devised in reference to the underlying aims of the Project and were aligned to some of the conclusions in the literature.

5.2.1 Focus groups - the focus groups served a threefold purpose:
   a. to provide insight into the lived experience of LGB-BME in Bristol;
   b. to evidence the gaps in service provision; and lastly,
c. to provide for the lack of BME participation in generic LGB organisations.

5.2.2 One to one Interviews - When contacting the Project respondents were given the option to take part in a one-to-one interview. It was anticipated that some of the respondents would not feel comfortable taking part in a focus group if they were not ‘out.’ Similarly, not all respondents would feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues in a group setting.

5.2.3 Questionnaire
The initial purpose of the questionnaire was to realise the Project aim of providing

‘a snapshot of baseline data on the size and distribution of the BME-LGB constituency in Bristol.’

However, following further reflection by the Project manager, the Steering Group and workers, it was agreed that the survey should be expanded to include a survey of Bristol attitudes to race, faith, and sexuality. It was envisaged that this would also indicate the correlation between faith, ethnicity and attitudes to sexuality.

It was felt that including an attitudinal survey would better justify the time and financial expense of the questionnaire given that, for cost reasons, it was not disseminated to all households in Bristol and would therefore identify only a small number of BME-LGB people. The revised document was now of relevance to all recipients whilst also providing data on the context in which LGB-BME people live and work.

Expanding the purpose meant that the questionnaire now targeted BME and non-BME, LGB and heterosexual Bristol residents. Questions were devised and revised in consultation with the Steering Group and the Project manager. The questionnaire was to be disseminated to particular streets in areas with high and low BME population density. This would, it was hoped, allow the workers to analyse the variance, if any, of the responses by ethnicity and faith.
Chapter Six:
Under One Sky Events and activities

6.1  Events
The following is a description of the events organised in line with the project outcomes of the Under One Sky project. These events intended to raise issues, promote the project and recruit participants.

6.1.1  Black History Month 13th November 2008
The Under One Sky Project identified and funded a visit by London based gay BME poet and activist Dean Atta to Bristol as part of Bristol Black History Month.

The event was organised and promoted in partnership with LGB- and BME-friendly writing group: Easton Can Openers. Ten people attended, with one BME-LGB individual recruited to take part in a focus group discussion.

6.1.2  Screening: Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin, LGBT History Month 1st February 2009
In fulfilment of the milestones, the researchers identified the screening of the biopic ‘Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin’ as a suitable event for LGB History Month. Rustin (1912-1987) was an African American civil and gay rights activist credited with organising the 1963 March on Washington. The aim of the event was to promote the project, recruit participants and to highlight the contribution BME-LGB men and women to Black History and the LGB civil rights’ movements. This event was organised and publicised in partnership with the Watershed media centre, with an introduction and post screening discussion, led by the researchers and Steering Group member, Simon Nelson.

The post-show discussions and subsequent feedback highlighted demands for more LGB-BME films. As a result of the screening two LGB men and women contacted the Project.
6.1.3 Faith and Sexuality 17th June 2009
As previously stated, the project aimed to contact LGB-BME people from Faith backgrounds. Over the course of the Project it became clear that Faith was a major strand of the focus group discussions. It was also clear that outside the Project initiatives to build greater dialogue between LGB and Faith communities informed input in order to establish a basis of mutual understanding. The researchers contacted the Imam and Islamic scholar noted for his critique of homophobia in Islam Dr Taj Hargey (Muslim Education Centre, Oxford) and the Nigerian born cleric Dr Jide Maculay (Founder Pastor of the Rainbow Metropolitan Community Churches Lagos), to take part in a panel discussion on Faith and Sexuality from an Islamic and a Christian perspective. The researchers also contacted various local and national agencies in order to find a representative of Sikh and or Hindu perspectives but were unsuccessful.

The venue was outside of the main areas of BME concentration in order to avoid ‘outing’ LGB people who might want to attend. Although attendance was less than desired -three individuals and four staff members - both speakers provided very different views on LGB and Faith and have expressed their desire to continue to support the project and the Forum in articulating a different Faith perspective on homosexuality.

6.2 Under One Sky Presentations/Workshops

6.2.1 Voscur Equalities Conference
The researchers delivered three workshops over the course of the research. The first was part of the Equalities-day funded by Bristol infrastructure organisation Voscur, where the researchers delivered two afternoon workshops. The purpose of the workshop was to promote the Project and to recruit participants. The workshops focussed on the invisibility of LGB-BME individuals and questioned the extent to which BME, Faith, and LGB identities are seen as mutually exclusive. A further aim following from the first was to alert organisations to the realities behind how communities are depicted and portrayed. Often this has not taken a nuanced view of gender, sexual orientation, and intra-ethnic divisions and can reinforce intra-community oppression.
6.2.2 LGBT Awareness Day Avon and Somerset Constabulary Headquarters HQ, 27th February 2009

The researchers and manager delivered presentations drawing upon the background to the project and some of the material used in the Voscur workshop. These challenged the various criminal justice employees present to consider the multiple identities that people hold and therefore to be sensitive to issues of multiple oppression and multiple identities within equalities groups. This presentation in the main lecture auditorium (to approx 30-40 people) was part of a wider day of presentations given by LGBT organisations. The presentation helped to promote the Project and the Forum to the Constabulary, as well as providing opportunities for networking between LGB organisations.

6.2.3 Race Privilege and Identity 1st April 2009

The researchers were approached by organisers of Bristol’s Queer Café collective to deliver a presentation as part of a national conference held at the St Werburgh’s community centre. Simon Nelson accepted an invitation to contribute alongside the researchers. Over twenty five people attended the presentation.

The researchers gave an overview of the Project with findings to date, followed by a presentation by Simon Nelson of the struggles of BME-LGB people in Britain.

As a result of the event, the researchers were approached by, and recruited, an LGB-BME individual who took part in the event. Overall the event served to promote the Project to a number of individuals and organisational representatives from across Britain.

6.3 Promoting and Recruiting participants for the Under One Sky Project

The Under One Sky researchers recruited interviewees by promoting the project through:

a. adverts in ward and city magazines and newsletters;
b. presentations at events;
c. flyers at community venues;
d. interviews on local radio such as Ujima, BBC Black Echo and the joint Muslim Jewish radio station Salaam Shalom;

e. emails to infrastructure organisations;

f. publicity on Bristol LGB Forum website and sent to its membership list.

6.3.1 Composition of Focus group Participants

Between October 2008 and May 2009 the workers conducted 6 focus group sessions and four one-to-one interviews with BME-LGB people. In total 19 LGB men and women were interviewed. Nine were of African Caribbean descent, two African, one East Asian, and three from South Asia. Of these ten were women and nine men, 4 were aged 20-25, 13 were 30-45 and 2 were 45-50 years of age.

The interviews were conducted in the hired rooms of community venues with the exception of two interviews that took place at the homes of the interviewees. Four members of our sample group were brought up in Bristol, whilst the remaining fifteen had been brought up in other parts of the country or abroad.

Responses to some of questions varied dependent upon whether respondents had been brought up in Bristol, migrated from other parts of the UK, or had come to Bristol from overseas. All interviews were semi-structured.

Not all the questions detailed in the appendix were posed to the groups as questions were sometimes made redundant by responses given elsewhere in the discussion, or were not relevant to the participants. Questions around physical and mental well-being were irrelevant to the cohort interviewed. This perhaps reiterates the need to test this sample against further interviews with LGB-BME resident in Bristol. Participants engaged fully and comprehensively with the discussion. Consequently, time constraints – each session was for an hour and half – also meant it was not always possible to cover all the questions.

The following is a summation of responses to lines of enquiry.
Chapter Seven: Qualitative Analysis

7.1 Growing up LGB and BME
Most of the participants stated that, during their youth, representations of LGB people were either non-existent or overwhelmingly negative. The comment by an African Caribbean gay man typified media depictions for a generation of LGB people:

“Well, from the media it was not good. It was, let me think, ‘Are you being served?’ was on TV, you know, Mr. Humphries.”

