

## FULL REPORT

### BOSTON SPA - 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010

12 employees took part, including HR support.

[Contributions by the facilitators are in standard print, whilst comments by the focus group participants are in *italics*.]

#### *General gender*

##### **Equal Pay**

The group was asked if the equal pay policy was working from a male and female point of view or was there any evidence men were paid more than women in the Library.,

- *some people perceive an issue about 'equal pay', but statistics suggest that there isn't one*
- *if you had been here 30 years your pay would be different to someone in the same post who'd only been here for 10 years, regardless of gender*
- *can pensions be affected by childcare responsibilities?*

The group was asked about the recent online Equality training, and how effective they felt it was.

- *because it is online, people can't get interact in order to ask questions*
- *face-to-face training would be better*
- *what they get is interesting and thought provoking*
- *because you had to pass, when you get something wrong you are told you need to go back to re-address areas, which is very good*
- *however once you had done the training, there is no follow up*
- *it would have been good if they could have had some leaflets or a chance to ask some questions of someone*
- *it would have been beneficial if, on the on-line system, there was an opportunity for you to look deeper into things you didn't understand*
- *it gives everyone basic awareness and a chance to discuss with colleagues*
- *another member of the group felt that it wasn't effective at all*

Due to changes in the law, equality training would need to be revisited at some point. However we do not know what funding is going to be like going forward. Face-to-face training for everyone is very expensive and resource intensive. The Library is still in advance of many organisations who are just starting to look at E-training for training delivery across a whole organisation in this area.

Are internal communications working well to promote gender equality?

- *the group felt they were, but that it is competing with a lot of other information*
- *you open the intranet page and you are bombarded with information*
- *it's hard to find the information on there*

## **Transgender**

There is confusion in employment if someone presents themselves to interview as a Female but then all her documents are that of a Male. This person was living as a Female but not had the full change. One employer in an educational establishment was challenged externally on employing someone in this scenario, and defended the decision saying that he had no problem with this, because, as long as the person does their job, it doesn't matter.

Changing sex is seen to negate a heterosexual marriage. If one person in a marriage wanted to change sex, but remain together in the partnership, they would need to either divorce or dissolve the marriage. The two people could then enter into a civil partnership.

- *it was raised that it can often be a traumatic experience going through the change especially if the person is unable to fund the surgery. If the change is very obvious it leaves them very vulnerable to harassment. Females going through the change to become Male, often found that they looked very young and found it very difficult to get served in bars or to be taken seriously at work*
- *being harassed on a day to day basis has an effect on your mental health, you need help from doctors for the surgery, but if your mental health is in question, then you can't get the help that you need. It's a cycle that's very easy to get stuck in. Another problem is that sometimes people face rejection from their friends and family as well*

- *abuse is upsetting as it takes a lot of courage for someone to reach the decision to come out and make the change, and nobody should have the right to take anything away from you. I blame it on the media and un-politically correct humour in the past, which has given people the impression that it is okay to do this*
- *you don't know what goes on behind closed doors. I've seen documentaries where children as young as 7 are wanting to go through the change because they've known since the age of 3 that they've been born into the wrong body*
- *often if you leave it too late, children enter puberty and things become more difficult to undo. Some also become a suicide risk and hormones and emotions become conflicting*
- *the Library needs to offer more than just time off when it comes to support. People needed to be able to ring up and tell someone that they were struggling or how they felt, or even have somewhere that they could go a refuge. Even if they are just able to go and sit somewhere with a friend from work*

Everyone was asked if they had any suggestions that could help the Library as an organisation.

