

EQUALITY MAINSTREAMING
Policy and Practice for Transgender People

Ulf Hansson
and
Molly Hurley Depret

Institute for Conflict Research
North City Business Centre
2 Duncairn Gardens
Belfast
BT15 2GG

www.conflictresearch.org.uk
info@conflictresearch.org.uk

June 2007

Executive Summary

This is the first report to focus specifically on the transgender population in Northern Ireland. It was commissioned by the Equality Directorate at the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to provide an evidence base to assist bodies in effectively considering transgender issues in the development of policy and practice.

The research identifies the barriers, difficulties and challenges experienced by the transgender population with the public sector in relation to accessing goods, facilities and services. It also outlines the legislative and policy contexts, and summarises existing research and statistical evidence in respect of transgender equality issues.

Recognition of the specific and distinctive issues affecting transgender people has been slow to develop, but are beginning to be recognised by statutory agencies and government. The PSNI has acknowledged this issue and between 1 April 2006 and 31 January 2007 recorded twenty-nine transphobic incidents.

Terminology

The terminology relating transgendered population is still disputed at times. We have relied on the following definitions:

- **Transgender:** A term used to include transsexuals and transvestites.
- **Transsexual:** A person who feels a consistent and overwhelming desire to transition and fulfil their life as a member of the opposite gender. Most transsexual people actively desire and complete sex reassignment surgery.
- **Transvestite:** A person who dresses in the clothing of the opposite sex. Generally, these persons do not wish to alter their body.

Methodology

The fieldwork was undertaken between May and November 2006 and utilised a variety of methodologies:

- Literature review of research and policy developments;
- A self-completion questionnaire;
- Focus group and individual interviews with members of the transgender community and from transgender organisations.

The transgender community is a largely invisible population and its members were reluctant and wary of participating in the research project. Similar difficulties have been experienced by other researchers in Britain and Ireland. This study had a small participant base, but represents the first piece of policy research to focus on the needs and experiences of the transgender population of Northern Ireland.

Transgender Survey Findings

The survey drew upon the experiences of thirty-one people who identified as transgender and considered their experiences of employment, welfare rights, housing, health, education and leisure. The analysis noted that respondents identified problems

in relation to employment, health, education and leisure. The most commonly identified problems were:

- harassment and abuse, particularly in relation to the use of transphobic language;
- bullying associated with transgender status, including the bullying of one's children;
- being subjected to discriminatory disciplinary sanctions at work; and
- a general sense of being discriminated against and marginalised because of transgender status.

Few people were prepared to make a formal complaint about their treatment, most people were reluctant to do so for fear of 'outing' themselves or because they believed their complaints would be ignored.

Many of the problems people experienced appear to be linked to a general lack of awareness of transgender issues, a failure to take the views and understandings of transgender people into account and a basic lack respect for transgender people.

Some of the problems however were also associated with a more basic form of bigotry and hostility to difference that has increasingly been experienced and reported by other minority communities across Northern Ireland.

Transgender/Transvestite Issues

Many transgender/ transvestite people had limited experiences with public bodies as transvestites as most rarely interact with public bodies in their female persona. Only one person we interviewed lives as a woman in both public and private. While all the people we spoke with would like to engage with public services in their female personae, very few do so because of fears of discrimination, violence, or being 'outed' in other areas of their lives.

Most people were wary of living or being identified in their female personae in public, and this was based on a range of fears and negative experiences, which are largely due to a lack of awareness of the transgender/transvestite identity. It was noted that if one was careful and selective it was possible to live in a public space, but this remained a very limited and carefully chosen public environment.

Transgender/Transsexual Background Issues

The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999 extended the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and made discrimination in employment and training on grounds of gender reassignment illegal as a form of sex discrimination. The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 similarly amended the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976.

Since April 2005 when the Gender Recognition Act 2004 came into force, transsexual people who have taken decisive steps to live fully and permanently in their acquired gender have the right to apply for legal recognition of that gender. They may have the

right to marry in their acquired gender and be given birth certificates that recognise the acquired gender. Transsexual people will be able to obtain benefits and State Pension like anyone else of that gender.

