

Survey reveals plight of LGBT elderly in care homes

March 12 2014, by Mike Addelman

Despite changes in social attitudes, many older LGBT people feel unable to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to staff according to a new survey of care home staff.

But though two thirds of [care home](#) staff say not even one resident has disclosed their [sexual preference](#), 82% report they would not feel embarrassed to discuss elderly lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans issues. Most care home staff, according to the report, say, "we, don't actually have any."

The survey, carried out by researchers at The Universities of Nottingham and Manchester who canvassed the views of 189 care home staff in England, revealed much individual goodwill towards elderly LGBT residents.

However, according to the researchers, Dr Kathryn Almack, from Nottingham University and Dr Paul Simpson, from The University of Manchester, care homes could be doing much more to address the distinct needs of LGBT residents.

Dr Simpson said: "Most respondents reported: 'We don't have any LGBT people at the moment' but that can't be true.

"We're not critical of care homes, as attitudes appear positive.

"But we do feel many may simply not be able to recognize people who

are LGBT.

"That, unintentionally, is likely to force residents back into the closet and deny a lifetime of experience."

One solution, say the researchers, is to monitor care home residents' sexual and gender identities.

However, 43% of respondents said they were 'unsure' about whether this was done and only fewer than one in ten respondents (9%) said their care home made LGBT-specific literature available and only 8% said that their home had any contact with LGBT organizations.

Kathryn Almack said: "It was common to hear the phrase: 'I/we treat everyone the same'. While well intentioned, ironically this reinforces, rather than prevents or tackles inequality.

"Encouraging an LGBT-friendly atmosphere needs to be higher on the agenda

"All residents should have the option and opportunity to disclose their [sexual orientation](#) or [gender identity](#) but never feel forced to disclose information."

The researchers say that staff training on LGBT issues is a big part of the answer to problem as nearly four-fifths (78%) of [respondents](#) said they had never been provided with any in their current workplace.

Dr Almack added: "The goodwill of individual staff needs converting into a collective resource and translating into strategically informed practice."

Provided by University of Manchester

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