- *does the Library monitor career development to ensure that there is no discrimination?*
- *which toilets do transitioning people use? Changing the description from 'disabled/accessible' toilet to 'Unisex/accessible toilet' would help as these could be used by both genders, rather than forcing them to use a toilet perceived as being specifically for disabled people*

An incident in a public organisation was mentioned where a male, dressed as a female, had gone into the Female toilets. A member of staff had seen this and asked the individual to use the 'disabled' toilet in future. This is not really appropriate because the person does not have a disability but if dressed as a woman, they would cause consternation if using the Men's toilet. It could be that if this person wants to be identified as a woman and is only going in there to use a cubicle, wash basin and mirror as a woman, this should be permissible. The

best option would be to move more towards Unisex accessible toilets for everybody including nappy change facilities etc.

- *when someone comes to you saying that they are considering or about to go through the change, you should ask them what it is they need from you as an organisation*
- *the best thing in that situation would be to ask the individual, because everyone is different*
- *a teacher at a children's school had decided to go through the change. The children were all brought together and told at the same time what was going to happen, and letter was sent home to parents. It was felt that it was probably the parents who had more issues than the children, who were told up front and knew what to expect*
- *there could be some sort of awareness training for staff about transgender that focused on particular areas? What is open discrimination? Or do people just bury their head in the sand*
- *this person had worked with someone who was transgender and spent time as both sexes. It was difficult in that this person spent 6 months at a time in each and she sometimes forgot what the persons other name was*
- *things are made awkward because people don't know what to say, they don't want to say the wrong thing now that things are seen as un-PC. Awareness training would be a very good idea*
- *what the Library is doing is hugely empowering - the way that everybody is being supported shows that the organisation values everyone*
- *the turnout to the focus groups is poor - more people should get involved. People are only interested in what affects them directly so they don't come and share their views on the subjects. They felt that managers needed to do more to encourage people to attend. Another member of the group said that line managers should put it at the top of the list at team meetings and cascade meetings*

Does it need more support from more senior management?

- *the group felt that it did have people giving it their support but it needed people to be more open. They felt it was hard to get people involved but didn't know how to go about this*
- *everyone has issues – gender, flexi time, closure of the nursery. But people don't relate their experiences to the groups*
- *an individual said that he had been raising these in directorate meetings, but felt that people just switched off because they think it doesn't affect them*
- *there needs to be more awareness before the meetings about what is covered. Not everybody is comfortable talking in a group; some haven't got the courage to be open about it. They wondered if, once one person opened up, the rest would follow*

### **Domestic abuse**

- *you don't realise that you're getting abused until someone explains what it is. You think how did I get there? How did I cope? Why me? You always question yourself first though*
- *when you're going through the abuse, you don't speak about it to anyone. It was only when my marriage broke down, and then my mother knew something was wrong. You just keep it all inside and then something will happen that will just make you snap and say this is it, I'm leaving. I think there needs to be more education, teach them early. I also cared for my mum for 8 years, you just come to a point where you can't cope and walk away, but it's family*
- *support mechanisms need to be in place. When you're in more rural area these are hard to access. The nearest may be 30 miles away. In London these things will be different because there are so many sources of support*
- *authorities don't act fast enough. Children need to learn these things from an early age, they don't always see it but they pick up on it*
- *children spend more time watching TV and playing on video games that were teaching them the opposite [inappropriate behaviour]. It's just a big*

*cycle that needs to be broken. They need to start to see that it's unacceptable*

It was mentioned that there are now Domestic Abuse workshops in schools. An example was given of a London borough. It is a very good idea to get children to understand domestic violence and to show it's not acceptable.

Statistics we have at the moment are thought to be only the tip of the iceberg. On average a woman is abused 35 times before reporting it. Then they may leave and go to a safe place, but carry on working at the same place, leaving them vulnerable to their abuser when at work.

- *one person recalled that this had happened a number of times at work*
- *one person had to ask for protection on work premises to stop the perpetrator getting access and protect colleagues and relatives*
- *when people have been victims, the effects lie just below the surface - something can happen later on, that can trigger memories. If children are around, you keep quiet*
- *is it possible to stop people ringing up the library trying to get in touch with the person?*

The point was made that it was a case of getting people to come forward to seek help, but there are things that can be done e.g. changing the person's number and informing people not to give this number to external people. Or redeploy the person to another area in the Library.

