

Gwent Police Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T) Liaison Officer Procedure



1.0 Procedure

1.1 Introduction

Gwent Police recognises that the communities we serve are diverse and varied. We also know that hate incidents can have a devastating effect on peoples' lives, and that our approach to dealing with victims and witnesses has a direct impact on their trust and confidence in the police and the likelihood of them reporting an incident to us in the future. This procedure will set out the processes through which Gwent Police's LGB&T Liaison Officers are able to provide tailored support to victims of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate incidents, as well as adding value to other areas of policing activity. For further information on hate incidents, including definitions and operational processes, refer to Gwent Police's Internal and External Hate Incident and Crime Procedures. This procedure uses the term 'hate incident' to refer to both non-crime incidents and hate crimes.

1.2 Objectives

The key objectives of the LGB&T Liaison Officer scheme are:

- To build and retain the *confidence* of our LGB&T communities and staff in relation to reporting hate incidents
- To provide a service that is *considerate* of individual needs in relation to sexual orientation and transgender
- To provide a service that is *accessible* to isolated or hard to reach communities, and LGB&T members of staff
- To provide a service that understands and is *responsive* to the needs of individuals or groups affected
- To provide solutions that are *prompt and effective* in reducing the impact on individuals and communities
- To *engage* with LGB&T communities and staff in order to continually improve the service delivered to them
- To support Gwent Police in maintaining a safe working environment, *free from discrimination or harassment*

1.3 Role

The role of the LGB&T Liaison Officers is to:

- Provide support to investigating officers who are dealing with a homophobic, transphobic or biphobic hate incident
- Liaise with the victim or witness, OIC and partner agencies in order to provide tailored and appropriate support
- Signpost victims or witnesses to appropriate support services
- Provide regular contact with the victim or witness from their initial report, throughout the investigation, and if necessary, throughout the court process
- Provide advice and guidance to members of staff that may be experiencing difficulties in the workplace in relation to their sexual orientation or transgender
- Assist Gwent police in engaging with LGB&T communities across the Force area (this may include supporting events, attending forums or assisting with outreach activities)
- Provide support to investigating officers in the event of a major or critical incident which may have the potential to impact on LGB&T communities

1.3 Definitions

1.3.1 HATE INCIDENT – ‘Any non-crime incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on actual or perceived disability, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and transgender’

1.3.2 HATE CRIME – ‘A criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person’s actual or perceived disability, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and transgender’

Agreed by Home Office and Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)

1.4 Recruitment, Training and Review of LGB&T Liaison Officers

LGB&T Liaison Officers may be recruited at any time, dependent on demand for services and any identified gaps in capacity. The Liaison Officer role is open to both Police Officers and Police Staff, regardless of sexual orientation, within Gwent Police, although candidates must be committed to achieving the objectives of the scheme and be able to evidence that their skills meet the relevant role description during the recruitment process.

Liaison Officers will attend an initial 2 day training course which is compulsory. The induction course will cover the Liaison Officer role, best practice in identifying, investigating and supporting victims of hate incidents, and will raise awareness and understanding of LGB&T community issues.

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Once a Liaison Officer has completed their induction training, this will be added to their personal record on ORIS.

As a minimum, 6 monthly review meetings will be held with all LGB&T Liaison Officers where any issues or difficulties can be discussed, and current caseloads reviewed. Responsibility for co-ordination of review meetings and subsequent actions is shared by the Community Cohesion Team and the LGB&T Support Network. 6 monthly reviews will also provide opportunity for Liaison Officers to identify any further training or development needs.

1.5 General Principles

LGB&T Liaison Officers will carry out their role in accordance with the following principles:

1.5.1 Joint Working

At all times, LGB&T Liaison Officers will maintain contact with the investigating officer in the case. They will make the OIC aware of their involvement at the earliest opportunity (ideally prior to victim contact) and will ensure that any information they obtain in relation to the case is shared with the OIC, including details of incidents that may not already have been reported. There may be times where a victim or witness expresses a desire to deal directly with the LGB&T Liaison Officer rather than the officer that has been assigned their case. In these cases, careful consideration of the most appropriate action is essential, both to ensure that the LGB&T Liaison Officer does not take on any investigative responsibilities, and that local officers are supported in retaining positive working relationships with their victims and witnesses. **A key expectation of the LGB&T Liaison Officer Scheme is that it will support Gwent Police as a whole in improving general awareness of LGB&T issues so that all officers are able to deliver a quality service to these communities.**

All victims of hate incidents will receive support from the Community Cohesion Team, and liaison between the relevant Community Cohesion Officer and LGB&T Liaison Officer is also essential to avoid any duplication of efforts and ensure effective information sharing.

