



Emerging with Pride

Interim Report

December 2020

#FuturePride #LGBTFutures #BLGBTHM

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Consortium team



Acknowledgements

Wise Thoughts and Consortium would like to extend huge thanks to all 15+ participants, who gave their valuable time to participate in the creation of the powerful videos. Thanks also to those who were reached out to to engage with this project. Having their honest and open experiences shared is simply invaluable. The opportunity to work on this project has the potential to be life-changing, build new community processes and recognise the human rights of diverse LGBT+ people and communities.

Background

As part of the National Lottery Community Fund's Emerging Futures programme, Consortium and Wise Thoughts have partnered together for this important project. Wise Thoughts agreed upon and delivered the stories of 15 BAME, LGBTQI+ (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic origin Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer identified and Intersex+) diverse people / or Queer, Trans, Intersex Persons of Colour (QTIPOCs) based across the UK, dealing with or emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. The stories "Emerging with Pride" were published on the GFEST 2020 website (and are still live) between Mon 9th to Sat 21st Nov 2020.

The stories, along with an additional 18 mins compilation of all 15 voices (a summary film), and recordings of 15 live webinar sessions can all be found [here](#).

Context of the recordings:

- A set of questions / queries and areas of enquiry along with a long list of some 30 potential participants were prepared in partnership with the Consortium team by mid-September.
- 23 potential participants contacted by end of September 2020.
- 15 Participants from groups and organisations delivering services to BAME, LGBTQI+ service users were enrolled
 - including 2 from Scotland, 2 from Wales, Leeds, Manchester, Leicester, Bristol, Birmingham, London, and Sussex by 1st week of October.
- The video recording of their stories, the editing process and communications on social media was conducted and completed between October and November. This enabled us to publish edited 15 mins versions of each story, along with live webinar chats (each up to 40 mins) held with them between 9th to 21st November on GFEST 2020 website.
- Most of the above 15 participants mentioned that they had continued to deliver services during the pandemic to their members via online mechanisms/tools. Some had also used other noteworthy LGBTQI services for themselves.

- There were some key learnings and findings from the conversations, interviews, and recording (please see below for further details).
- A new social media tool (closed WhatsApp group) was set up on 24th Nov, and many more individuals are joining in the conversations. They are working together on a list of priorities, as a way of moving forward.

Initial statistical data within the week of sharing / publishing of the video stories (figures based on 2 weeks progress by Monday 30 Nov):

- Over 2000 people (hits) watched the films on GFEST 2020 website.
- The majority of them watching up to 90% length of film. (10% time of title scroll repeats in each edited film).
- Over 30K impressions of social media posts with shorter/ trailer versions on the films from the project and over 2000 engagements and near 1k hits on the link to GFEST 2020 web.
- Very few comments/ feedback or conversation response yet but these are ongoing engagements and statistical focus should shift on responses as more strategic, joint awareness and communications/ campaigns delivered as they are in the pipeline.

Next steps for the project

Consortium and Wise Thoughts will work on social media messages to generate responses from the wider public by inviting them to share their own stories with pictures or short videos and tagging us (so that we can re-share/ flag and promote).

Both organisations will also collaborate on a social media campaign as the most effective way to focus on findings from these stories and feedback into the final project report.

Key findings to date

A majority / all the 15 participants mentioned and / or agreed with the following findings:

- A. Joining a network and develop resource building activity together via a mechanism of online seminars and a full-day conference (physical, in summer 2021) and a virtual meeting, to help move the agenda forward in the most effective, meaningful, and constructive manner.
- B. Generate support and resources for already existing and newly created safe spaces nationally for BAME, LGBTQI+/ QTIPOCs, diverse people.
- C. Through operation of above-mentioned spaces, secure core funding for up to (min.) 2 staff and operational costs to deliver health, wellbeing, self-care programmes. According to Wise Thoughts own estimates, there are **up to 50 to 60 smaller groups** that face enormous challenges while 'strategically' serving BAME, LGBTQI+/ QTIPOCs, diverse people across UK.

- D. Historic reasons were identified for the extremely little or no progress delivered for individuals from these UK based community groups. The challenges / issues faced by young and older BAME, LGBTQI+ / QTPOCs, diverse people that have been recurring over a couple of decades, have forced them to live a closeted life in 2020. They are facing extreme difficulties during the pandemic. They are left mostly without any proper recourse to help, and some must tackle the hurdles of familial stigma, societal shame, racial prejudices and racism (from mainstream and LGBTQI+ communities) and life-threatening situations, should they opt to access support. Despite the availability of some support delivered technologically, and via connections within these groups, some lives continue to remain jeopardised due to specific cultural reasons.
- E. The lack of investment in these smaller groups and their lack of capacity was cited as key reasons for factors identified in point D and combine with the following factors to exacerbated problem
- a. All or most BAME community groups/organisation are not supporting these groups due to perceived or real homophobia, biphobia and /or transphobia
 - b. They feel alienated from the larger and wider LGBTQI+ groups due to real or perceived prejudice from these LGBTQI+ groups, their lack of understanding and appreciation of differences in cultural values and base or nuanced understanding of diversity-related issues that exist amongst BAME, LGBTQI+ / QTPOCs people.
 - c. These prejudices are also compounded on the face of real or perceived racism prevailing within wider/ larger LGBTQI+ groups towards BAME, LGBTQI+ / QTPOCs people.
 - d. Very limited or no resource was invested by funding bodies or grant making organisations to enable sustained capacity building to enable these small struggling group to survive. **In short, previous funding mechanisms have consistently ignored BAME, LGBTQI+ / QTPOCs people for far too long.**