Part of the newly drafted Policy does deal with serious threats to colleagues and readers. The perpetrator may have lost their control over the individual and could get aggressive with rage and be out of control of themselves. We want to use what we have in place to protect people.

- *One person worked in a different area 20 years ago with someone who had a partner at the organisation. Sometimes they would have screaming rows on the phone and it had a negative impact on other people. Was it really fair on the people at work? Thinking back perhaps they should have said or done something but there wasn't the same support there is now 20 or 30 years ago. Most people then would have said it was a private matter. Also recalled was a young employee of an organisation*

*who was killed by her partner; she didn't turn up to work so alarm was raised, but it was too late*

- *what is within your power as an employer if both parties are on site?*

There are a couple of things that they can do if it's on site. There has to be some kind of evidence that this is taking place, it would be very difficult to take sides. If there was an obvious perpetrator there would be things that could be done e.g. British Library have an Employee Assistance Programme.

- *you don't want to feel like your being interfering. How far can a line manager go? They're not counsellors*

A lot of people meet their partners at work. Possibly a relationship could be between a line manager and a member of their team. People could be worried about favouritism on the PMR or perhaps marking this person more harshly on the report in thinking that this would show that they could be fair. It is very useful having Employee Assistance and also there is also support from HR and trades union.

- *the perpetrators also needs support and counselling. Once they realise what they are doing is wrong they can work to move on and recover*
- *now that domestic abuse is a crime, it's treated more seriously and 's becoming more talked about more openly. There has been a shift in how these things are dealt with*
- *when somebody says that they feel under threat, the police can't/won't actually do anything because that is only your perception. They can't do anything until something has actually happened. This is why education at school level is important. It starts to work towards the future to help and support people. There is also more knowledge about where you can go to talk to someone and know that it's still going to be classed as confidential*
- *it's often difficult to admit what's happened because you feel a failure. You don't know what to say to someone. We used to have a welfare officer on site all the time, so you knew when you went to see them that when you left, and closed the door, what you had said wasn't going to leave that room*

- *how do you tell the difference between a row and abuse? If you're being demeaned all the time, and you have so much going on in your life. You don't see it when you're in it*
- *how much training do line managers receive about this?*

The Library has a newly drafted Policy which is on the same level as many other organisations. Managers have been trained in other areas and when experienced in handling issues, they will do so quite well, but we need to make some changes in awareness. There are other areas being considered e.g. possibility of mental health first aiders who will help identify if a person needs to go to the hospital because they are a danger to themselves or other people etc.

- *it's often the issue of knowing when to step in. When you're seeing these people on a daily basis, how long do you leave it? Some people might be stronger mentally than others and be able to cope better*
- *when one had suffered abuse, it had made them stronger. Work was a safe haven and they became more involved with different activities that kept them away from home. Sometimes these people aren't aware of what they're doing. If they see it being talked about it might trigger them to realise that what they've done is wrong. Like if someone is having a bit of a family drama, it might actually be abuse*
- *when at university, they had a room that you could go to be safe. They would let you in and nobody else could get in. There was a bed, some food etc. Could we do something like that here? We have plenty of space.*
- *one person had learnt from their experiences and become more streetwise. They knew every time to tell someone else what's happening so they could tell them if they were doing something stupid, or whether it was abuse*
- *when working for a previous employer, a young Asian girl who had joined straight from university contacted her because she was having a few problems at home. As she'd taken up this new job she was working away from home and interacting with other people, she was changing as a person and her parents didn't like the changes they were seeing in her, so they were putting a lot of pressure on her. Her parents turned up to*

*work one day demanding to see the daughter when she hadn't returned home because she was working away on an audit. We then had to tell Security not to let them into the building, to keep the phone calls diverted. We even changed the bank details her wages were paid into. Unfortunately she wasn't strong enough to make the break from her family, so we supported her best way we could, but she did leave the organisation. At the time we didn't have a Policy in place*

The draft Domestic Abuse Policy is ready to consult on and negotiate with TUS. The Policy looks at domestic abuse from a management perspective e.g. how can managers support their staff etc as they are not counsellors etc. We also have the support of CIC , TUS and HR and the Civil Service Benevolent Fund can sometimes help fund the first months break away from the situation.