Participants in one focus group exchanged the following experiences:

A Gay male said,
“there was no visual or image that I could identify with in Bristol’

His fellow participant, a lesbian woman, agreed but added that was with the exception of,
“Greenham common (where the image was) of dirty lesbians – dirty lesbians quite literally.”

Other respondents mentioned ‘Dick Emery’ ‘Danny La Rue’ and ‘John Inman’. Most respondents felt that these role models were negative. None of the respondents could recall seeing an LGB-BME person depicted in the local or national media.

The following statement (by a British born woman) summarized the experience of many participants:

“Being gay wasn’t on the agenda, it wasn’t part of any discussion, or any experience that I had.”... “It’s not a part of the conversation with the community or within the home.”

Participants from Central America and Africa explained that perceptions of lesbian women and men were rigidly gendered.

“I went to a gay club here and we saw the difference because here, I can’t say all the lesbian girls, but most of them, looked like a man
with short hair and in Mexico you can't have as a friend like that style... I have long hair, I make-up myself, so it's not a problem if I say to someone, “OK I’m a lesbian”, they will say “OK fine”. But if I cut my hair and wear clothes like a man they will shut me out. Maybe it’s difficult to understand, but it’s the way.”

Such constructions of gender did not allow for alternative sexual identities. An East African lesbian participant explained that:

“No, no, I think. I don’t know. The way I understand homosexuality and things is different. I think that homosexuality and lesbianism is a very Western, Euro-centric term, so I think I really wasn’t in tune or aware that I was different as such. So earlier on when I said there was something “deeply different” about me. I didn’t know... it was just oddness, something that I couldn’t really put a finger on or anything. So I dunno. I hadn’t seen or hadn’t met anyone.”

Her testimony was shared by another African lesbian who explained that, in her home society, homosexuality was seen as a sickness imposed by the Western world,

“that it is ‘not something that Black people do’; Black LGB people were considered to have been brainwashed by White people.”

A unique exception was that of a young student who explained:

“I think my experience is quite different from everybody else’s because I have two mums who are lesbians since I was born, so I’ve always had really positive awareness of LGBT people.”

### 7.2 Coming to terms with their sexuality

The question was designed to reveal the barriers or not, that BME-LGB people faced on their journey towards self acceptance.

Most respondents identified their attraction to people of their gender from either before the age of ten or during adolescence. Some shared their resistance to accepting their sexuality:

“...when I got to about age 12, 13, I think then I realised the horrible truth and thought ‘Don’t like this. Don’t want to be there. Don’t want this caper and have no choice’. “
For others their awareness of sexuality was more discursive. Clearly, while care must be taken not to suggest some general statement, the internal journey to understanding sexual orientation appears more exploratory among the lesbian women we interviewed. One respondent illustrates a recurring theme:

“I don’t know, I think, looking back just at when I was young, probably 15, 16, ... I hadn’t had a framework to see myself, sort of like, somebody who’s attracted to a particular gender, I just seemed to like girls, but I didn’t really [think], I didn’t think in that way, sort of defining way, and then still I don’t.”

Another female respondent stated,

“First time I came out, I fell in love with a woman [in her 20s].”

For most the journey towards understanding and accepting their sexuality involved a fear of social and familial reactions. For many respondents the decision to come out was born out of frustration with living covertly.

7.3 Coming Out
Participants were asked a variety of questions concerning their experiences of ‘coming out’ to family and friends. As previously suggested most respondents were aware of their sexuality from an early age but as one respondent described:

“[It] was a ‘staged process’. I came out to myself when I was 20 but I didn’t come out to my family until I was in my mid 20s, because you have to get comfortable with yourself before you can start sharing that with other people.”

Respondents consistently cited coming out to family as a difficult experience. Fear of estrangement from family and friends was consistently mentioned. Underlying this fear was an internalisation of parental expectations.

One respondent described preparing himself for the worse:

“When I decided to tell my parents at 17, I knew here would be that view with the blocks, that I would be chucked out, I’d gone through the stage of planning for the worst and if it didn’t, then I’d have been like “wow!” but, from what I was hearing, and I
knew my parents attitudes to gay issues, I had prepared myself to be thrown out and to walk!" 47

As in the response to the aforementioned question, hesitation regarding coming out arose for some women respondents around defining sexuality.

One respondent explained:

“I just didn’t have a name for it but I knew what I was and it wasn’t the norm.”48

whilst the respondent in the following quotation felt that defining her sexuality was complicated by having:

“two lesbian mums... because it’s not what they’re used to, and I wasn’t sure if I was, you know, just more open to the concept of being in a same sex relationship because of my upbringing and whether this was normality for me, so that I was actually denying the chance that I might be heterosexual. Kind of like working the other way around.”49

Three of the women respondents described themselves as queer.

Becoming involved in heterosexual relationships was a strategy used by some respondents to avoid or deny feelings of attraction to the same sex:

“I had a boyfriend because I said, ‘There’s something wrong with me because if I’m a girl I have to be in attraction with boys...if I had a boyfriend maybe in a few years, I made a few mistake, I’m not gay, I’m heterosexual.”50

Her reflection was shared by other respondents who struggled with self acceptance, particularly in more conservative contexts.

The actuality of parental responses was diverse. One respondent was surprised to find that her mother had been in a relationship with her fictive ‘aunt’ for much of her adult life.51 This was also the case for one African Caribbean bisexual male respondent,

“well before I told him [my Father] he told me he was bisexual; I was stunned, I was just stunned.”52
Unequal acceptance among parents was also mentioned:

“my mum was alright but my brother and my dad and that were homophobic” 53

Others described parental denial:

“...I’m sure my mum knows, but she doesn’t say anything. But it’s a big problem for my dad because we are very close. And I’m sure he’s waiting for that, oh you know, ‘I have a boyfriend, I will get married.” 54

For some respondents parental hostility eventually gave way to an uneasy rapprochement. Two female respondents described how their parents referred to their partners as their ‘friend.’

For one gay man his sexuality compounded an already abusive relationship with his mother:

“She called me a poof before I knew what the word meant” 55

Mature respondents questioned the validity of ‘coming out.’ They preferred instead to challenge the heterosexist assumptions of colleagues and friends as and when relationships were discussed.

An underlying theme in the extracts above was a fear of disappointing familial and societal mores. Such fears were sometimes justified. A dual heritage lesbian woman described her rejection by her African Caribbean father. This rejection was compounded by the differences between her feminist politics and those of her father, a Catholic employed by the RAF:

“He [Father] was very disappointed in me. I did all the things she couldn’t when he came here. I did all the studying. Got a BA la, la, which meant nothing to me but meant everything to him. But then I went out with a dirty lesbian from Greenham” 56

When asked as to the reason for her father’s response she replied:

“It was about my girlfriend being quiet butch. He found that very threatening. Like she was trying to be a man.” 57

This participant described her pain at being rejected by family members and friends who could not share her joy:
“I was very hurt because I had fallen in love for the first time.”

She described herself as being “naïve” for not anticipating homophobia. Arguably her testimony reveals a distinction between her values and those of her Caribbean parent, raised in a society where differences in sexual orientation are less accepted.

Her response also echoes that of respondents overseas who cited that rigid constructs of gender were an actor in perpetuating homophobic views. Her, and other accounts by British born participants, indicate the continuity between the experiences of BME people born in England and overseas.

The following statement by a gay African male further illustrates the convergence between social and familial mores. He explained:

“as an African male you have to be head of the family, as head of the family you must have wife, wife and kids. When you have wife and kids you they respect you a lot, you...merit...deserve a lot of respect.”

7.4 Harassment and Discrimination

Most participants had experienced some form of verbal or physical abuse as children and or as adults. Male participants that described themselves as ‘camp,’ reported being physically and verbally bullied at school. This was true for a Bristol-born male and an African-born male participant.