Transgender/Transsexual Issues in Northern Ireland

The interviews and focus groups reflected the fact that while some individuals have had positive experiences, others have had more negative reactions to their transgender/transsexual identity. Overall there was a significant area of concern about the public perceptions of transgender/transsexual individuals and the lack of knowledge of issues associated with gender dysphoria and the transition process more generally.

The interviews indicate that transgender/transsexual people have a range of issues associated with the workplace, health and use of public facilities that cause stress and concern. In some cases these relate to the interaction with public bodies and the general lack of knowledge and awareness of relevant issues amongst staff.

Participants also highlighted the positive experiences of the gender identity clinic at Belfast City Hospital. Some individuals stated that the situation in Northern Ireland was ahead of the situation in the rest of the UK in some areas. The experiences of individuals of the local health service are something that deserves further attention and further research.

Conclusions

The transgender population in Northern Ireland is not large and there are a limited range of resources and organisations supporting the wider community. Our research indicated however that the transgender/transvestite and transgender/transsexual communities share some common experiences while also having their distinctive and different areas of concern.

The common experiences include a general lack of knowledge, awareness and understanding of transgender identities and issues. This lack of awareness has helped to feed and sustain prejudice and discriminatory practices towards transgender people, in the population at large, in elements of public service delivery and in the supply of goods and services.

There is a need for greater recognition by public bodies of the transgender population and of the issues that they face. There is a role for government to play in raising awareness amongst public bodies and of establishing relationships with the currently small number of support organisations and representative bodies.

Contents

1. Introduction	5
Terminology	5
Structure of the Report	7
2. Methodology	9
Questionnaire	9
Focus Group Interviews	9
Confidentiality and Sensitivity	10
3. Transgender Survey Findings	12
Employment	13
Welfare Rights	14
Housing	14
Health	14
Education	15
Culture and Leisure	15
Barriers	15
Making a Complaint	16
Summary	17
4. Transgender/Transvestite Issues	19
Background	19
Research Findings	20
Public Bodies	22
Goods and Services	24
Safety	25
Summary	26
5. Transgender/Transsexual Background Issues	27
Transition Process	27
Identity Issues	29
Workplace	30
Health Provision	32
General Goods and Services	34
6. Transgender/Transsexual Issues in Northern Ireland	35
Personal Experiences	36
Health	38
Employment	41
Public Bodies	42
Improvement of Public Services	46
Summary	46
7. Conclusions	47
References	49
Annex – Questionnaire	52

1. Introduction

This research report is the first study to focus specifically on the transgender population in Northern Ireland. The research, commissioned by the Equality Directorate at the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, was carried out as part of a wider study with the aim of 'providing a broad evidence base to assist statutory bodies in effectively considering LGBT issues in the development of policy and practice'. The research began in April 2006 and was completed in November 2006.

Some recent studies of the LGB population in Northern Ireland have aimed to include the transgender population in their research, but in reality there has been little engagement with the transgender community by researchers and little understanding of the issues facing the transgender population. This project aimed to identify equality issues facing both the transgender and the LGB populations, but it was evident that the issues were likely to be different for the two groups. Therefore it was decided to present the findings in two separate but related reports, one for the LGB issues and one for transgender issues.

This study aims to highlight issues related to equality mainstreaming that are relevant to the transgender community in Northern Ireland. The research identifies the barriers, difficulties and challenges experienced by the transgender population with the public sector in relation to accessing goods, facilities and services and identifies examples of good or improving practice within the public sector. The report also outlines the legislative and policy contexts at local and national levels, summarises existing research and statistical evidence in respect of transgender equality issues, and aims to bring some clarity regarding the use of language and definitions.

Recognition of the specific and distinctive issues affecting transgender people has been slow to develop, but transgender issues are beginning to be recognised by statutory agencies and government in Northern Ireland. One recent example of this is the subject of abuses, harassment, violence and other forms of hate crimes directed at transgender people. The PSNI has acknowledged the problem and in April 2006 started to record transphobic crimes. In the first ten months of recording (1 April 2006 – 31 January 2007), twenty-nine transphobic incidents, of which eleven were crimes, had been reported. It is likely that the number of transphobic incidents will increase in the coming years, as this was the experience for racist and homophobic crimes once the police began to record them as a specific category of incidents.