### **Sexual orientation**

5 employees took part in this focus group, including HR support.

What do you think the British Library does well and what can they do differently? How would you describe the Library's approach to LGBT issues?

- *people think it is political correctness gone mad*
- *people have been here a long time and are resistant to change*
- *generally all staff work together and accept each person for what they are*
- *as an organisation, the British Library is pretty liberal*
- *no one wants to upset the 'apple cart' - just want to do their job and go home*
- *there is a lack of information on LGBT issues*
- *more is promoted in the South on these issues*
- *hard to get North/South together to discuss, and all the interest is in the South*
- *International Women's Day was celebrated in the South but not up here*
- *everyone is very laid back and they don't bother too much about the issues*

The Library finds it very difficult to get people interested in consultation days at St Pancras, and even more in Boston Spa. Participants were told that the focus group in the morning had covered domestic abuse which e.g. affects 1:4 women at some point in their lives so potentially 280 of our female staff at any given time (male statistics to consider too) yet not many interested.

How can we get people more interested?

- *there needs to be more awareness of the topic and how it effects people – maybe start off small and then try and escalate it*

If someone came out do you think they would be/are treated any differently?

- *no, they would be treated the same as always*

Is there a resistance to promotion, of LGBT staff?

- *no, don't think so*

Sexual orientation should also be an issue concerning supplier diversity – all need to be on board and comply with the same rules.

If things change, would the manager be able to deal with the problem? e.g. domestic abuse – if someone was abused by their same sex partner, would the manager be as supportive? These are all areas of diversity and everyone is responsible. Compare two situations – London and Boston Spa. We need to understand and start with small groups.

How easy is it to be out with your sexuality?

- *there is a happy working environment here – people are laid back*
- *people here accept what you are and who you are*

It is not a problem having LGBT people working in Boston Spa but if a new starter did not share this philosophy, how would they fit in? How would a new starter learn about our level of acceptance? How do you ensure they don't have different attitudes?

- *the British Library attracts a certain personality*
- *everyone is really accommodating*
- *the Library is like a big family - free and easy – laid back*
- *nobody makes a big issue – people are more tolerant, and they just get on with it – no questions asked*

- *lots of gay people – don't make an issue about it*
- *new starters – all welcomed and included – communications are very good*
- *there is a liberal attitude throughout the Library – maybe the odd comment is made now and then*

How many staff identify as gay in Boston Spa?

- *as many as a football team!*

Why have more people not joined us today - not many have attended the consultation?

- *people just can't be bothered to attend, they are quite happy with things as they are*
- *people don't seem to be aware about it – apathy – like to moan, but won't do anything about it*
- *people might make an assumption that someone is lesbian/gay if they attended*

How well does the Library communicate sexual orientation and anti-gay bullying?

- *better in recent years*

What has the change been?

- *we hear more about it*
- *it's not an issue, the Library is a tolerant employer*
- *sexual orientation is not covered in the employee handbook*

If people don't attend, maybe there are no issues to be dealt with, or fixed?

- *more focus groups with LGBT issues could be held*
- *only recent years has this been discussed*

What would make people come to groups? Maybe they are worried if they show an interest people may think they are gay?

- *would people think they were lesbian/gay when they are not?*
- *let people know there are more issues, such as domestic abuse, and that anything can be discussed at the forum*

- *I'm not lesbian/gay, but I have come here to learn more about these issues*

Does the Library need to send out a better message to staff re focus groups?

