

Shine @ Galop

Supporting the diverse lives and voices of trans people



Introduction

We wanted to let you know about the trans project we are running at Galop. This document outlines the thinking behind what we are doing. Because we'll be asking as many people as possible to be involved, we think it's important to share our starting points with you. We think the process of discussion is important so please feel free to agree or disagree with us – our contact details are at the bottom of this document if you'd like to get in touch.

A word about language

We acknowledge that the word 'trans' although designed to be inclusive, may not fit well as a descriptive term for everyone. (For example, those who do not have majority privilege, and those who have always been the men and women they feel themselves to be) We use it here as a way of talking about all people who have a history or present experience of being of feeling 'gender different' in some way. We use the words 'people of colour' when talking about BAMER (Black and minority ethnic and refugee) trans people, because we think they are increasingly used by these communities as a positive way to describe themselves.

We discuss our thinking behind this in more detail below; for now we want to say we welcome dialogue about more appropriate descriptive language, and aim to talk about this explicitly as the project progresses.

Part 1: Information about the project

Who funds the project?

The project is funded by the City Parochial Foundation which is an independent funder which funds projects that aim to combat poverty and social exclusion in London, including those which other funders will not or are unlikely to fund. Some of their work benefits all those living in poverty, while other work targets particular groups. www.cityparochial.org.uk.

What are the aims of the project?

The project has three main aims:

- To improve the safety and perceptions of safety of trans people, both through lobbying for policy change and by providing practical interventions such as workshops.

- To develop resources for both the voluntary and statutory sectors which increase understanding of trans issues and therefore improve services for, and increase safety of trans people.
- To improve Galop's service for trans clients, and to act as a best practice example therefore improving the voluntary sector response to trans people on a wider basis.

What will happen over the next 2 years?

The project has two phases; the first phase is about providing resources which people can access to improve their feelings of safety and actual safety. We are running a series of free voice and movement workshops to achieve this.

At the same time, the project will also talk with trans spectrum people to explore experiences of transphobia, the police, and accessing services without discrimination. We will be holding a mixture of themed sessions (open to everyone) and closed sessions (for specific groups of people, e.g. trans people of colour, young people, migrants and refugees) to identify specific issues and points for change. We have chosen to split the discussions in this way because we want to make safer spaces for people who identify in certain ways to participate in the discussions, and to further explore the differences (in terms of experiences and therefore needs) amongst trans spectrum people. We think that gender privilege is affected by many things including ethnicity, class, age, faith, disability, sexuality, at the least, and we want to investigate this further to ensure the work we do is relevant to the *people* we work with.

The second phase of the project involves using this information to improve Galop's services to the community, as well as producing two resources. The first resource will be around 'making your organisation trans inclusive'. This will be aimed at LGBT and mainstream organisations. The second resource will build on the first and we aim to use this to build coalitions to influence policy change, outlining key issues concerning trans communities, and safety issues.

How do we hope to make a difference?

- By using voice and movement to improve the feelings of safety and actual safety of trans people accessing these workshops.
- Increasing accessibility and improving services to trans people from a range of LGBT organisations including Galop, by providing trans targeted services and having a fuller understanding of the issues.
- Working towards increased safety by lobbying for increased legal protection, and better services from the criminal justice system.

Part 2: FAQ's.

Why is Galop doing this project?

We expanded our remit in 2004 to work with trans people, and we have been determined to make this expansion meaningful.¹

We are aware through anecdotal evidence and our work with trans people that transphobic violence and hate crime is a huge issue in these communities.

Galop works with victims of transphobic hate crime and we know from our own casework the debilitating effect that hate incidents can have on their victims. Reporting the crime is important, but after reporting victims can be left powerless and terrified to leave their homes. This project seeks to address these support needs by providing practical, trans-specific services, to increase confidence and safety.

How does this project fit with existing activism?

We are particularly aware that many LGB organizations have expanded to include the 'T' but haven't got the skills, experience or expertise to make this a meaningful transition. We are also aware that whilst the trans voluntary sector is extremely active it is also mostly concentrated around grass-roots activism and social support organisations. Whilst a small number of larger national groups do exist, they also have limited capacity. Galop works locally, with a specific remit (anti-violence) across the Greater London area.

We have over 25 years experience of working with criminal justice issues and over this time have developed excellent links within the Criminal Justice System. We work closely with key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Justice, the Attorney General's Office, Crown Prosecution Service, Metropolitan Police Service and Metropolitan Police Authority. Our ongoing work with these organisations means that we are perfectly placed to gain access to lobby on trans issues. We want to utilise this as a platform to make trans issues heard.

We think that activism takes many forms and we want to complement the work that is being done already. Our aim is to work with trans and non-trans organisations and individuals as

¹ For example, we have worked with Camden LGBT forum to improve their links with trans community, we are an associate member of FTM London and provide their management committee with free meeting space in Galop offices, we have lobbied the government on protection against incitement to transphobic hatred and worked with PFC on this, contributed advice to the Crown Prosecution Service on trans issues, and provided a worker at the first trans with pride conference to plan and facilitate the 'visibility: safety and education' workshop session.

one part of the jigsaw puzzle which makes up the whole strategy that we believe is necessary for activism to be successful.