Terminology

Overshadowing this work is the definition of what to include under the label 'transgendered people'. The terminology often refers to transgender, which is best described as an umbrella term, which incorporates subgroups of a wider population of different gender identity. The Gender Trust (<http://www.gendertrust.org.uk>), a charity, provides a useful list of definitions:

- **Transgender:** A term used to include transsexuals, transvestites and cross-dressers. A transgenderist can also be a person who, like a transsexual, transitions - sometimes with the help of hormone therapy and / or cosmetic surgery - to live in the gender role of choice, but has not undergone, and generally does not intend to undergo, surgery.
- **Transsexual:** A person who feels a consistent and overwhelming desire to transition and fulfil their life as a member of the opposite gender. Most transsexual people actively desire and complete sex reassignment surgery. This condition has also been labelled as gender dysphoria or a drive to live in the opposite gender to that in which a person has been registered at birth and is a widely recognised medical condition.
- **Transvestite:** The clinical name for a cross-dresser. A person who dresses in the clothing of the opposite sex. Generally, these persons do not wish to alter their body.
- **Intersex:** A term covering a wide range of conditions in which the sex may be indeterminate to some degree at birth. Such people are often subject to ill-conceived attempts at surgical 'correction' early in life which may cause major problems later, sometimes including gender dysphoria.

Organisations such as Press for Change, a campaigning and lobby group for transsexual and transgender people, have also argued for a more inclusive terminology and have advocated the term 'trans'. Press for Change (1998) states:

Usage of the terms differs, however, and has evolved over the years in line with a growing sophistication in trans people's own awareness. The above distinctions invite the assumption that "transgendered" is in some way inferior or short of "transsexual" for instance.

More recently, Press for Change and other organisations worldwide, have begun to advocate the use of the adjective 'trans' to describe people who, in expressing their sense of identity, come into conflict with the contemporary gender behaviour norms of their society. This approach has also been taken by organisations such as the Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSo 1998), which simply refer to 'trans,' which they consider a more inclusive concept.

This problem of definition and use of terms was also highlighted by Laird and Aston (2003) in their study on transgender research in Scotland. They write (2003: 6):

The term transgender as an all-encompassing umbrella term was viewed as being problematic because there is a huge range of diversity even within the transsexual label. It was felt that the categories of transsexual and transvestite being put together under transgender did not help with the understanding of any of the issues because both categories are very different from each other.

The report also highlights the issues felt strongly within the transgender/transsexual community, particularly among male to females (MtF) that people make assumptions about sexual orientation and sexual expression. Transsexuals and transvestites also believe that people in general had very fixed ideas about what a man/woman should be like, e.g. 'not a real man'. Participants in Laird and Aston's research made the point that transgender people may be lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual, simply because someone has transitioned to their true gender does not mean that they will be emotionally and physically attracted to a different sex than before, thus whether a transgender person defines as lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual depends on their true gender.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (1999) highlighted the fact that while some transsexual people have self-identified as transgender in this respect, others have emphasised the very distinctive aspect of transsexual identity and the specific goal of living permanently in a new gender role. Some transsexual people therefore have a desire to live and be accepted as members of the opposite gender, usually accompanied by a sense of discomfort with, or inappropriateness of, their anatomic gender and a wish to have hormonal treatment and surgery to make their bodies as congruent as possible with the preferred gender.

In this report, we most often use the hybrid terms 'transgender/transvestite' and 'transgender/transsexual'. Although this is a somewhat clumsy formulation it makes a distinction between transvestite and transsexual people, yet at the same time it reflects the fact that some people may simply prefer the term transgender. In conversation with individuals references were also made to terms such as 'trans man' to describe a female individual who is going through, or has gone through, with sex reassignment surgery. For a male in a similar situation, the adjective 'trans woman' is sometimes used. At times, we also use terms that people prefer to call themselves when referring to specific interviewees.

Structure of the Report

We have tried to acknowledge the diversity of perspectives and views within the wider transgender population by discussing separately the views and experiences of transgender/transvestite people and transgender/transsexual people.

This general introduction is followed by a methodological chapter outlining the approach to the research project. The third chapter offers an analysis of the results of a survey conducted among members of the LGB and the transgender communities. This chapter focuses purely on the small number of people who completed the survey and who identified as transgender, the full survey findings are analysed in the companion report on equality issues facing the LGB population.