One respondent became the target of bullying at school as she was the child of lesbian parents. Another participant, a male resident in the BS5 area, was subject to a long campaign of abuse from neighbours:

“All the time, constantly. That’s the one thing [sexual orientation] that can be brought into your face, regardless of anything else, so that in itself was a marker of sorts.”

The experiences of rejection and harassment often overlapped. Some participants were asked related questions comparing their experiences of discrimination in BME, Faith and White
The following exchange between a lesbian and a gay participant is insightful in this regard. She described her sense of “Being owned by black men...it can be a look it can be very subtle” and went on to describe an experience that developed her sensibility of this:

“The only time I'd experienced homophobic abuse was from a Black guy...what happened the day before I walked down the street [in St Werburghs] he whistled, I just gave him a look and the next day he saw me with my girlfriend and he just beat me up, just beat me up in the street - they had to literally drag him off me. And although it was an extreme response, it was an extreme situation, it happened only once, but that’s the feeling I have around Black men.”

The assault informed her caution around affirming her sexuality in BME circles:

“But, I would say now I am less likely to come out among Black people than amongst White people. I dunno, I’m just more aware of that. Definitely.”

She explained that as a “light skinned, dual heritage woman” she was also placed at the apex of an aesthetic hierarchy, created by the transatlantic slave trade with the result that this intensified the dynamics of ownership within Black men.

In relation to the above quotation her fellow participant rejoined:

“I have to reiterate I feel exactly the same. I think it’s because of our notions of Black communities and also Asian communities generally; that it’s something that is simply not accepted at all and you think twice if it’s a group of BME people, about being explicit about your sexuality, but if it’s a group of say White people, you maybe wouldn’t think twice about saying it, you wouldn’t think twice. I do identify with that, it’s something I am quite conscious of now than when I was at school.”

He went on to suggest that growing up as a Muslim:
“no way would I think of saying anything [about my sexual orientation] in that community because I knew they wouldn’t be supportive.”

The experience described by the female participant above was shared by another lesbian respondent. She found her experience of verbal abuse particularly surprising as she had not encountered anything similar when previously living in London:

“In Bristol, I’ve been on the receiving end of both racial and homophobic abuse and that hasn’t happened to me directly in London, and I grew up in London.”

She went on to suggest: “Bristol is a different kettle of fish.”

For this and the previous female respondent, such incidents led them to be particularly guarded in relationships with men. Both participants were keen to avoid being perceived as courting male attention. These testimonies point to the complex multi-faceted nature of oppression: gender, race, and sexuality cannot be easily extricated. Clearly in the assault described above, race intensified a territorialism built on patriarchy.

Some respondents who were not out at work revealed the demoralising effect of being part of a work culture where homophobic comments were freely exchanged. However, many participants revealed a willingness to challenge the homophobia and heterosexism of peers, colleagues and strangers.

The following quote summarizes the resilience of a number of the participants:

“It was much harder when you were younger but as you survive, you see yourself as a survivor, you become more adamant, you’re not going to be pushed back into cupboard, you’re not going to let some youngster turn around and get away with calling you ‘batty man’ and ‘chi chi boy’”

Instead he drew support from siblings and friends. In a similar vein a woman participant who had experienced homophobia from her family commented:
“I learnt about the politics of who I am through meeting other women, mostly lesbian.”

Two of our interviewees were not out to their families.

However not all participants felt that BME communities were more homophobic than the White community. Moreover, homophobia on the one hand was balanced against racism. The underlying tension described by many LGB people in the study was of a lack of understanding and acceptance of the fluidity of identity from White, BME, LGB and non-LGB communities.

As explained by a participant of dual heritage:

“I encounter unease with either my ethnicity or sexuality.”

She went on to describe her disappointment when experiencing opprobrium from lesbian friends during a brief heterosexual relationship.

As suggested by the secondary literature, BME-LGB people in Bristol are sometimes made to feel that sexual and ethnic identities are incompatible.

7.5 Faith
The family lives of many our respondents were characterised by religious belief and adherence. Put succinctly by one respondent

“As Black people religion plays an important part in our lives whether as Christians or Muslims.”

Furthermore they felt that religious teachings were the main cause of their struggle with self and social acceptance. Respondents referred to their encounters with the Biblical stories of ‘Adam and Eve’ and ‘Sodom and Gomorrah’, with the teaching that homosexuality was an abomination in the eyes of God.

A pivotal departure point for one respondent was the realization that,

“If these stories were true then I am Satanic...that’s how others see me.”
More than one participant described religion as oppressive and some participants noted the marked divergence between what was professed in the pulpit and the actuality.

One participant stated that he

“could not cope with the fact that the two clergymen he knew came on to him.”\(^{72}\)

He felt this to be totally at odds with his perception of Christians and clergymen. Another respondent reported:

“I heard something about the pastor in my mother’s church (Pentecostal)...who was seen in a gay club in London. When he was challenged he said ‘Oh I’m preaching’ which is a cop-out obviously.”\(^{73}\)

Having experienced rejection, having struggled against the internalisation of negative Christian precepts, many respondents chose to abandon the Church.

Only three participants were from Muslim backgrounds but their experiences mirrored that of Christian counterparts in the study. In reflecting upon her formative years in East Africa one respondent explained:

“When we were learning about the Qu’ran and we would go to what we call a madrasah. Basically, I’m saying, it was crystal clear that homosexuality and also their kinds of faith, they see it as a kind of ...kind of stuff they must challenge and eliminate and get rid of this sin.... The teachings what the scholars were saying about homosexuality was horrible, just horrible.”\(^{74}\)

This participant felt that the lack of congruence between her sexuality and her faith was a primary reason for turning away from Islam and faith generally:

“..the main thing was about my sexuality...because it was completely against negotiation or kind of finding homosexuality...Homosexuality couldn’t find the place for, in Islam or Islamic teaching. I dunno if I could be gay and in Islam. Anyway it was both my sexuality and also my kind of...lifestyle
combined that I couldn’t really fit or be compatible with the
religion that I grew up in.” 

For another respondent her rejection of Islam emerged on
encountering the Curse of Ham whilst a young Qu’ranic school
pupil:

“I came across a part of the Qu’ran that said Black people
were children of sin and I thought why am I following a religion
that says I will never be good and I will go to hell because of our
skin colour ... ‘cause our skin is a mark of Cain.”

This respondent became involved with Christianity and then the
Ba’hai faith but disengaged from the latter when she again found
conflict with her sexuality in her experience of that Faith.

The above, and previous accounts, illustrate the difficulty of
extricating Faith from wider questions of culture and race.

As expressed by the following, some participants argued that
Faith underpinned heterosexism and homophobia:

“I do have a problem with organised religion - I’m quiet scared
of organised religion. I feel I will never be able to fully identify,
be that complete mould I’m meant to be. I’ll never be able to
achieve that”.

He defined ‘the mould’ as:

“the heterosexual relationship, children.”

This participant had been raised within Muslim and Christian
contexts.

One interviewee noted:

“the Church had shifted a lot on race, on gender, on disability but
cannot seem to find its way to manoeuvre itself around the thorny
issue of sexuality.”

The inability of Faiths generally to shift on sexual orientation led
many participants to reject organised religion. As expressed by
one former Christian:
“It’s hard to be somewhere where someone is slating you.”

Another felt that the journey towards acceptance must come first from the Church:

“I can reconcile myself to the church but can the church reconcile itself to me?”

Some respondents steered a path to their own understanding of faith. As one respondent explained:

“I just focus on spirituality but I do sort of draw from different religions. In Hinduism they say you are the sum total of all experiences, ‘God is love’; in Islam, ‘there is no God but Allah.’”

Some participants remained committed to their Faith. They challenged Faith teachings in light of their own experience. The LGB-inclusive Metropolitan Church was mentioned by some respondents, but none attended. The participants who professed a religious Faith had chosen to remain within the congregations in which they were born. The following echoes a point by other participants who stayed in their Faith communities:

“I was born to be gay. He created me to be gay so I have to praise him.”