We understand that in talking with trans spectrum people about their experiences, we may have to adjust the kinds of activities we do, to be fully inclusive and campaign effectively. We have done this before in our organisation and we would be willing to do it again to ensure we are working effectively for the people we serve.

Sexuality and Gender are different issues – why is an organisation that works with lesbian, gay and bisexual people also working with trans people?

First things first: we recognise that trans is not an ‘additional sexuality’ and realise that there have been many reasons why it’s been important to emphasise the differences between sexuality and gender in the past.

We think people whose gender matches their body are privileged with respect to how they view gender. They get to view it as arbitrary, like role-playing. Trans people don’t have the same options and are told over and over again that they are not who they know themselves to be.² In other words, we understand there’s a difference between ‘camp’ (the love of the exaggerated, of things being what they are not) and the experience of some trans people: sometimes playing with gender can be fun – sometimes it’s great to be provocative like that. And sometimes it’s dangerous - people punish you for it.

Yet in spite of these differences, there are things which bind us together. We think Galop should work with trans spectrum people on a targeted project because at our heart we are an anti-violence and community safety charity. Straight, gay and lesbian people have contacted us after experiencing transphobia, and trans people (identifying with all sexualities) have contacted us after experiencing homophobia. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people are being killed, physically assaulted, sexually and emotionally abused just because someone else didn’t like the name that they wanted to be called by, the clothes that they wanted to wear, or the fact that their gender identity did not conform to their genital configuration. The abuser often neither knows nor cares how a person identifies, just that they seem ‘different’ in some way, and this is often based around a narrow perception of what they think men and women should look like, who they should be attracted to, and how they should behave. Since these kinds of negative gender stereotypes affect all LGBT people and cause our communities to experience violence, we think it makes sense to work with trans people as well as lesbian, gay and bisexual people in our organisation.

We think that trans people have different experiences, and therefore different needs, in relation to their identities, and that these are often overlooked by non-trans organisations

² Jamison Green has written extensively about this: check out his website www.jamisongreen.com for more info.

who do not yet recognise or understand their gender privilege. **We believe that given the context of abuse it is particularly important to respect how a person wishes to be understood.** This is why we are doing a project that caters specifically for trans spectrum people (rather than doing a generic project which looks at 'LGBT' people) so that by the end of the project trans people can choose to access just as much relevant support from us as lesbian, gay and bisexual people can. In fact, by providing practical services for people to engage with to improve their feelings of safety and actual safety, this project is leading the way for the organisation in going 'beyond' the traditional activities of Galop (i.e. independent advice and assisted reporting if you don't want to talk to the police).

We also recognise that LGB people can be transphobic, and trans people can be homophobic; we hope that by producing documents that are targeted at a variety of organisations, including LGB organisations, we can start to engage with these prejudices in a productive way.

We want to emphasise that we think identity is multifaceted and complex; ones 'trans' experience may be impossible to distinguish from other parts of a person, e.g. race, class at the least, and one's 'trans visibility' is also affected by these factors.

Talking about 'trans' in relation to 'lesbian, gay and bisexual' frames the debate in terms of identities which act like boxes – fitting some people quite well but leaving others out. We think organisations which are trying to address exclusion should be thinking creatively about how redress this power dynamic in order to be as inclusive as possible. This is why we are attempting to frame the project around *values* which recognise the importance of identity categories for staking a claim to being who you are, whilst focusing the *content* of the project around the relationships between people, which we believe are at the heart of experienced violence and abuse. We welcome further dialogue around this issue.

Part 3: About Galop

Galop was established over twenty-five years ago, in June 1982, and remains one of London's oldest LGBT voluntary sector organisations. Over the years, our work has developed, although our ethos of working to end hate crime, by supporting victims and campaigning for change has remained constant. We started working with trans people in 2004.

Current activities include:

- **Shoutline – helpline and casework service:** we offer advice, support and ongoing casework to victims of homophobic and transphobic hate crime, sexual and domestic abuse, and those who have issues with the police. This can include liaising with police to ensure good communication with the client, related issues such as housing and safety plans, and support through the criminal justice system, criminal injuries compensation claims.
- **Non-police reporting:** Galop developed the 'assisted reporting' scheme in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), to increase the level of reporting of hate crime. Clients who do not wish to report directly to the police can report via Galop's website or Shoutline. We can pass details directly to the police, pass on anonymous reports, or act as an intermediary so that the police do not have

the client's details but can follow up via Galop. We also work with clients who have been treated unfairly by the police, and can make police complaints. Although we work with the police we are completely independent from them. We will never pass on any information to any third party without your explicit consent.

- **Interactive website:** includes factsheets on client's rights and the police. We also able to offer 'live advice' via a website chat facility.
- **Training and consultancy:** Galop tries to improve best practice and has been involved in training and offering consultancy on a range of issues; see our website for more information about this.
- **Research:** Galop's current research project is the Oral History Project. The project involves interviewing people who have either been clients, employees or volunteers of Galop or Stonewall Housing, and examining archive material to understand the changes in London, as well as the context and histories of the organisations.

Size and legal status

Galop works across Greater London. We are a registered charity as well as a company limited by guarantee. We are a small organisation, and we currently have eight members of staff, of whom four are part time. We are independent from the police.

Want to know more about us? Visit www.galop.org.uk

Want to get in touch? Email Ben: Benjamin.Gooch@galop.org.uk