Chapter four looks in more depth at the issues facing the transgender/transsexual population while the final two chapters look at issues facing the transgender/transvestite population. Chapter five focuses on general issues identified

through the local and international literature, while chapter six presents the findings from the interviews and focus groups conducted in Northern Ireland.

This report represents the first exploration of issues facing the small but diverse transgender population in Northern Ireland. It is not a comprehensive study; rather it represents an initial engagement and outline of some of the key equality issues facing trans people. Our initial research indicates that there will be a need for more extensive work with this diverse population in the future in order for policy makers to identify and develop appropriate responses to their distinctive needs.

2. Methodology

The fieldwork for this research was undertaken between May and November 2006. In order to reach as many people as possible within the wider transgender community we utilised a variety of methodologies, these included:

- Literature review of research and policy developments;
- Self-completion questionnaires;
- Focus group interviews with transgender people in urban and rural locations;
- Individual interviews with members of the transgender community; and
- Interviews with representatives from transgender organisations

Questionnaire

A single questionnaire was developed as part of the wider project on equality issues for LGB and transgender people. Representatives and individuals from the transgender/transsexual community were involved in the design of the questionnaire, as were representatives and members of the LGB communities. Members of the Butterfly Club, the only transgender/transvestite organisation in Northern Ireland, were contacted by e-mail in June 2006, and ICR met with a representative in July 2006 to inform them about the aims of the study and the approaches being developed to undertake the research.

There was considerable discussion about how best to include the transgender/transvestite and transgender/transsexual aspect within the questionnaire. Representatives from a transgender organisation felt that their inclusion in a study on Section 75, which covers sexual orientation but not gender status, would be inappropriate as their status was determined by their gender rather than sexual orientation. We agreed to alter the questionnaire to allow members of the transgender/transvestite and transgender/transsexual communities to indicate their sexual orientation, including the option to choose 'heterosexual' on the survey, as well as the option of whether they consider themselves 'transgender,' 'transvestite,' 'male to female transsexual,' and 'female to male transsexual'. These terms were important to include on the survey since, as several participants emphasised, there is a broad spectrum of transgenderism.

The research team also attended several events during Pride to promote the research. A link to the questionnaire was available on ICR's web-site and was also distributed through groups on Irish-T@yahoo.com on the internet. The questionnaire was distributed at two meetings of the Butterfly Club and amongst individuals attending the support group for transgender/transsexuals in Belfast.

Focus groups and interviews

The transgender population is not publicly very visible in Northern Ireland and it was only possible to interview seven people on a one to one basis and to organise three focus groups involving eighteen participants. The first of the focus groups was held in May 2006 with eight members of a support group for transgender / transsexual

individuals in Belfast. The group, which has been in existence for the last year, offers support and also invites groups and individuals, such as members of the PSNI and health professionals for talks and meetings. The meeting was not recorded on the wish of the participants, but notes were taken. Seven of the eight participants were in the process of their 'real life test' and one was post-operative. Seven of the participants were MtF and one was FtM. The participants estimated that it is impossible to know how many transgender/transsexual individuals live in Northern Ireland but one participant estimated that there were about fifty such people.

Attempts were made to organise a further discussion with the support group, but they declined further participation in any external research projects. However, two individuals attending the group agreed to participate in individual interviews and two further interviewees were contacted via other sources. Two of the people interviewed were living in their acquired gender as were three people enrolled at the gender identity clinic at Belfast City Hospital. All interviewees were male to females (MtF).

Other focus groups and interviews were organised with the assistance of the Belfast Butterfly Club, which has at least 135 members on its mailing list. The aim of the Butterfly Club is to inform, advise and educate. They run a help-line each Wednesday evening, which is advertised in the phonebook and in newspapers and has been featured on Ulster Television. The help-line acts as a point of contact for people across Ireland who feel they may be transgendered, but they also occasionally receive calls from wives and mothers. If they are unable to address a question, they refer people to other help-lines, such as the Samaritans or groups in the UK that deal with transgender issues.

The first focus group was held in Belfast in August 2006, the second in Derry/Londonderry in September 2006. Eight people were present at the Belfast meeting, while at the Derry/Londonderry focus group, five individuals attended, three of whom had also participated in the Belfast session. The discussions were not tape-recorded because of concerns of the participants for confidentiality. A range of interview questions had been prepared but in reality the participants led much of the discussions, which focused on the Butterfly Club's purpose, mission and social activities; participants' experiences with public bodies, their thoughts on social acceptance of transgender/transvestite people, family lives and when and where they are 'out.'