Some, but not all, respondents were asked a secondary question of whether they would access services offered by Faith groups. Unsurprisingly given the testimonies, none specified a desire to do so.

7.6 Services

The interviewees were asked a range of questions on service provision. These questions attempted to ascertain what, if any, services existed for LGB people during their coming out, if they would have made use of these services, and their attitudes to those services that now exist. For respondents from Africa and Latin America the question reflected a broader issue of socio-political denial in their home societies. Among British born interviewees responses ranged from an unwillingness to use
services - “I wasn’t the type to ring up” - to a lack of awareness that support services existed.

Most respondents felt that services to the LGB community in general were hard to find, if not invisible. A respondent from Central America explained:

“It’s not easy to find information about the lesbian organisations or lesbian groups here and I just saw the paper on the … newsletter and got your email but there’s not more information. I’m gay and I want to find information. And if you are accessible, if you put some information in the City Council or more information in the schools or something like the Arnolfini, the different places that you go to often … cinemas, I don’t know, to find information easier, it would be great.”

Two participants felt that there was a lack of services to the LGB community generally and that this needed to be tackled. In being critical of the LGB scene one respondent commented:

“Gay guys are a bit weird anyway - their personalities I think it’s the way they are treated and supported in this society: there is no support.”

One respondent was particularly critical of the lack of engagement by the ‘White’ LGB organisations, including the Forum, with BME-LGB people prior to the Under One Sky Project. She asked that this should be mentioned in the report.

The East African participant explained that learning about services was more problematic for BME-LGB individuals:

“I wouldn’t say it… it’s only White LGB homosexuals can access [these] services. I’m not saying that. I think it’s open to everyone, but what I am trying to say is that ethnic minorities are less positioned to find out where these services are”

However, like the aforementioned and quoted participant, she felt this was

“…probably because no-one wants to come out and find out.”

Criticism of the visibility of LGB organisations cut across generations. A young lesbian woman respondent commented:
“I know a lot of my friends, peers who are my age, probably benefited a lot just from the Internet and I think that’s because the services that are available aren’t visible, so they weren’t able to benefit from actual services which were intended for their use, and because you know, just internet chat boards, and trying to get in touch with anybody in a similar situation, and I noticed it with a lot of people.”

They also noted that there was a lack of services to support families of LGB offspring.

Respondents relied upon informal networks for support, ‘friends’, ‘clubs’, ‘the internet’, ‘the women’s camp.’ But more than support, these networks clearly provided a sense of belonging. As one respondent described:

“I’ve got the support of my peers now, my new-found family ‘cause I knew this family would be supportive of me regardless... my new family, my new-found family and friends were there, offering me somewhere to stay, and saying ‘this is about you.’”

7.7 The LGB Scene
The interviews reveal that LGB pubs and clubs were an important part of coming out. For many they were the first experience of being part of a LGB community.

One respondent gave a particularly salutary example of the importance of an inclusive environment when discussing the BME LGB London club Bootlicious:

“and it brings tears to my eyes still, y’know, young Black lesbians and bisexuals enjoying themselves in an environment where they can be themselves.”

This was mirrored in Bristol by the experience of several interviewees. One explained that clubs acted as a support network:

“There were probably support networks, but I didn’t get into contact with any of them. There was a pub which I found out, then I sort of got to the club. It was an eye opener ‘cause I just realised that I wasn’t the only person that was [gay] and there were men of different ages, so they were older than me,
younger than me, all the way through. There was a sense of freedom ‘cause you could just be yourself.”  

Respondents were asked a range of questions on the inclusivity of the LGB scene. These questions were designed to ascertain if BME-LGB people resident in Bristol felt that they were welcomed or catered for by the local scene.

There was a general consensus among the respondents that Bristol’s LGB pubs and clubs did not cater for BME people. A point generally raised was that music policy in the LGB scene did not reflect the diversity of interest groups in Bristol. Perhaps one effect of this has been to compound the lack of BME engagement with the scene. Most of the participants who mentioned going to Bristol pubs and clubs recall being the only Black or Asian person, or being one of a consistently small number of faces. There was a marked similarity in this regard between recollections of Bristol’s LGB scene in previous decades and today. One respondent remembered:

“There weren’t that many Black people around at that time, but I didn’t expect there would be, and the few that I did see were usually on the periphery of anything... There were a lot of strange things you had to go through because of that fact, I mean, because you were Black you were almost preyed on then, if you’d allow that.”

The flip side to the eroticisation of Black LGB individuals was described by a young focus group participant. She experienced racist stereotyping in Bristol LGB clubs:

“I used to go out on the scene all of the time. I was like the only Black lesbian there and there was my Black gay friend, too. But people just judge you... I dunno they just judge me, just cos I don’t dress like the White people, with spiky hair...Then I get the whole drugs’ question. Once I had an afro comb in my pocket and the bouncer said I had got a knife. Just little things like that.”

Discrimination of this nature was not mentioned by other participants but, to reiterate, most of the focus group participants did not engage with the scene.
Some respondents explained that if they wanted a clubbing experience they would travel to London’s LGB clubs, in particular the BME-LGB club Bootlicious.

The ‘Whiteness’ of the scene was less of a concern for participants who were born or raised outside Britain for much of their adult lives. Arguably this was due to the elation of finding an inclusive LGB environment. Both West African respondents explained that gay clubs were underground in their home societies and were by invitation only. A lesbian woman participant explained ‘out’ gay men and women risked being imprisoned and imported in her home society. 94

However it must be noted that a number of our respondents felt that as thirty- and forty-something’s they had outgrown loud pubs and clubs generally.

“There aren’t enough places where people can just chat and vibe fully without noise and drink” one respondent remarked. 95

Lesbian women in particular set up their own informal networks.

One respondent felt the scene does not reflect the diversity or meet the needs of the LGB community:

“Guys you see out on the scene are no reflection on who’s actually out there from grown women of our parent’s generation [onwards].” 96

It is perhaps worth noting, by way of instructive contrast, that one respondent who had lived in Sweden explained how different LGB clubs catered to different age groups. These clubs were supported by funds from government.

One respondent proffered the view that Bristol’s music scene in the ‘70s and early ‘80s was sufficiently inclusive to cater to straight, gay Black and White audiences. He described how a typical night out would encompass gay and gay friendly clubs such as
the Oasis, the Moulin Rouge and the Elephant and might culminate in The Bristol-renowned Dugout club in the centre.

“..you could hear so much of a different music [in the Dugout] and the thing is, the lines in that place were blurred, cause everybody went. And they all went there with an agenda of sorts, ‘cause if you were going to look for a bloke in there, you could pull. It just boils down to how discreet you were and how much they’d had to drink.”

The respondent felt that the divisions between straight and gay clubs became more rigid with the spread of HIV and AIDS in the 1980s. One might draw from this observation that BME-LGB people were left without venues with which they could readily identify.

Owing to time constraints not all respondents were asked if they perceived BME venues to be welcoming. Those who did reply to this question suggested that this would depend upon the type of event. They agreed however that they would avoid outward displays of affection towards a sex partner and discussing issues around being LGB.

As one participant explained:

“..my sexuality [in a straight BME environment] doesn’t come into play unless I am with a partner and again I would be aware in an environment as to the appropriateness of any contact, so I am less likely to go with a partner to the Criterion [BME straight pub] and have a pint and be talking about this and that; I would to go into the Bristol Bear [LGB gay pub], even though I might get looks from others as in, y’know, ‘there’s two darkies in the corner’.”

The participant went on to argue

“Everyone’s behaviour is policed by an environment.”

7.8 BME-LGB Organisations
All the participants agreed that they would like to see a ‘group’ ‘project’ or ‘network’ established for LGB-BME people in Bristol. For some this was essentially a social need,
“more clubs for Black guys and girls playing reggae music.”

Others suggested that they would like to find spaces primarily for socialising free of the frissons of club culture. Seconded by a friend and young lesbian participant, one interviewee commented:

“It would just be nice to talk to people who are Black and gay and exchange experiences. We’re the only two Black girls on the scene and have been for the last three years and you can’t go up to someone in a club and ask them what are your experiences – you can’t go on Gaydar and ask what are your experiences - people will think your hitting on them. For other young people as well, ‘cause we’re not the only young people, there are others around.”