Maybe make them more exciting? Emails need to be better communicated?

- *a lot is done for London and not here - different culture here*
- *we get a watered down version of the facts*

The Library has recently formed a communications group to get a broader variety of people to actually contribute and to send out information. The Diversity topic has got bigger. Reporting on everything that people do across the Library is very hard because of the quantity of information and the risk of overload:

- *O&S Highlights bulletin was the one most people read - maybe incorporate diversity issues into this?*
- *people don't read the intranet*
- *if those reading something are not excited by it, then they don't promote it*

Does this link back to having a champion? There is a vibrant economy and it can sometimes feel like we are just ticking the box's on diversity. What is the answer?

- *persistence on all issues from the people who are championing*
- *everyone treated fairly*

There is a need to keep up staff morale – what is the Library's approach to sexual orientation? The Library is setting up a Sexual Orientation Action Group as a priority which will be strategic - what would be the priorities?

- *need more action group members here in Boston Spa – not only in London*

The Library tried to promote awareness of the focus groups, using posters, but one was defaced, suggesting that there are pockets of people who are not so inclusive.

It is important to take a hard line with anyone who is bullying in the workplace. Not only to do with LGBT issues but religion etc. People should not feel that

they are being targeted. A strong message about an intolerance of anti-gay bullying will help. It is not about changing their beliefs but inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated. There will always be someone who has different views.

Do you mean that there isn't a problem at the moment, but by greater engagement, there could be?

- *seeing posters around will show people that the Library is taking this topic more seriously*
- *action groups – people become acclimatised*

The Library's Disability Action Group has a sub group, call the Mental Health Sub Group, which feeds back and reports to the main group. A similar arrangement with a Sexual Orientation Sub Group reporting into the Gender Action Group is planned.

There is concern about people seeing diversity as just political correctness, when it has more to do with ensuring human dignity and acceptable conduct. If people think diversity is just political correctness then there is a need to change that perception. The Library looks at all cultures including traditional British, and is keen about not hiding UK identity/culture e.g. we still celebrate Christmas and Christmas trees are permitted. There is a need to get some people to understand the meaning of diversity and there are three areas of concern:

- people who may have poor conduct/attitude towards diversity that we don't know about
- people who think diversity is political correctness
- subconscious bias

We want to dispel the myth about political correctness and encourage them to see that diversity is about everyone.

- *some people have been here for 20 to 30 years – so it's a hard thing to break into*
- *what people say in public is not necessarily what they say in private – not what they really think, and they should be encouraged to say what they think*
- *need to say that intolerance won't be tolerated*

Some areas are beyond Library's power, we may not be able to address people's beliefs and behaviour when at home, but we can address how they conduct themselves at work.

If they have an issue they need to be more vocal. People tend to be reactionary – empathise with one group e.g disability, but not gay. Diversity is including everyone

Inclusive communications are important and so too is our Unified Equality Scheme, not each area of diversity being seen as a separate strand.

Do you have much contact with service users? Do you proactively market your services to lesbian/gay groups etc encouraging them to visit the Library?

- *only staff in reading rooms come in contact with public*
- *we are essentially remote suppliers, and we don't encourage readers to come here*
- *we are in a good area to reach out to public, but our location is a big problem as we are isolated*
- *we need to advertise our location more locally, as people don't realise we are here and what we do. This needs addressing*
- *maybe we should hold open days and invite people to learn about the Library and its diversity*
- *people are interested in seeing what we do at the British Library*
- *the trouble is – great ideas come out of these discussions, but when this is finished, nobody wants to know*
- *we used to have open days – not anymore*

Why did open days stop?

- *change of management – not core to business*

It is a pity that the open days stopped; they would be a good way to promote Diversity – especially to young people. This is a respected organisation and it would be in a good position to challenge it.