Confidentiality and Sensitivity

In conducting the research the issue of confidentiality was particularly important. While some participants were 'out' and 'open' in all areas of their lives, others were only so to select individuals, or in specific situations. There were also concerns about visibility and recognition due to the small number of transgender individuals in Northern Ireland. The fear of 'outing' was highlighted in concerns about completing the questionnaire on line. Even though confidentiality was assured, individuals expressed concern that their details were being monitored. One non-respondent said that the inclusion of post-codes in the questionnaire could expose individuals even

though only the first three digits were requested for statistical purposes. Some individuals also suggested that the inclusion of transvestites in the questionnaire might deter individuals from the transgender/transsexual community from taking part in the research. ICR attempted to respond positively to the concerns expressed by members of the transgender community.

Multiple challenges arose in efforts to reach transgender/transvestite people. These included the fact that many transgender/transvestite people do not feel comfortable enough to dress as women in public or even at a private meeting of the Butterfly Club. In many cases families and close friends do not know about the individuals' cross-dressing, and this creates a constant fear of being 'outed.' Some people thus attend the Butterfly Club sporadically, while others may attend regularly, but then fail to return without notice due to changed personal circumstances, such as getting married, divorced, working different hours, or simply due to a personal wish to suppress their cross-dressing. We did not record any of the focus groups we attended, and for the most part, we did not know the participants' legal first names or surnames.

The transgender community is a largely invisible population and its members were reluctant and wary of participating in the research project. Similar difficulties have been experienced by other researchers in Britain and Ireland (Sanger 2006; West 2004). However, while this study has a small participant base, it nevertheless represents the first piece of policy research to focus on the needs and experiences of the transgender population of Northern Ireland.

3. Transgender Survey Findings

The survey was designed to gather experiences and opinions of members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender population of Northern Ireland. In total 204 people completed the questionnaire. A full analysis of the findings is included in the other project report on equality and LGB people.

Thirty-one transgendered respondents completed the survey. Fourteen people used this term to describe themselves, four used the term transvestite and five used transsexual. Eight people described themselves by the term ‘other’ (Table 1).

Table 1: Transgender status of respondents

Transgender status	Number
Transgender	14
Transvestite	4
Male to female transsexual	4
Female to male transsexual	1
Other	8
Total	31

There were two respondents in the 18-25 age range (7%), eight respondents in the 26-35 age range (26%), thirteen people were between 36 and 50 years old (42%), seven were between 51 and 65 (23%) and one person was over 65 years of age. There were no respondents in the under18 category. In terms of ethnic background, twenty-six respondents referred to themselves as ‘White’, two as ‘Irish Traveller’ and two as ‘mixed ethnic group’ and ‘other’ respectively. In terms of community background, ten respondents said they were Catholic, while seven indicated they were Protestant and eight individuals, indicated ‘no religion’.

Six people referred to themselves as being gay, eight as lesbian and eight as bisexual. Seven respondents referred to themselves as heterosexual, two people did not answer this question. The majority of respondents resided in Belfast or Derry/Londonderry but there were also respondents from areas throughout Northern Ireland.

Respondents were also asked how ‘out’ they were in a variety of contexts (Table 2). A larger number of respondents were out amongst friends, than amongst family and the community at large and individuals were most likely to be out to some degree within the community, followed by friends, family, and work.

Table 2: ‘How ‘out’ are you?’ by context

Out	Friends		Family		Community	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Completely	17	57	14	48	12	40
Partly	11	36	9	31	13	43
Not at all	2	7	6	21	5	17

Respondents were also asked how they felt about the statement: **‘Northern Ireland is a tolerant environment for LGBT people?’** Twenty-two respondents (75%) disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement. Only five respondents (17%) agreed.

Employment

Respondents were also asked about economic activity, Table 3 indicates that the majority (eighteen) were working (full-time/part-time). There were however a number of respondents who were not working, either because they were unemployed (five people) or because they were unable to work (one due to illness and four to disability).