Some participants pointed to the need for more explicit support services for BME-LGB living in Bristol. One participant described her experience in London working for a support organisation, as follows.

“For seven years I worked for a group called London Friend which provided ‘coming out’ support and advice to people who were exploring their sexuality and I facilitated ‘coming out’ groups for many years... It was a ‘coming out’ group and a support group. And people had something, had something they could move on to after they’d gone through.”

She suggested that a similar organisation could be established in Bristol.

For a gay male participant the need for a ‘service’, ‘a network’ or ‘organisation’ was of urgent importance,

“because young gay people are still people suffering in their family homes they are told they are possessed by the devils.”

The findings from the focus group do not conflict with findings elsewhere.

BME-LGB Bristolians described a lack of recognition by LGB and non-LGB providers that ranges from club culture to organisational support with ‘coming out.’ These sentiments can be seen in the
context of the fact that much of the non-commercial LGB services simply do not exist or are simply unfunded in Bristol. With little or no funding available the capacity for LGB organisations to outreach to the wider LGB community is severely limited.

It must be stressed however, that three quarters of the qualitative study participants were of African and African Caribbean descent. Many were students or professionals. Whilst invaluable their experiences cannot be said to provide anything other than a snapshot of the variety of BME-LGB life. Anecdotal evidence from non-LGB service providers such as Bristol Mind suggest that South East Asian and Somali individuals present in Bristol are often at a loss as to where to find support. However the strategies employed in this research did not succeed in attracting these harder to reach groups. Further sustained outreach and new modes of working are needed to contact these groups.
Chapter Eight: Quantitative analysis

This section sets out the parameters of the questionnaire and a selection of the questions.

The purpose of the Under One Sky questionnaire was to ascertain the views of Bristol residents on a range of questions about sexual orientation, ethnic identities and Faith communities. It was intended to give a sense of the context within which BME LGB and BME LGB people of faith operate and give a sense of how they are perceived, and how they perceive themselves. In Bristol this last point is particularly worth investigating given the Easton Schools issue mentioned in previous sections. The intention was that the quantitative responses could form a baseline, complementing more in-depth data provided by the one-to-one interviews and focus groups.

There were 270 responses to the questionnaire from residents of Bristol or the surrounding area. Those who did not provide details of their residency were deleted from the database prior to the data analysis.

Aside from asking for the first part of the postcode, respondents were not required to answer every question.

Question headings were:

a) About you – demographic information, including age, gender, sexuality and faith
b) Abuse
c) Views – asking how strongly people agreed or disagreed with a series of questions or statements
d) Meeting People
e) Discrimination
f) Identity – as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and BME.
The questionnaire was online for two months and issued in two stages. Firstly with the website’s address and a brief explanation issued directly to specific voluntary sector organisations, including Equalities South West, Voscur, Terrence Higgins Trust (THT), and to informal, community-based networks like Missing Lesbians, so that they could upload it to their website and cascade the questionnaire as they thought appropriate. Secondly, the Forum emailed the questionnaire to its whole membership, as well as uploading it onto its website.

Locally, the existence of the online questionnaire was promoted by:

i) the production and dissemination of a business card-size booklet distributed by THT’s volunteers;
ii) adverts or articles in the community newsletters of St Paul’s, the Talk of Totterdown, and in Voscur’s and the Black Development Agency (BDA)’s magazines;
iii) Delivery of paper copies of the questionnaire to St Paul’s Learning Centre, Awaz Utaoh, the BDA and Bristol Muslim Cultural Society.

Furthermore, national websites such as Somali Gay Community and Imaan were asked to include a link to the questionnaire, in the hope that this would encourage responses from these communities within Bristol. Whilst both were willing to be of assistance and posted a hyperlink to the questionnaire on their respective websites, there is no evidence that respondents accessed the questionnaire in that way. We also had no response from some self-organised networks, despite attempting contact on several occasions; we cannot say whether this was because of lack of resources or unwillingness to engage. Initially 70 questionnaires were completed online.

Two thousand hard copies of the questionnaire were delivered directly to households in BS3, BS5, BS7 and BS10 areas of Bristol, of which 199 were returned. These areas were chosen for two reasons: either because they have a high density of BME and of LGB people, or because they were chosen as comparators.
The intention was that some of the questions would capture the environments that BME-LGB people and BME-LGB people of Faith occupy, and others, how they are perceived and perceive themselves.

196 were input (three were not completed though had comments written which criticised the validity of the questionnaire or LGBT people themselves) and a further 4 were completed online.

8.1 Sample of the Demographics responses

8.1.1 Age

266 people completed this question. Just over a fifth (21.5%) were under 30; just under a quarter (24.1%) were 30-39 years of age and just over a quarter (26.7%) were aged 40-49. Those 50-59 years of age provided 15.7% of the respondents, while 6% of respondents were 60-69 years old and another 6% were over 70.

8.1.2 Gender

266 respondents answered this question.

169 (63.5%) identified as female;

96 (36.1%) as male;

1 (0.4%) as other.
8.1.3 Country of Birth

268 people responded to the question on country of birth as follows:

- UK (90.7%)
- Europe (3%)
- Russia/E. Europe (0.7%)
- Indian subcontinent (0.4%)
- China/Japan/South East Asia (0.7%)
- Australia/New Zealand (0.7%)
- Middle East (0.4%)
- Africa (19%)
- USA/Canada (0.7%)

Three respondents (1.1%) chose the ‘elsewhere’ category.

When it came to ethnic origin the broad categories were broken down as follows:

a) White:

- British (223) 84.2%
- Irish (8) 3%
- W. European n(6) 2.3%
- E. European (5) 19%
- Other (4) 15%
b) South Asian:

- **Indian**: 11% (3)
- **Pakistani**: 0.8% (2)
- **Other Asian**: 0.4% (1)

![Bar chart showing South Asian ethnic groups]

c) African:

- **Caribbean**: 2.6%
- **Somali**: 0.8%
- **Other African**: 0.8%
- **Other Black**: 0.4%

![Pie chart showing African ethnic groups]

d) South East Asian: 1 (0.4%) as Chinese.

e) Other ethnic group: 9 (3.4%).

Three respondents (1.1%) chose not to state their ethnic origin(s) and 10 chose to use the text box to tell us more about their ethnic origins which included: mixed heritage, dual heritage and British Indian.

Essentially, 19 of the 270 respondents (7.1%) identified themselves as non-White. The question however, invited individuals to tick as many terms of self-identity as applied:

“How would you describe your ethnic origin, or origins? If you are of multiple heritage, please tick all that apply.”

So whilst we can state absolute numbers for Indian, African Caribbean and Pakistani, for example, it is not possible to be precise about who is multiple or dual heritage.
Potentially there might have been scope to cross-compare this by putting in markers for when more than one answer was ticked. However, a separate question would have more easily yielded clearer more nuanced information.

### 8.2 Sexuality and relationships

Of the 262 people who responded to a question asking them to describe their sexual orientation, the responses were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexuality</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asexual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay men</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those listed as other are respondents who stated they didn’t like to define their sexuality. So, at least 46 (17.4%) of the individuals who answered this question are lesbian, gay or bisexual.

When asked to describe their relationship status, of the 265 respondents 8 (3%) described themselves as celibate and 72 (27.2%) as single.

Of the others:

- a) 5 (1.9%) in a civil partnership;
- b) 75 (28.3%) married;
- c) 49 (18.5%) cohabiting;
- d) 21 (7.9%) divorced;
- e) 5 (1.9%) separated;
- f) 5 (1.9%) widowed; and
- g) 25 (9.4%) other.
8.3 Disability
Slightly fewer (251) respondents answered the question about whether or not they identify as a Disabled person with the majority, 215 (85.7%) saying they did not.