Similarly, OICs will involve LGB&T Liaison Officers in the decision making and planning process. This may include involvement in case handling or problem solving groups, or seeking advice on handling potentially sensitive situations.

1.5.2 Conflict of Interest

There may be occasions where the only available LGB&T Liaison Officer is also responding to the initial call, or is allocated a case to investigate. To avoid a conflict in role and any confusion for the victim or witness, that officer must discuss with their supervisor whether it will be appropriate for

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them either to hand over the case to another officer and retain the LGB&T Liaison Officer role, or to take on the case and refer the Liaison role to an alternative LGB&T Liaison Officer when they become available.

1.5.3 Victim Support

LGB&T Liaison Officers will be best placed to ensure that victims and witnesses are able to access appropriate victim support. All victims of hate incidents will be referred to Victim Support, and LGB&T Liaison Officers should check whether this has been done and make a referral where it has not, but consideration should also be given to signposting to specialist services, details of which are available on the Community Cohesion Team's intranet site. Any contact details for support agencies should be current, up to date and relevant. It is also important to remember that everyone has multiple identities – sexual orientation, disability, race, age etc. and that support provided to each LGB or T person should also be appropriate to their other characteristics. In some cases, it may also be appropriate for an LGB&T Liaison Officer to offer support to the family of the victim or witness, as they may also be significantly affected by the incident.

It must be made clear to the person that is receiving the support of an LGB&T Liaison Officer that whilst they are there to provide assistance, signposting and advice, their role as a police officer will always be paramount, and that any information disclosed to the Liaison Officer, such as reports of incidents, or indication of any potential harm or risk will be treated in line with normal policing procedure.

Liaison Officers should provide victims and witnesses with a direct email address and telephone number and advise of any times that they will be uncontactable. Liaison with victims must be consistent, regular, and sensitive to individual needs (for example, not wearing uniform for a home visit, or meeting in an alternative location). As building and maintaining community confidence is key, if an LGB&T Liaison Officer is unable to continue to provide appropriate support to a victim or witness (for example because they are going on annual leave), they should make the Community Cohesion Team aware.

As support may be provided to a victim or witness over a lengthy period of time (for example throughout a court case), careful consideration should be given to a planned exit strategy, in order to minimise impact on the victim. For more guidance on this, please refer to the Force's Family Liaison Officer procedure.

1.5.4 Internal Incidents

Where a referral is made to an LGB&T Liaison Officer regarding an internal incident, advice and support may be provided either to the victim or to their Supervisor. Depending on the nature of the incident, it may be necessary to involve the Professional Standards Department. Further information can be found in the Force's Internal Hate Incident Procedure.

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1.6 Supervision

Supervisors of LGB&T Liaison Officers will be expected to be supportive of responsibilities that form part of the role, which will primarily mean a degree of flexibility around shift changes or time allowed to carry out Liaison Officer duties wherever it is operationally possible.

If an LGB&T Liaison Officer requires support, wished to raise a concern about a particular incident, or encounters any difficulties, they can contact the Community Cohesion Team, where an appropriate Sergeant or Inspector will be able to assist.

1.7 Resources

LGB&T Liaison Officers will be provided with the appropriate resources in order to carry out their role. This will include a Force mobile telephone or Blackberry (where appropriate) to facilitate victim contact, and provision of a vehicle or payment of personal expenses, in line with Force policy, where a victim visit is required.

1.8 Callout/Referral Process

In order to effectively risk manage the Liaison Officer scheme, members of staff who are appointed as LGB&T Liaison Officers will only be referred internal cases that involve other members of staff. Internally, LGB&T Liaison Officers may be contacted directly by any member of personnel or Supervisor who requires assistance by searching for an appropriate Liaison Officer on the PV screen of ORIS (search 'LGBT OFF' in the 'Specialist Skills' field).