Table 3: Economic activity of respondents

Economic activity	Number
Working (full- or part-time)	18
Unemployed	5
Unable to work because of disability	4
Full-time carer for family/other dependents	1
Unable to work because of illness	1
Retired	1
Other	1
At college of further education	1

When we asked about whether people were or had ever been ‘out’ to colleagues at work, eleven respondents said they were completely out, eleven said they were ‘partly out’ and six respondents said they were not out at all. Amongst the self-identified transvestites, three were employed, and one was unemployed, none were ‘out’ at work. One respondent commented that a major issue in employment is ‘acceptance of cross-dressing in the open workplace.’ Another person remarked that s/he must ‘keep my orientation hidden,’ while another said, ‘it would be impossible to be open about my sexual orientation.’ This last comment highlights the fact that while most transvestite people are heterosexual, some may be gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Respondents were asked if they had experiences of problems because of their transgender status, fourteen individuals referred to having had problems while fourteen stated they had not (Table 4). Five of the fourteen who had problems stated that they had experienced verbal attacks and five had suffered forms of harassment.

Five respondents referred to colleagues causing the problems at work, four of these had complained to managers and three to employers. References were also made to other bodies, such as trade unions, in relation to lodging complaints.

Table 4: Problems experienced in employment as a result of gender status

Problems experienced in employment	Number
Verbal attack	5
Bullying	4
Harassment	5
Refused promotion	2
Disciplinary action	2
Dismissed	2
Suspended	-
No experience	14
Other	5

The response from employers varied: four respondents referred to being satisfied or very satisfied with their employer’s response while four stated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Respondents were also asked to indicate what they saw as the major issues in relation to employment, to which seventeen people replied. The main issues that were cited were a lack of knowledge and understanding about gender status and transgender issues and therefore a need for people to conceal their identity at work.

Welfare Rights

Amongst respondents, just over half of the sample, sixteen individuals, indicated that they received some type of benefit. The majority of individuals who accessed welfare had never experienced any problems. Amongst those who had, gender status had been a problem experienced by four respondents.

Respondents were also asked to comment on the following statement: **‘Do you think that you receive the same treatment from public service providers as non-LGBT individuals do?’** Of the twenty-six respondents who answered this question, ten said yes and sixteen said no.

Housing

Only nine respondents referred to having had any contact with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive within the last year and only one referred to having experienced problems due to sexual orientation or gender identity. This had involved an experience of transphobic language.

Health

The overwhelming majority, twenty-eight respondents said they were registered with a GP, while only two respondents were not. Of those who were registered with a GP, seventeen were completely ‘out’ and eleven ‘partly out’ about their transgender status. Five respondents referred to having been treated unfairly by the health service. Individuals referred to discrimination because of their transgender status and

experienced the use of transphobic language. Other difficulties with the health service involved issues related to gender status, such as a lack of understanding of a transgender identity, breaches of confidentiality and providing inappropriate advice.

Respondents were also asked to comment on the following statement: **‘Health workers, mental health professionals and social workers are adequately trained concerning issues of sexual orientation/gender identity’**. Six individuals agreed with the statement while thirteen disagreed or strongly disagreed, while five neither agreed nor disagreed.

Education

Eight respondents had been in contact with the Northern Ireland education system in the past twelve months, for four of these it was through their line of work, while another three had been students at a university or Institute of Higher Education. Three of these eight people referred to being treated unfairly and references were made to a range of issues, such as bullying, harassment by teachers or staff and issues relating to sex education. Three individuals who identified as parents or co-parents referred to their children being bullied.

Respondents were also asked to comment on the following statement: **‘The education system in Northern Ireland is free from discrimination of LGBT people?’** An overwhelming majority, nineteen respondents, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Respondents were also asked to comment on the following statement: **‘The education system in Northern Ireland takes a strong stance against homophobic bullying?’** As with the statement above, a majority, eighteen respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in contrast to the six respondents who agreed or strongly agreed.

Culture and Leisure

Respondents were asked if they had any difficulties accessing culture/leisure facilities and eleven answered affirmatively. Respondents referred particularly to problems regarding safety accessing a venue and a feeling that the service provision was not adequate. Amongst those eleven who had had difficulty accessing culture/leisure facilities, the largest number of respondents referred to not having made a complaint. Individuals also referred to rudeness and impoliteness by staff and being discriminated because of gender status.