Of those who did, the results were as follows:
   a)  7 (2.8%) had a physical impairment,
   b)  1 (0.4%) a visual impairment,
   c)  1 (0.4%) a hearing impairment,
   d) 14 (5.6%) a mental health condition,
   e)  2 (0.8%) a learning difficulty or cognitive impairment, and
   f) 16 (6.4%) identified as having a long term and/or life-limiting illness or health condition.

8.4 Faith and spiritual belief
Some 258 people responded to the question about Faith or spiritual belief.

Of these:

- Agnostic 15.9% (41)
- Atheist 22.9% (59)
- A Higher Power 16.3% (42)
- Buddhist 12% (3)
- Catholic 6.2% (16)
- Christian 22.7% (57)
- Hindu 0.8% (1)
- Humanist 16% (4)
- Muslim 2.7% (7)
- Jewish 0.8% (1)
- Pagan 3.1% (8)
- Other 7.4% (19)
This included respondents who had previously identified with a particular Faith but no longer held those views.

8.5 Views
People were asked a series of questions regarding particular equalities communities.

8.5.1 Question 2 asked people to complete the sentence:
‘I believe that same sex relationships are ...’.

In total 263 responded in the following ways –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘I believe that same sex relationships are ...’</th>
<th>Replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“something to be celebrated”</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“just as valid as heterosexual ones”</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“not real relationships like heterosexual ones”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“not understandable, but none of my business”</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“a private matter, not for public display”</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“wrong/unnatural”</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“against God’s will”</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other comment not listed</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short, close to 76% of those who answered considered that same sex relationships were just as valid as heterosexual ones, or at least something to be celebrated.

Among the 23 respondents who answered “not real relationships”, “wrong/unnatural”, or “against god’s will” the prevalence within the various age groups were:

21-24 = 1; 35-39 = 6; 40-44 = 1; 45-49 = 1; 50-54 = 1; 55-59 = 3; 60-64 = 1; 65-69 = 3; over 75 = 4.

Six were female, 16 male.
This suggests that there are generational/gender differences.
People over 35 (and mostly male) view same-sex relationships negatively. Though the sample is statistically small, more women than men completed the survey (roughly 2:1) as a whole and the majority of those women appear to have liberal views in this regard.

Other points to note here are related to ethnicity and Faith.
  a) Eight respondents identified as Christian; two as agnostic; two as atheist; four believe in a ‘higher power’; two Catholic; two Muslim; and two other.
  b) Eighteen identified as White British; one as White Eastern European; one Somali African; two Other African; and one Other.

8.5.2 Question 4 asked whether respondents thought it was appropriate for schools to teach children about the equal value and rights of people from different groups. In total 255 people answered this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number who agreed</th>
<th>% who agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disabled people</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>98.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith groups</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>87.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender people</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/Minority Ethnic Groups</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romany/Gypsies</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travellers</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The table above gives the number and percentage of the responses to each of the options provided.)

Almost all of those who answered the question thought it appropriate that the equal value and rights of Disabled people should be taught in schools and, to a slightly lesser extent, the same for Minority Ethnic groups. Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people are in the middle of the table and Transgender people are in the lower half of the results.)
This perhaps shows some slippage between the liberal views declared in question 2 and indicates more interrogation of what people views mean in practice is required.

8.5.3 **Question 5** asked respondents what age they feel a child should be before it is appropriate to discuss the existence of same-sex relationships.

There were 262 responses to this question.

Adding all the percentages from birth to junior school together, over half of the respondents felt that children should know about the existence of same-sex relationships before the age 11.

Upon reflection, it would have been worthwhile to include a follow-up question about whether this is best done at school or at home.

**8.6 Observations**

The questionnaire is flawed. Some of the questions are ambiguous or offer too many overlapping choices that do not easily yield clear answers. For example, the question on employment didn’t easily allow someone who is working part-time
and studying part-time to show this apart from by completing the ‘Other’ section. It would be need to be revised somewhat before being used again.

However, the questionnaire has been a test of the willingness of the people of Bristol to engage in a debate around ethnic origin, sexual orientation and faith and, with an almost 10% response rate in relation to the hard copy version, it is clearly a line of enquiry worth pursuing.

The results of this small survey suggest Bristolians are well disposed towards the acceptance of same sex relationships and teaching about same sex relationships. In this regard the questionnaire suggests that service providers have little reason not to positively promote inclusivity in its many forms. However only 19 percent of the sample were of BME origin, so it is not clear what the actual attitudes prevalent in BME communities are. Without this information it is difficult to assess what might be the impact of openly promoting services to LGB BME individuals upon BME organisations.

What this does do is set a tentative benchmark for future working and highlight the need for a community development project long enough to develop trust, confidence and ‘safe space’ for engagement with LGB people from BME and Faith communities in a more organic way.
Chapter Nine: Recommendations

The following recommendations have arisen from the research findings, and the wider project.

9.1 The development of an LGB-BME network or organisation led by BME-LGB people.

9.2 To increase BME membership of the LGB Forum through a BME-LGB network (see point 1), the Under One Sky Project and any future initiatives that foreground the BME-LGB presence.

9.3 Support provision for BME-LGB people and their families.

9.4 Use of literature that clearly states and celebrates what provision is open to homosexual and heterosexual users among relevant service providers.

9.5 In relation to point 4, to encourage service providers to actively review their work, publicity and marketing.

9.6 For LGB and non-LGB organisations to increase the use of resources akin to ‘Out in the Family’ that depict BME people who are also LGB.

9.7 For the Forum, in partnership with BME organisations, to conduct an attitudinal survey of BME attitudes to LGB people. This is vital in order to provide an empirically-based understanding of the resistance to, and support for, LGB-BME same sex relationships in Bristol.

9.8 Increased visibility of generic LGB organisations through campaigning for more funding for this sector.

9.9 For LGB and BME organisations to cross-promote provision so as to ensure BME-LGB people are not missed.

9.10 Diversity training for BME, LGB, and Faith groups.
9.11 Broadening the range of strategies used to engage LGB groups that providers find “hard to reach” - particularly South Asian, African and Muslim groups.

9.12 Statutory authorities to support the Forum in their attempts to build dialogue and working relationships with BME and Faith groups.

9.13 That the Forum, in partnership with sympathetic Faith organisations and leaders, further provides and/or supports opportunities for informed discussion about Faith and sexual orientation - to ensure LGB-BME and non-BME people are exposed to a variety of Faith perspectives on sexuality.

9.14 For BME-Faith and non-Faith groups to be offered LGB awareness training so as to be made aware of the impact of homophobic pronouncements and to raise their awareness of the realities of LGB lives - perhaps especially those LGB people from within their own communities.

9.15 For LGB clubs and pubs to consider and support a greater diversity of LGB communities, to include the BME-LGB communities.

9.16 Existing LGB networks and social groups to actively promote their services to BME-LGB people and to receive support from relevant BME and BME-LGB organisations in doing so.

9.17 That Faith, LGB, and BME organisations recognise and actively challenge the direct and indirect internal exclusion of BME-LGB people within their communities, with the active encouragement of funders.

9.18 Continue the Forum’s efforts to promote cross-programming within LGBT and Black History Months, in partnership with relevant cultural providers.

The recommendations above would provide a foundation for the inclusion of BME-LGB people in the design and delivery of service provision.
However, the Under One Sky project has also revealed the need for a wider review of LGB services. If attempts to promote equality for the BME and Faith constituents of the LGB community are to be successful, the general poverty (of resources and capacity) caused by a lack of funding, and the discrimination and harassment disproportionately suffered by all LGB people, has to be tackled by all stakeholders in the city.
Chapter Ten: Conclusion

Although the eleven-month ‘Under One Sky’ project has laid the groundwork for identifying the needs of BME-LGB people in Bristol, further quantitative and qualitative research is necessary to broaden the understanding of particular groups that were not fully represented in the study. These include non-Christian LGB-BME people under 25, and BME-LGB people from working-class backgrounds.

