

Written evidence submitted by the LGBT+ Consortium

Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport inquiry on impact of COVID-19 on the charity sector

Introduction

1. Consortium is the UK's umbrella / second tier body for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans plus voluntary and community organisations. We have a membership of approximately 365 organisations of which 95% are based in England.
2. The announcements of a financial package by the Chancellor for the voluntary sector are broadly welcome but we remain concerned that this will merely be the tip of the iceberg in terms of need. NCVO's estimate of the loss of £4bn was for a 12-week period. The longer-term impact will be far worse and seriously risks the sector being able to support vulnerable people and communities.
3. Consortium actively supports NCVO's calls for additional measures to support charities through this crisis.
4. As an organisation representing organisations working with marginalised and isolated LGBT+ people and communities, we are concerned that funding allocated by the Government risks further marginalising diverse voices across the spectrum. The [Government's LGBT Survey](#) highlights the increased risk of LGBT+ people on a range of issues including social isolation, poor mental health and domestic abuse. The data also shows that LGBT+ people receive better experience of services through specialist community organisations. Those organisations set up to provide this vital support must have equal access to available funding.

Impact on LGBT+ communities and LGBT+ sector

5. Our early research into [the impact of Covid-19 on the LGBT+ sector](#) is already beginning to show that increasing numbers of LGBT+ people are seeking support from specialist organisations, and those organisations are already coming under strain.
6. Measures such as social distancing have had an immediate impact on LGBT+ communities. This is because LGBT+ people are more likely to be socially isolated and therefore may not have the same networks to rely on if they fall ill. We also know that LGBT+ people are at higher risk of poor mental health outcomes (which will be exacerbated by the loss of life, financial uncertainty and isolation during the pandemic) and of domestic abuse, leaving them trapped in situations with abusive partners or family members. The LGBT Foundation has produced a full briefing on the impact on LGBT communities in the UK, [available here](#).
7. We also know that, when LGBT+ people need help, they are better supported when specialist services are available. The Government's [National LGBT Survey](#) found that LGBT+ charities were considered the most

helpful when reporting anti-LGBT+ incidents (including in the workplace and intimate partner violence), demonstrating the importance of maintaining a specialist sector.

8. LGBT+ sector organisations doesn't have charity shops that can close and most don't have large teams that can temporarily be laid off, which makes it difficult to benefit from initiatives like the Job Retention Scheme. Most LGBT+ organisations operate on proportionally low turnover; 73 per cent of LGBT+ organisations operate on less than £20,000 per year. Yet collectively, the sector reaches over 5 million beneficiaries.
9. And the sector is already feeling the impact. Additional data from our early research across our membership found that:
 - 64 per cent of LGBT+ sector organisations surveyed reported an immediate loss of earnings. 38 per cent have seen a reduction in donations, and many more predict future losses due to the cancellation of fundraising events and 65 per cent have seen a loss in earned income, through cancelled training events or services.
 - 20 per cent are concerned that they will have to close, due to the financial impact of the pandemic.
 - Many have had to take rapid measures in response to the loss of income; this includes reducing staff hours at a time of increasing need.
10. Consortium observes that as part of a sector-wide drive towards increased financial resilience and sustainability, many LGBT+ organisations have worked hard to diversify their income streams to become less reliant on statutory and grant funding. Those organisations are now seeing disproportionate impact on their immediate finances as a result of those self-generated income streams quickly depleting in a matter of weeks.
11. The Insight Report also found that many organisations have adapted their delivery model quickly, to continue to provide the support their service users rely on. One organisation told us:

“We are increasing our collaborative efforts among all marginalised groups who are already at a disadvantage and will now be disproportionately affected”

12. Additional research carried out in the last week has shown that:
 - 40 per cent of those responding have seen an increase in the numbers of service users contacting them since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis.
 - Many of those reporting a decrease in service users are reporting this is as a result of service users being unable to access newly digitised services safely. Anecdotal evidence shows that the hidden harm is with those who are isolating further due to unsafe home environments.
 - Of those reporting an increase in service users, 90 per cent reported an increase in calls for isolation support, 73 per cent needing additional mental health support, 67 per cent not feeling safe and 46 per cent reporting lack of access to vital medication or healthcare (e.g. trans people not having access to regular hormone injections)

“We know some service users are reluctant to join online groups due to anxiety. There are some who simply don't have the equipment to do so. Some have told us that the equipment is in a shared space where they don't feel safe/comfortable accessing an online LGBTQ+ group. This is making it

difficult to reach the most vulnerable in our community and are currently looking at other ways to reach out but is made difficult due to limited funding/capacity.

13. The LGBT+ sector has adapted quickly to new ways of working, however 42 per cent of respondents to our latest research shows concerns with safeguarding and security as they adapt. Nearly 20 per cent of respondents have no access to appropriate software or equipment in order to carry on their vital support work.
14. 81 per cent of LGBT+ voluntary and community organisations have reported being unable to make use of any government support scheme such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Many smaller staffed organisations are reporting increase requests for support so are unable to furlough or consider reduced working otherwise it risks the health and wellbeing of their service users.
15. Alongside our support for the NCVO's calls for support for the voluntary sector, **Consortium also recommends that the work that the Government Equalities Office (GEO) began to ensure the sustainability of LGBT+ sector continues.** To make sure that LGBT+ specific services can continue to support the community during this difficult time, the **GEO could utilise the mechanisms developed through LGBT+ Futures Fund Programme**, which are able to move at pace and within Government rules, to make sure that organisations can access the support that they need at this critical time.