Barriers

Respondents were asked what they thought of the state of homophobic and or transphobic harassment monitoring by public service providers. Fourteen individuals found it poor but ten said that they found it adequate.

In relation to barriers between the LGBT community and public services, fifteen respondents said that barriers did exist. When asked what barriers people experienced in accessing public services, respondents' comments included:

I feel I'm not able to avail of services as myself, ie en-femme.

Lack of education surrounding issues.

Ignorance of the various situations and problems facing transpeople.

Feel that you are a freak.

When asked why these barriers exist, they also commented:

Society's attitude toward transgenderism.

A lack of knowledge.

Lack of education.

There was also a high awareness of Section 75 amongst respondents: eighteen individuals said they knew of Section 75, while nine said they did not. Amongst those respondents who were aware of Section 75, six referred to having becoming aware through work and three through 'the news'. Respondents also referred to other sources, of which the main one was an LGBT organisation.

Making a Complaint

Respondents were asked who they would contact for help if they experienced problems with a public service. As seen in Table 5, the largest number of respondents referred to LGBT organisations, followed by a Citizens Advice Bureau.

Table 5: If you experience a problem with a public service, who would you contact for help?

Who to contact for help	Number
LGBT organisation	7
Citizens Advice Bureau	6
Family member/Friend	5
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland	4
Wouldn't ask anyone for help	3
Human Rights Commission	2
Solicitor	2
Other	2
Local councillor	1
Northern Ireland Ombudsman	1

Only two respondents had however made an official complaint, in one case to the police and in another to a trade union. These respondents both stated that they were satisfied with the response. Respondents who had not made a complaint were asked why they had not done so. The largest number of respondents referred to a fear of being ignored (Table 6). The lack of complaints might also be related to their lack of experience with public bodies or, as well, their concerns about being ‘outed.’

Table 6: Of those who had not complained, why have they not complained

Why no complaint	Number
Thought would be ignored due to sexual orientation or gender identity	12
Felt that nobody would help	7
Felt that nobody would be interested	5
Didn't know how to complain	5
Didn't know to whom to complain	4
Had a poor experience when reporting a previous incident	4
Were too upset	4
Felt that nobody could help	3
Were scared of provoking reprisal	3
Incident was too trivial	1
Other	1
People discouraged you	1

Summary

The survey draws on the experiences of thirty-one people who identified as being transgender in the areas of employment, welfare rights, housing, health, education and leisure. The analysis noted that the respondents identified that problems have been experienced in relation to employment, health, education and leisure

The most common problems people experienced were:

- harassment and abuse, particularly in relation to the use of transphobic language;
- bullying associated with transgender status, this included the bullying of one's children;
- being subjected to discriminatory disciplinary sanctions at work; and
- a general sense of being discriminated against and marginalised because of transgender status.

Few people were prepared to make a formal complaint about their treatment, most people were reluctant to do so for fear of ‘outing’ themselves or because they believed their complaints would be ignored.

Equality Mainstreaming & Transgender People

Many of the problems people experienced appear to be linked to a general lack of awareness of transgender issues, a failure to take the views and understandings of transgender people into account and a basic lack respect for transgender people.

Some of the problems however were also associated with a more basic form of bigotry and hostility to difference that has increasingly been experienced and reported by other minority communities across Northern Ireland.

4. Transgender/Transvestite Issues

Background

In the terminology and discourse relating to transvestism it is important to note that there are distinctions between transvestism and cross-dressing. First of all, some people feel that the term ‘transvestite’ has pejorative connotations, since this term is often linked to the psychiatric/medical definitions of transvestism as a mental disorder and/or a sexual fetish. However, many others accept this term without any dissent and refer to themselves as transvestites or TVs as an abbreviation (Belfast Butterfly Club 2001). Though the term ‘transvestite’ may carry a connotation of fetishism for some people, for others it does not. This is highlighted by Tri-Ess, an American organisation primarily for male heterosexual cross-dressers/transvestites. Rather, some men just feel particularly comfortable or ‘themselves’ in women’s clothing even though they still feel heterosexual desire, and they do not feel that they were born with the incorrect sexual/secondary sexual characteristics. It is important to note that transvestites may be heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual.