However, the research can already be used to illustrate the lack of focused support for BME-LGB people and their families and the heterosexist norms operating in society as a whole in relation to BME people.

The project’s main achievement has been to highlight that which has largely been unspoken - simply that BME-LGB people exist. Invisibility has compounded and colluded in the erasure of the BME-LGB contribution to both BME and LGB communities. Similarly it has meant that both LGB and BME organisations have not served this, one of their most vulnerable and isolated constituents.

The report and its recommendations need to be built upon by all if Bristol is to embed fully inclusive, cross-equalities working as it seeks to develop a truly inclusive society.
Appendices

Appendix 1

Focus Group Questions

A1.1 Workers’ Script for the Introduction

a) Outline the project: It is EHRC funded and managed by the Bristol LG B Forum. The purpose of the project is to ascertain the experiences of people of BME origin and/or Faith in Bristol, in terms of service delivery, but more broadly in terms of inclusion within social networks that are BME and non-BME. Our aim is provide recommendations for service providers, and policy makers as to what would make Bristol more inclusive.

b) Reason for Focus Group: To consult with LG B-BME and Faith people to discover their experiences of being LG B and BME in Bristol. What if any encounters have they had with service providers? How might service provision be improved? Are these needs being met and how these services could be improved?

c) Confidentiality: The Forum adheres to a strict confidentiality policy. At this point it is mentioned that members may choose not to be identified at this meeting or in minutes.

d) Format of the interview: We will start with general pointers/open discussion and take some notes and extrapolate key points. We will attempt to steer discussion to ensure we cover some of the main points but not be too proscriptive. Please be frank, passionate but respectful of each others’ views. Try to avoid interjection.

e) Terminology: The workers will use the designation LG B people but participants are invited to self-describe using whatever terms with which participants are most comfortable they are comfortable.

Participants are invited to identify themselves if they wish to do so.
**A1.2 Section A - Formative Impressions of BME and non-BME LGB people**

*Quote:*

“My memories of gay men and lesbians are limited to stories about child molesters in the newspapers and quiet gossip among adults who wondered about the sexual orientation of the only male teacher in my elementary school.”

a) What was your knowledge and experience of LGBT people when you were growing up?

b) Optional: What were the sources of your formative impressions?

(N.B. Questions might touch upon media and or local figures. Try to cover both. The important point is the group’s response to such individuals. It may also include role models who were assumed to have been LGB.)

c) Has the perception of LGBT people improved in Bristol or worsened over the period you have lived in the city?

**A1.3 Section B - Coming to terms with your Sexuality**

A1.3.1 When did you realize that you were attracted to someone of the same sex?

A1.3.2 Was it easy for you to accept your sexuality?

A1.3.3 Were there any support networks or literature in existence that you knew of to help you with discussing your sexuality?

A1.3.4 Would you have felt comfortable accessing these services?

A1.3.4a) Optional: If not is that because they were White identified?

A1.3.5 What information or support groups, if any, did you encounter for helping your family understand your sexuality?

A1.3.6 Did they target, in any way, people of BME background?

A1.3.7 In your experience, who has been more accepting White or BME heterosexual friends?
A1.4 **Section C - Coming Out in Bristol**

Note for worker:
The aim of this section is to find out which if any LGB or BME associated venues are inclusive of LGB-BME people. Music, culture, lack of direct appeal may lead BME-LGB people to feel that they are not welcome. Fear of verbal and/or physical abuse precludes some people from accessing certain venues.

Quote:
“BME LGB communities are disproportionately affected by homophobic violence, and harassment. In a study conducted by London, BME LGB people were more likely to experience physical abuse, more likely to experience harassment from a stranger and were equally likely to have experienced verbal abuse as their white LGB counterparts.”

A1.4.1 Does that cohere with your experiences?
A1.4.1a) Optional: Were you ever bullied because of your sexuality, or because of suspicions of your sexuality, in school, at home or in your local community?

A1.5 **Section D - Health**
A1.5.1 Has tolerance/intolerance affected your well being at times in your life? (Especially mental health and or drug taking).
A1.5.1a) If so, have there been any support services available that you knew about?
A1.5.1b) If so, were these services targeted at your needs as a BME person?
A1.5.1c) Would it have helped if they had been?
A1.5.2 Would you have used services targeted at BME people?

A1.6 **Section E - Work**
A1.6.1 Have you been ‘Out’ at work?
A1.6.2 Are you currently ‘Out’ at work?
A1.6.2a) If not, why?
A1.6.3 Have you ever experienced homophobia or racism at work?
A1.6.4 If you would, given the choice, choose to be ‘out’ at work, what could be done by your employer to make this possible?

A1.7 Section F - Venues/Clubs
N.B. Aim is to identify which, if any, venue is viewed by focus group as inclusive. Music policy, informal venue culture, lack of direct overtures to BME/LGB clientele may act as a barrier to access. Fear of verbal and or physical abuse may also preclude LGB-BME people from accessing certain venues.

A1.7.1 BME Venues in Bristol
Members of Focus group to respond to each of these venues listed. These venues are located within areas of BME concentration and are utilised by a diverse range of BME groups.

a) What is your perception and/or your experiences of attending this venue?
b) Could you be ‘out’ at an event hosted by this venue?
c) If the venue is not regarded as inclusive, what has or could it do to make a difference to your experience or perception of the venue?
d) Has Bristol improved or worsened in this regard over the years?

A1.7.2 Gay and Lesbian Venues
NB Interviewer: List venues but incorporate those mentioned by people within the focus group.

Quote: “I’ve lived in areas where I was at risk of violence by going to a local scene gay pub and being Asian. I still largely associate the gay scene as being quite White.” (extract from belonging to Bristol available Bristol City Council Equalities and Community Cohesion Team)

a) What has been your experience of these venues over the years? (Optional) Did you feel catered for?
b) Where do you hang out - In Bristol, outside Bristol?
c) Why?
d) How could Bristol’s LGB scene be transformed to become more inclusive?

**A1.7.3 Section G - Faith**

NB Worker: On a nearby table display a range of religious artefacts to participants.

Optional Quote:
“God caused Hurricane Katrina to wipe out New Orleans because it had a gay pride parade the week before and was filled with sexual sin.”

a) What if anything has been your experience of Faith groups?
b) Faith groups offer a range of services: counselling, advice, funeral, bereavement, marriages. Would you access any of these services?
c) If not why not?

**A1.9 Section H - Sexual Identity versus Racial Identity**

a) Sexuality: Black, Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, which comes first?
b) Do you think that choosing one’s identities is still a choice that people are able to make today?
c) What do you feel about racial identity vis a vis sexual identity?

**A1.10 Section I - Social Networks**

Preamble: BCC, like elsewhere, funds a range of support organisations that support the needs of equalities groups. Their impact on the wellbeing of clients contributes to emotional and physical wellbeing.

a) What’s out there for LGB BME people - Anything?
b) Does this include informal/formal friendship groups?

**A1.11 Closing Remark**
Thank you for taking part in this Focus Group.
Appendix 2

Focus Groups and One-to-One Interviews

Please note that given the size and concentration of Bristol’s BME population the report writers have taken additional care to remove identifying details. This, we felt, had to be an a priori concern over and above revealing demographic information.

A2.1 Focus Groups:

Focus group 1 Oct 2008
A African Caribbean male: 40-45
B Black Caribbean British female: 20-25
C Black Caribbean dual heritage male: 45-50

Focus group 2 Nov 2008
A Black Caribbean British male: 35-40
B Black Caribbean British male: 35-40
C Black Caribbean woman: 35-40

Focus group 3 Dec 2008
A West African Black woman: 20-25
B Black British Caribbean woman: 20-25
C Black British Caribbean male: 35-40
D Black Caribbean dual heritage male: 45-50

Focus group 4 Jan 2009
A Anglo Asian British female: 20-25
B Black Caribbean dual heritage female: 40-45
C East Asian female: 35-40

Focus Group 5 May 2009
A Black British Caribbean dual heritage lesbian woman: 40-45
B South Asian male: 30-35

Focus Group 6 May 2009
A Central American woman: 30-35
B Central American woman: 30-35

The participants in focus group six were invited to focus group five but, in the final outcome, were unable to attend. An additional focus group was therefore arranged to ensure that the remaining participants were interviewed.
A2.2 One-to-One Interviews

Interview 1 April 2009
Asian male 35-40. At his request, the interviewee’s partner accompanied him and occasionally contributed to the interview.

