



Interventions
Alliance

The Experiences and Inclusion of Trans People in Community Justice Services

Executive Summary

Jess Lawrence
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About this research

There is a growing body of research on the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in the justice system, however only a minority of this work has focused on the experiences of trans people. Policy and guidance for working with transgender people predominately discusses those in prisons or Approved Premises, and this focus is reflected in the extant literature. Research on trans people in the community predominantly considers their experiences of victimisation, discrimination and abuse, with limited discussion of trans people accessing community rehabilitation services. This is an important area of omission and one the present research seeks to address.

Aims of the research

This research sought to explore the views and experiences of trans people attending CFO Activity Hubs run by Interventions Alliance, and contribute to the knowledge base around how the justice system works with trans people on probation and in the community. Additionally, it looks to unpack how Interventions Alliance encourages a trans inclusive culture amongst its participants and staff, and provides evidence for the development of service delivery in the Hubs in the future.

Methodology

The research employed an explorative, mixed methods design. Three trans participants took part in interviews, including trans men and trans women at different stages of their transition journey, with diverse experiences in the justice system, prisons and the community. There were two responses to the participant questionnaire, which was open for four months from June – September 2023. 21 staff members responded to the staff questionnaire and five participated in interviews. The staff questionnaire was open for seven weeks in June/July 2023. All interviews were conducted in August 2023.

Findings

Trans participants in this research all reported feeling safe and accepted at their Hubs. Feeling comfortable at the Hubs allowed them to engage with activities more confidently, leading to significant progress. Staff were passionate about creating an inclusive environment and attributed this to a collaborative effort between colleagues and all Hub participants. Many factors contributed to this, such as the overall Hub ethos of community and choice, physical signs of inclusivity, staff diversity and the creation and maintenance of firm boundaries.

Participants spoke positively about their relationships with their support workers. They felt they could share what they wanted to, ask for support where needed, and trusted that personal information was treated appropriately. Participants noted the value in being seen and treated as a whole person, rather than solely as 'a trans person' or 'someone with a conviction'.

Some participants expressed apprehension when first attending their Hub, due to prior negative experiences with other services, being in prison or Approved Premises. Some older participants at the Hubs reportedly struggled with elements of trans inclusivity, so some trans participants choose not to share their gender identity with other participants. Although participants reported that infrequent incidents of transphobic language at the Hub were generally tackled swiftly by staff, misgendering was not seen to be dealt with as robustly. This suggests a potential difference in the way transphobia and misgendering are seen and addressed. Staff also discussed different approaches to challenging comments depending on the circumstances and who was involved.

Most participants reported some LGBT focussed activities at their Hub, which were mainly awareness raising events rather than providing spaces exclusively for LGBT people. There was a distinct lack of trans specific activities, however these may risk participants being outed, feeling labelled or singled out.

Experiences in the justice system appeared to differ for people with different trans identities and correlated predominantly with stereotypes. Generally, trans women were considered with higher levels of caution, non-binary people were met with confusion, and trans men were misgendered more frequently.

Participants who attended Hubs with gender neutral toilets for everyone valued this provision highly. Most interviewed participants and questionnaire respondents said that they attended single-gender groups at their Hub with no issues. Staff discussed the factors that required consideration 'behind the scenes' when balancing inclusion and risk management in these spaces, and were sometimes unsure on whether such decisions were fair or defensible in the absence of clear guidance.

Although all staff were skilled in working with people and treating them as individuals, there was a mix of confidence levels when it came to meeting the specific needs of trans people in

the justice system. Most staff recognised the uniqueness of every trans person's experience, were clear on their boundaries when helping with transition-related issues and the importance of sign-posting appropriately.

Most staff said they wanted training, however they also described researching independently, or learning from colleagues (especially LGBT colleagues) and participants. Talking things through with colleagues was the most common source of support for staff. Reflective practice and discussions in team meetings worked well for teams with strong bonds and diversity amongst colleagues.

Limitations

All trans interviewees were white, identified as a binary gender and were out to staff at their Hub. Further research on the experiences of trans people of colour and other trans identities (e.g. non-binary) in the justice system is necessary. The experiences of participants who are not 'out' also remain largely unexplored.

Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the findings from this research, however they are relevant to any organisation working with or supporting trans people.

Within Hubs

1. Training for staff
 - From someone with lived experience
 - At the start of employment, and regular refreshers
 - With time to discuss information
2. Consulting trans participants
 - About what they want support with (if anything)
 - About how they'd prefer misgendering incidents to be addressed
 - About how to improve service delivery
3. Environment
 - Pride flags or bunting all year round
 - Posters or leaflets for specific services or LGBT and trans friendly services
 - Pronoun badges for staff
4. Consider dedicated sessions for minority groups

5. Trans awareness events for participants
6. Focus on promoting allyship for non-LGBT staff and participants
7. Normalise conversations about discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes
8. Normalise conversations about trans people and gender identity

Organisational

9. Compile a list of specialist organisations for trans people, and LGBT and trans friendly organisations
10. Establish a process and a specific place for storing and sharing information on trans status
11. Create guidance for making risk decisions involving trans people, and update this regularly
12. Confirm clear escalation routes – including timeframes for responses and assigned SPOCs in CFO, HMPPS, IA

Continue to:

13. Listen to participants' voices
14. Focus on individuals rather than characteristics
15. Highlight participants' strengths
16. Include trans people's needs in all activities
17. Be flexible and responsive to participant needs
18. Celebrate diversity events such as pride and trans awareness week
19. Establish/maintain boundaries with all participants about treatment of others
20. Provide gender neutral bathrooms
21. Recruit diverse staff
22. Expand the use of SPOCs for minority groups
23. Expand availability of clinical supervision for all operational staff