We need to make local people realise, this is a British institution which people should value and be proud of. Are there any lesbian/gay groups up here?

- *not that many – there is an LGBT form in Leeds and York which are the main areas locally*

Some people have concerns about the newspaper storage moving up here from Colindale – accessibility could be an issue. What will change apart from the location?

- *people are worried about it coming up North*
- *it is mainly to be storage – what the access is I don't know - surrogate copies are still available*

This is the first consultation on sexual orientation, how would you like to take it forward?

- *make the subject more visible – people would be interested if the communication was improved*
- *any problems could be raised if there were an action group to whom people could take personal or work problems*
- *the intranet could be utilised to give details of who to contact if someone had a diversity issue*
- *people would be able to raise issues if they knew where to go*

What should they be discussing?

- *work place issues*
- *making sure people know who to contact*

Do you think people would know who to go to?

- *no, they wouldn't know what to do*

What do you think would help?

- *an intranet page if they don't want to go to their manager*
- *the staff hand book is now available on the intranet*

It needs to be made clear what they should do?

- *I find the staff handbook too scary!*
- *if someone had support at the beginning, the problem could be 'nipped in the bud'*

Re the confidentiality aspect – do people feel comfortable?

- *this is for the action group to explore – maybe it could be helpful to be able to talk to another gay person*
- *monitoring could be better communicated*
- *make people aware of the Staff survey which isn't given to everyone. Need time and guidance when filling in surveys*
- *if questions around sexual orientation etc. were put into context, people would answer the questions*

What could the Library do to reassure people and create in culture of safety?

How could we encourage people to self declare their sexual orientation as people have been encouraged to declare a disability? How best do we reassure people so that they don't feel threatened about declaring and are confident that the survey is confidential?

- *trade unions could help by reassuring that the Library wants you to declare as they can't address any LGBT issues if they are out there*
- *managers just get on with their day job*

If they could see the benefits, would they not change their attitude? Maybe a S/O survey, focus groups, see what different responses. Survey is needed targeting people as to why they have not come to focus group. Do you think people would respond to that?

- *only a few*
- *they might think what's in it for them?*
- *we could improve with the new starters that are coming in now and try to encourage them*

The plan is to hold consultation every three years for Unified Equality Scheme.

- *need to be more if they are going on all year*

What other suggestions?

- *need support from the management chain – encouraging people to come to consultations*
- *people could score highly on their PMR if they go on focus group*
- *this would be OK if the manager is keen for this to happen*
- *has to come from the top*



## FULL REPORT

### ST PANCRAS

**12<sup>th</sup> April – sexual orientation** – 11 participants

**13<sup>th</sup> April – gender, transgender and domestic abuse** – 4 participants

[Contributions by the facilitators are in standard print, whilst comments by the focus group members are in *italics*.]

#### ***General gender***

- *There seems to be more part time working offered by businesses outside London. Here at the British Library, you have to find your own part time co-worker, you have to ask for this to be accepted and it can be turned down*
- *Some people have term time contracts and those without children then have a deluge of work during school holidays. It is not always balanced. The British Library flexi contract is good, but it only applies up to Grade B. It would be better if it were offered up to all Grades*
- *managers may give those with children first refusal of dates during school holidays for annual leave. Someone without children may be asked to change their leave dates so that someone with children can take leave during school holidays;*
- *Managers need to be mindful that everyone has family even if they don't have children*

#### ***Transgender***

The facilitator gave a brief presentation on transgender definitions, terminology and legislation that affords protection to those transgender people.

#### **Training**

The participants were asked whether they had any questions around transgender issues.

- *the question was raised around how a service user should be addressed if a member of the Library's customer service staff was unsure of their gender. This is an issue that should be addressed during staff training.*

The group debated the issue about which gender toilet a transgender person should use when using British Library facilities. The case of Goodwin v. Goodwin was given, where the judge ruled that provided someone lived permanently in the new gender role, then appropriate facilities should be used.