Interview 2 May 2009
African Caribbean man, mid-40s.

Interview 3 May 2009
Central African gay man 30-35.

Interview 4 June 2009
African Caribbean Male, 40-45.

Interview 5 June 2009
East African woman 20-25.
Appendix 3
Further Reading List


Bristol Evening Post: “Schools must halt lessons on Homosexuality”. Article summarizing different viewpoints regarding the furore that ensued after introduction of teaching materials referencing same sex parenting/relationships, 1 April 2008.


Darder, Antonia (edits): “Culture and Difference: Critical Perspectives on the Bicultural Experience in America”, 1995

Duncan, Garret “The Zone of Black Bodies: Language Black Consciousness and Adolescent Bodies” in ‘Culture and Difference’.

Fish, Dr Julie: ‘Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Advisory Group’ (at De Montfort University) for the Department of Health.

NHS Briefing 12: “Reducing Health Inequalities for Lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people from Black and minority ethnic communities” (one of a series of 13 briefing papers written by same author), September 2007


The annual schools Census (PLASC) & Institute of Community Cohesion: “Pupils Population Change and Community Cohesion: Impact and Policy Implications for Education in Bristol”. May/June 2008


“Religion and Sexual Orientation: How to manage relations in the workplace”. Stonewall, 2009


P.A.C.E. (Project for Advice, Counselling and Education) - McFarlane, Linda: “Diagnosis Homophobic: The Experiences of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in mental health services”, 1998.

Williams, Dr Nick and Saunders, Ms Becky (for P.A.C.E.): “Understanding the specificities of LGBT parenting and their implications for support services and addressing gender differences in lesbian and gay parenting studies”. Final report, July 2007

Rehman, Bushra: “Choosing Muslim or gay in post 911 USA” in Curve Vol 13

Safra Project: Presentation on 'Diversity as strength' Safra Project Mapping and research into the experiences of LGBT Muslim women. The findings of the report are based on the input of about 80 Muslim LBTQ women and 15 service providers. Presented by Safra’s Coordinator Tamsila Tauqir to the Confederation of Indian Organisations on 29 March 2006

Sigma Research: Bass Line survey, 2007


Vanita, Ruth: “Queering India; Same-Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society”. (Routledge), 2002.


Websites
Mind Factsheets: “Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals and mental health” http://www.mind.org.uk/Information/Factsheets/Diversity/Factsheetlgb.htm

Bibliography of Islam, gender and sexuality: http://www.safraproject.org/bibliography_sgib.htm
Footnotes/References

1 Bristol Lesbian Gay Bisexual Forum Constitution

2 This is an extract from the Bristol Lesbian gay and bisexual application to the EHRC. The extract has been slightly amended for the purposes of grammar.

3 Derek Jay briefing papers 2007, ‘Challenging Homophobia in Bristol Schools’ and ‘Summary of Event surrounding Easton Primary and Bannerman Road Primary.’

4 The incident has generated a considerable body of local literature in the form of articles summarising the sequence of events; the response to the incident, and attitudes to homosexuality among BME and non BME individuals.

5 ONS 2007 Population Estimates Unit Crown Copyright 2008. (See also BCC Report into Community Tensions St Paul’s.)

6 ONS 2007 Experimental Statistics Crown Copyright 2009

7 See also the annual schools Census (PLASC) & Institute of Community Cohesion ‘Pupils Population Change and Community Cohesion: Impact and Policy Implications for Education in Bristol’ p.4.

8 The website http://www.uwe.ac.uk/about UWE/facts gives the University of the West of England’s student population as 29,300 between 08/09 and, according http://www.answers.com/topic/university-of-bristol Bristol’s population, as 22,780.

9 See ‘A Guide to Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual life in Bristol’.


11 ‘Second Best Value - Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Life in Bristol’ pamphlet. This research was commissioned by the Forum and carried out by Professor Tamsin Wilton and Carly Hall.

12 Tamsin Wilton and Carly Hall ‘Report of Survey into the Experiences of Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexuals in the Bristol Area’

13 Amnesty International (AI). July 2006. A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Network. ‘Sexual Minorities and the Law: A World Survey’ last updated July 2006. The survey is not comprehensive but it does indicate that homosexuality is illegal in many Asian, Caribbean and African countries from which migrants are migrating to Britain. However as the survey indicates, where homosexuality is legal protection from discrimination and harassment does not follow.


16 Munawar Hussain ‘ A Century of Migration’ Bristol library service, 2006

17 Ibid

18 Tasmin Wilton and Caryl Hall ‘Report of Survey into the Experiences of Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexuals in the Bristol Area’ p.7. The findings in the document Second Best Value are an extracted from this longer document.

19 ‘Quality of Life in Bristol: Quality of life in your neighbourhood Survey results 2008’ Sustainable City Group, City Development May 2009 p52.


22 Galop ‘The Down Low: Black Lesbians, gay men and bisexual people talk about their experiences and needs’. Galop, London.


25 P.A.C.E Linda McFarlane, ‘Diagnosis: Homophobic’. The experiences of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in mental health services’.


33 Ruth Hunt and Gill Valentine, ibid.

34 Sexuality Matters Community Strategy p.9.

35 Interview 2.

36 Focus Group 5.


38 Focus group 4 B.

39 Focus group 6 A.

40 One to One Interview 4.

41 Focus group 3 A.

42 Focus group 4 A.

43 Focus group 4 C.

44 Focus group 3 C.

45 Focus group 5 A.

46 Focus group 3 D.

47 One to One Interview 3.

48 Focus group 3 C.
Interview 3 A.

Focus group 6 A.

Focus group 3 A.

One to One Interview 3.

Focus group 4 B.

One to One Interview 2.

Focus group 3 B.

Focus group 5 A.

Focus group 5 A.

Focus group 5 A.

One to One Interview 3.

One to One Interview 3.

See Appendix.

Focus group 5 A.

Focus group 5 A and B.

Focus group 5 A.

Focus group 4 D.

Focus group 3 C/One to One Interview 4.

Focus group 3 C.

Focus group 5 A.

Focus group 5 A.

Focus group 3 C.

Focus group 3 C.

Focus group 1 C.

One to One Interview 3.

One to One Interview 5.

One to One Interview 5.
Focus Group 3 A. The Curse of Ham appears in the Old Testament when Noah, the father of Canaan, is cursed for seeing nakedness. Canaan is regarded in Biblical exegesis as the father of Ham, who in turn is seen as the progenitor of African people’s. Islam, like Christianity, recognizes the Jewish Old Testament.

Focus group 5 B.

Focus group 3 C.

Focus group 3 B.

Focus group 3 C.

One to One Interview 4.

One to One interview 3.

Focus group 6/One to one interview 3.

Focus group 6 A.

One to One Interview 3.

One to One interview 5.

One to One Interview 5.

Focus group 4 C.

Focus group 2 A.

Focus group 3 A.

One to One Interview 3.

One to One Interview 3.

Focus group 3 D.

Focus group 3 A.

Focus group 4 A.

One to One Interview 4.

One to One Interview 3 C.

Focus group 3 C.

One to One Interview 4.

Focus group 3 A.
The Under Sky researchers were informed by a Bristol Mind worker and that a number of Somali and Asian men who were not out were contacting the service looking for support with understanding their sexuality.

This question was designed to highlight possibility needs rather than suggest problems of service provision as during the life of the project there no LGB-specific substance misuse support available in Bristol.

2006 Extract from speech by Rev John Hagee, Muslim pastor of Texas Superchurch, during NPR interview - see Salon.com.