Externally, LGB&T Liaison Officers will usually receive case referrals via the Community Cohesion Team (CCT). Daily checks of hate incidents across the Force will flag those that have been recorded as homophobic, biphobic or transphobic, and where appropriate, the victim or witness will be contacted and the offer of an LGB&T Liaison Officer made. There may be occasions where it is not appropriate for an LGB&T Liaison Officer referral to be made, for example if the log has been closed incorrectly or relates to a victim who is already receiving support. Where the offer is made and accepted, an appropriate LGB&T Liaison Officer will be contacted by the CCT who will provide them with incident details. The LGB&T Liaison Officer should contact the OIC in the first instance to gather further information and make them aware of their involvement before contacting the victim wherever possible. At this stage, the CCT should also update the log to confirm that an LGB&T Liaison Officer has been allocated. Allocation of Liaison Officers will depend on the location and nature of the incident and available resources available.

As incidents are flagged to the CCT by closing category, this will incur a natural delay whilst the incident is dealt with initially. Usually this will not

cause a problem as the LGB&T Liaison role is part of the follow up support service for victims after an incident has occurred. However, there may be occasions, for example in the event of a major or critical incident, where an LGB&T Liaison Officer will need to be deployed immediately. In these cases the Force Control Room will contact an LGB&T Liaison Officer and request that they make contact with the OIC to offer assistance. Efforts should be made to call out an on duty resource in the first instance, but if this is not possible, depending on the circumstances, an off duty officer may be contacted.

In all cases, a record of involvement including log number (where relevant) and outcome will be kept by the CCT to enable review of workload and frequency of deployment. Where an officer receives a referral from a source other than the CCT, they should email the CCT with details at the nearest opportunity.

1.9 Operational and Support Structures

1.9.1 Community Cohesion Team – Responsible for reviewing incident logs and making victim contact and subsequent Liaison Officer referrals. Also responsible for monitoring and reviewing use of the scheme and providing support to Liaison Officers where required. Will assist the LGB&T Support Network in raising awareness and developing the capacity of the scheme. Will ensure that the Force's wider hate crime processes complement and incorporate the work of the LGB&T Liaison Officers and support appropriate community engagement activity.

1.9.2 Gwent Police LGB&T Support Network – Responsible for raising awareness and developing capacity of the scheme, reporting to ACPO on its progress and managing the recruitment and training of new LGB&T Liaison Officers.

1.9.3 Force Communications Suite – Responsible for deploying LGB&T Liaison Officers in the event of a critical or major incident that requires immediate assistance. Also responsible for categorising incidents appropriately so the CCT can refer into the scheme.

1.9.4 Corporate Communications Department – Responsible for raising awareness of the LGB&T Liaison Officer scheme internally and externally through use of appropriate media messages and communications tools.

1.9.5 All officers and staff – Responsible for promoting the service of LGB&T Liaison Officers internally and externally, and supporting their work through compliance with Force Hate Crime policies and procedures.

1.9.6 Local Partnership Forums – Responsible for managing vulnerable or repeat victims of hate crime and providing a multi-agency response, including the involvement of LGB&T Liaison Officers where appropriate.

2.0 The Legal Basis and Legitimate Aims

Equality Act 2010
Welsh Language Act 1993
Race Relations Act 1976
Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
Protection from Harassment Act 1997
The Human Rights Act 1998
Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
Sex Discrimination Act 1975
Gender Recognition Act 2004

In line with Gwent Police's Equality Duties, this procedure aims to:

- Advance equality of opportunity
- Eliminate harassment and victimisation
- Foster good community relations

3.0 Human Rights Certification of Compliance

The procedure has been checked for compliance with the Human Rights Act; with particular reference to the legal basis of its precepts: the legitimacy of its aims; the justification and proportionality of the actions intended by it; that it is the least intrusive and damaging option necessary to achieve the aims; and that it defines the need to document the relevant decision making process's and outcomes of actions.

4.0 Compliance with The Welsh Language Scheme

This procedure aims to comply with the organisations Welsh language Scheme in terms of dealing with the Welsh speaking public, impact upon the public image of the organisation and the implementation of the language scheme.

5.0 Risk Assessment and health and safety Considerations

The Gwent Police Service Dynamic Assessment should be applied as necessary. A training package in the use of risk assessment will be provided to all police personnel if requested or required.

6.0 Procedure Identification Section

Procedure Title: LGB&T Liaison Officer Procedure

Reference: 112/27b issue 1

ACPO Lead: DCC

Service Area Owner: Neighbourhoods

Department Responsible: Community Safety

Links to other Policies/Procedure: Internal and External Hate Incident and Crime Policy and Procedures; Critical Incident Procedure; Bullying in the Workplace Procedure; Family Liaison Officer Procedure

Procedure Implementation Date: 31st Jan 2012

Procedure Review Date: Jan 2014