- *training is needed to ensure that employees do not react in an inappropriate way if they see someone using a gender specific toilet whose gender may be unclear. One option might be for the Library to label its 'Accessible' (disabled persons') toilets as Unisex*
- *more talks about diversity issues such as transgender would be very helpful to staff and a larger audience should be encouraged*
- *British Library staff need to have their awareness raised in order that they feel comfortable with transgender people*
- *training on transgender issues needs to include faith and religious aspects and employees need to know that the Library expects its employees to respect all colleagues whatever their diversity issues*

### **Sexual orientation**

The group was asked how they would describe the Library's attitude towards sexual orientation.

- *there are barriers to this topic - people are not happy with it. There have been issues demonstrating unease with the topic, maybe due to lack of awareness rather than dislike*
- *some think it is a lifestyle choice; but it is who we are. Could be down to a lack of understanding about why people are gay*
- *seems supportive to me personally*
- *the LBGT month on the intranet was impressive - things we wanted informally were done formally, and it worked*

- *HR were supportive when I received abusive emails. More work is needed though if the Library is to be more proactive*
- *I have noticed an issue around the holiday season, particularly Christmas, when there has been an assumption that because you are gay or lesbian, and have no kids, you are available to work*
- *it is easy to be out*

So you don't feel you need to hide your sexual orientation here?

- *you don't know if there are issues over your sexual orientation or your gender. It goes with the territory. I responded by setting up a gay group*

If there was bullying is there a way to report it with confidence?

- *via the line manager and upwards. The police were called by the Library on one occasion in an abusive mail scenario*
- *there has been some bullying but it may have been coincidence that the person being bullied identified with LGBT*

Does the Library communicate to the workforce that it is not OK to discriminate on the basis of LGBT issues?

- *not completely*
- *there may be confusion about using certain words; some can be said in an offensive way or construed that way when it was not meant.*
- *the Library seems to be very culturally diverse. If gay and in a different cultural environment to yours, you may feel more comfortable*
- *in the Asian community there is a stigma, and targeting the issue in the smaller groups may be a tactic. There should be more openness so people know what they can and cannot say. i.e using the word 'Paki' - depends on the person saying it and receiving it*
- *something on paper about expectations would be good on diversity and LGBT*
- *people who feel they have been discriminated against could be concerned about 'rocking the boat'. Line managers may take the approach 'you have taken it the wrong way' where a service user is said to have offended a staff member. Dealing with issues effectively may depend on the grade of the person dealing with it*

What awareness training has there been on LGBT?

- *there is on-line info on disability but a more particular approach is needed. Face to face courses give you a better insight*
- *I work with colleagues from cultural backgrounds where homosexuality is illegal. There should be training to ensure colleagues know the law and what is expected*
- *in 2007 there was a one day course during the Sacred exhibition looking at ideology, culture, sexuality, religion - it was a one way session. To me this seemed confrontational and I felt affronted. There should have been more work done on it*
- *an equality conference be useful*
- *the Library needs to decide whether training on all strands of diversity should be compulsory*
- *we should have a sort of 'Wellbeing' day to explore diversity at the British Library, with workshops*
- *attendance would need to be compulsory, people with negative attitudes won't go to an optional one*
- *if you make it compulsory, some won't come. It is up to how you advertise, whether or not you get attendees*

So perhaps training specifically targeted at sexual orientation as a human issue, with the religious and cultural and language dynamics?

- *people don't think about their language. Some people are not comfortable about challenging inappropriate language. Many keep quiet – but they don't have to tolerate it*
- *need to be sensitive to confidentiality – some would not want to know that a certain group is a gay group. I would not want to have a meeting in the staff restaurant, in the open*

A staff LGBT group has been set up. There is also the corporate sexual orientation action sub-group and perhaps both groups could work better together.