Key comments from participants

A few noteworthy comments from the project. Most, if not all, participants in this projects expressed a deep seated anger and resentment about their continuing invisibility and that the fact that whilst for many LGBTQI people the last two decades brought huge progress, they were essentially overlooked or forgotten.

Amisha, Poc a dot in London:

“Black and brown trans people, non-binary and queer people are on the forefront, fighting for these rights (for equality) but are often demonised by these (BAME) communities, and we cannot look towards white LGBT community groups to support us as we know there is systemic racism and historically we cannot rely on white people to liberate us.”

Mridul Wadhwa, Forth Valley Rape Crisis Centre, in Scotland

“There is a lot of prejudice and racism towards people of colour within the LGBTQI communities.”

Ramses Underhill-Smith, Alternative Care Services, an LGBTQI+ care service provider (National), on equality battles within mainstream LGBTQI+ communities:

“It can’t be that we will listen to you (BAME, LGBTQI+ people) and tell you what YOU need to know...we need to keep looking at each other and say we are equal.”

Sayang, House of Flava in Leeds:

“Not purposefully, or (even if) someone hasn’t realised it, as a white person you will have benefited from the way the society has been built, ...black folks are set up... to try so much harder in life.”

Samah Naseem, Shakti Women’s Aid, Edinburgh:

“Especially BAME, LGBT+ people who are the most at risk (in the COVID-19 pandemic) and most unsafe of being... (being) at risk of ‘honour’ based abuse, risk of forced marriages, (some face) risk of being killed, they should be the ones that we need to get to and help”

Shivani Dave, journalist BBC Wiltshire:

“I worry for the older LGBTQ+ community who have their own struggles, lots of them having their own health problems and they make them more vulnerable in this pandemic and also the disabled community within LGBTQ+ community, because people from that intersection are more vulnerable and often get forgotten.”

Dan Singh, Birmingham LGBT Centre:

“As a Punjabi Sikh person, whose parents are from India, I did not know who should I go and talk to about my sexuality, I still don’t know who can I go to talk about it for the fear, that shouldn’t be happening in 2020 in the UK.”

And finally, Niranjan Kamatkar, the project lead:

“Societies are and will be judged, rightly, by how they deal with their diverse and the most vulnerable people, more so in the time of crisis. Clearly, the almost scandalous present situation for several BAME, LGBTQI+ groups and people / QTIPOCs is shameful and unacceptable. These voices must be heard and need to be acknowledged widely to accept and recognise their often-ignored plight by the system. These findings of a ‘seemingly’ systematic failure cannot be and should not be ignored by British Society in 2020.”

Initial Recommendations

A strong and clear emphasis on an immediate ‘Trust Building’ process is key for including these people/ groups, and building their capacity to develop future opportunities. Clearly these resilient but extremely vulnerable people and groups offer a **hugely undermined and hitherto ignored resource** that can be harnessed for greater-good of a truly diverse and vibrant society.

Note: There was a consensus that surveys are defective/ ineffective or plainly ignorant of cultural ground realities. A new approach of BAME, LGBTQI+/ QTIPOCs, diverse people promoted in ‘leadership roles’ and building or enhancing their capacity will start the trust building process in an effective way.

A second key factor in the immediate trust building exercise should be empowerment and visibility of the role models from these groups. A journalist/s assisted careful media coverage of these 15 inspiring role models - and people like them – on a regular basis over next few months can deliver further trust building, visibility, and empowerment process.

It is imperative and important to work on all societal progress / societal change processes by means of **‘inside-out, outside-in / top-down, grassroots-upward approach’** to enable the effective change delivery process. A short-to-medium term impact assessment process needs to start with signing up of ‘ambassadors’, who will help these processes and help deliver the change. Key ambassadors need to be enrolled from BAME, LGBTQI+ Community organisations, LGBTQI+ Business networks, Members of Parliaments (both, from Houses of Lords and Commons), media and special interest bodies (e.g., **relevant religious/ faith groups, relevant cultural bodies, relevant ‘Think Tanks’** based in the UK). As number of participants mentioned about the historic impact on their identities and predicament, representatives from bodies such as British Council and the Commonwealth Institute need to be invited to QTIPOCs Ambassadors’ programme.

Monitoring the changes need to be managed via creation of a high-profile group (including above mentioned ambassadors, relevant civil servants, and relevant office bearers) such as ‘All Parliamentary group on QTIPOCs’ in the UK or a BAME, LGBTQI+ progress group run and led by Government Equalities Office (GEO).