

Study finds specialist support is lacking for LGBT asylum seekers

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Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) asylum seekers – including those living with HIV – face a lack of specialist support and services in the UK, according to a study by the University of Liverpool.

This group of [asylum seekers](#) come to Britain in order to escape considerable prejudice in their own countries. However, new research shows that many experience humiliating questioning by Home Office

case workers, and some are even asked for graphic evidence to prove their sexuality.

Asylum seekers are already a vulnerable and marginalised group of people. A dispersal centre for asylum seekers since 1999, Liverpool is one of only two cities in the UK where people can seek asylum.

The research was carried out in partnership with Sahir House, a charity which provides services to people living with and affected by HIV in Merseyside and North Cheshire.

Provision of relevant services

Jennifer New, from the University's Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology, said: "Understanding LGBT peoples' experiences of the asylum process and relevant support services is vital in order to push for change in the [service](#) provision that is available to LGBT people seeking asylum and refugees in Liverpool and Merseyside."

"As one of the key areas for asylum dispersal, Liverpool must show its acceptance and sensitivity towards people seeking asylum who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, including those who are HIV positive, and support organisations must work together to improve the support provision that is available for these highly vulnerable groups in the future."

Steve Earle, Services Manager at Sahir House, said: "This research project will have a significant impact on improving services for LGBT people seeking asylum in the UK, including those living with HIV."

"The research carried out so far highlights the problems still in the UK asylum process including the degrading nature of Home Office

interviews and the extremes that people have to go to, to 'prove' their sexual orientation or [gender identity](#)."

Need for specialist training

The study highlighted a need for greater visibility of existing services as well as need for specialist training for frontline staff in public and third sector agencies. It also found there is a need for greater access to good quality legal [support](#), and for specialist interpreters who understand issues around orientation, gender identity and HIV.

The next stage of the ESRC-funded research will focus on the experiences and needs of LGBT people seeking asylum in Liverpool including those living with HIV, and an analysis of Home Office and tribunal decisions.

Provided by University of Liverpool

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