- *the staff group needs to be more prominent and on an official site*

- *we need to remove the North/South divide and open both groups up to employees at both London and Boston Spa sites*

Some information is blocked/not accessible on British Library screens; may need to consider respecting the religious aspects of some cultures.

- *Sometime ago there was a video shown on inner peace. Someone put forward a request for a film about Reiki. There was a complaint from a Christian so the dvd was not shown. Surely it is an individual choice?*
- *need to take care that the British Library is not considering LGBT issues as only sexual*

On cultural and/or religious aspects and language - might discrimination be encountered in particular places?

- *mainly frontline spaces with service user encounters*
- *the basement areas may have more problems. In these areas people think they can make a joke. It is an individual thing, whether a joke is seen as offensive*

How can service users best be made aware that anti LGBT discrimination is not acceptable at the Library?

- *there must be something in the regulations/terms and conditions that readers sign, but when service users get frustrated, human nature comes out*
- *making explicit reference to LGBT respect would be good*
- *it would help to update the diversity policy on professional behaviour*
- *something in writing offers recourse*
- *training on dealing with difficult situations including LGBT examples would be good and this training should start at the top*

What are your priorities?

- *improving LGBT awareness*
- *LGBT History Month is good – but we want this all year round*
- *a day funded by HR - inclusive agenda*
- *aiming for the British Library to be in Stonewall's top 50 would be good to see*

- *people need to understand that LGBT people don't have a choice – it is who they are*
- *for the Library to be seen as celebrating LGBT in a positive way, being encouraging*
- *communication skills courses - to break the 'sex' thinking and help everyone to understand what LGBT really means*
- *sub group dialogues would be useful; what is acceptable? develop awareness*
- *signs in the reading rooms saying staff should be treated with consideration and respect*
- *induction training inclusion could be improved - what behaviour is not acceptable. Tell new recruits that there are LGBT social groups*
- *improve training on diversity, harassment issues; maybe target certain groups. The library tends to generalise; certain groups would benefit more than others.*

The Library has just developed a new Policy on the prevention and management of staff abuse and this is nearly ready for TUS negotiation.

### **Domestic abuse**

A presentation was made to focus group participants on the incidence of domestic abuse in the UK and it was explained that domestic violence was only recently criminalised.

Participants were asked whether the participants had observed any issues relating to domestic abuse either at work or outside work.

- *I have witnessed this when a friend was repeatedly being treated badly by her partner and we could see that she was being abused but she did not recognise it as abuse. For my friend, it was a normal situation. How does one step in? What can one say? An understanding of how one could help would be good*
- *if a perpetrator of domestic abuse came to the Library as their partner's place of work, and someone at the Library witnessed domestic abuse,*

*would the Library be called to give evidence and would it be obliged to act as witness?*

This would be considered on a case by case basis. The Library's new Policy covers this, as well as related issues on confidentiality, calling police etc. It also covers the situation where an employee might be abusing their partner who may also be a member of staff. The guidance may be developed still further.

Are the participants aware of counselling and advice available through the British Library?

- *there is a counselling/advisory service, but people tend to leave personal issues at home*
- *the advisory service phone number is on the back of the pass*
- *some people would worry that confidentiality will be lost if they were to be seen going into a counsellor's room. They may feel that there is a stigma attached to them*

What would be helpful to provide greater confidentiality?

- *the room used by the counsellor could be rotated each week so that it is not immediately identified by all as 'the counsellor's room'*
- *an employee could ask to meet the counsellor off site*
- *have a partnership with external organisations e.g. care trusts, where staff can go to outside the office*
- *promote on the intranet, where someone experiencing domestic abuse can go to for help, guidance or refuge*

An employee could ask to meet the counsellor off site. The Library currently provides the most confidential room that they could find.

- *the Library should consider more options in order to ensure confidentiality*

Does training cover domestic abuse issues?

- *there is online diversity training, with a test, but some managers seem too busy for it*
- *all staff should have training so they can help others*