In its broadest meaning, ‘cross-dressing’ includes anyone who (regularly or occasionally, fully or partially) wears the clothing intended for the opposite sex, usually used in referring to a genetic male who wears women’s clothing but who does not have a strong desire to transition. Men who cross-dress like to be identified as women (by name, by gender) when they cross-dress (www.transproud.com). This raises the question of their gender identity in that they may not be transsexual people, but their gender does seem to depend on the context of their interaction. The term ‘transgender,’ while being an umbrella term, can also point more specifically to non-operative transsexuals, transvestites and/or cross-dressers and has been used to refer to males who were satisfied with their male genitalia, but wanted to be seen and to live as a woman. Transsexual or intersexed people also ‘cross-dress’ regularly during their ‘real life test’ prior to medical intervention, but being a transsexual man or woman or an intersexed person is their primary gender identity. Cross-dressing simply functions as a part of their overall transition.

Cross-dressing can also include women who wear men’s clothing, though the popularity of unisex/androgynous clothing means that this is not always as readily apparent as a man attempting to ‘pass’ in women’s clothing. Also, it is unclear whether a ‘butch’ woman, who feels most comfortable in men’s clothing and sometimes also traditionally male interests/activities, whether lesbian or heterosexual, would fall under the rubric of being cross-dressed. The award-winning novel/semi-autobiographical account, *Stone Butch Blues*, by transgender/transsexual activist Leslie Feinberg, sheds some light in this regard since it details the life of a woman who ‘passes’ as a man in the 1950s and 1960s and, at times, also recognizes herself as a butch woman and a lesbian. This example highlights the very complex intersection of cross-dressing, gender identity, and sexual orientation. For instance, though being ‘butch’ may be linked to clothing and traditionally male interests, the web site (www.butch-femme.com) states that:

Butch, stone Butch, Femme, and stone Femme are natural gender expressions that are of the heart, having little to do with appearance or any stereotypical code of behaviour.

While people who cross-dress differ in the above ways from the larger transgender/transsexual community, cross-dressers' or transvestites' interests are sometimes aligned with the larger transgender/transsexual community, while also departing at times. For instance, transsexual people's needs within the medical, legal and psychiatric communities are very specific (e.g., the need for hormone therapy, legal name changes, and operations to transform one's body, etc). This is a point of divergence. However, there are several other points where their needs converge. The advocacy guide, "Trans Care Advocacy: An advocacy guide for trans people and loved ones," (Trans Care 2006) points to many of these potential convergences. A brief list of these arenas where policies regarding some transsexual and transvestite people's needs - including cross-dressing - do (or could) have effects includes situations where information about being a trans person or cross-dressing is shared without your consent or knowledge (i.e., being 'outed') or getting someone to use the pronoun/name you're comfortable with (e.g., being dressed as a woman and doing best to be convincing, yet being insistently/rudely referred to as 'sir').

Other situations involve reporting transphobic crimes, or testifying in court and revealing one's trans status (e.g., being attacked while cross-dressed). Police reaction to a trans person reporting a crime or any other police/trans person contact also involves the education of police staff. There might also be a fear that the trans identity will be discussed, potentially with negative implications, such as in adoption proceedings, the loss of a job or job discrimination due to employers' knowledge of cross-dressing/being a trans person, whether cross-dressing on the job or not. There could also be a fear of a denial of an application for welfare/state benefits after quitting a job due to transphobic harassment by your employer or co-workers

Research Findings

The discussions with members of the Butterfly Club and the responses to the questionnaire highlighted the sensitivity around terminology. Most people agreed that either transgendered or transvestite are acceptable terms, though one person who lives as a woman both in public and in private preferred the term transgendered instead of transvestite. Trans, as a common abbreviation, has been adopted by Press for Change and other transgender organisations. Several participants in the focus groups did not agree with this terminology and were critical the use of 'trans people' or 'T people' to describe transgendered people. They felt that without 'gendered' attached, 'trans' had no meaning, and that the simple use of 'trans' was dehumanising. Most accepted the word 'transvestite' or its abbreviation, 'TV,' arguing that it is important 'to take ownership of this term,' and to not be 'ashamed of it.' Future researchers should be aware of the sensitiveness of utilising 'trans' to describe those who are transgender/transvestite.

