

# Berkshire Older Lesbian and Gay Forum

## Steering Committee Minutes

Thursday, October 24th, 2003  
Rupert Street Information Centre

Action

### 1. Attendees

Jenny Ward, Maria Ottway, Jane Kightley, Nigel Tooke, Rebecca Ballard, Pat Herriott and Lois Williams.

Berkshire Age Concern: Geoff Chivers and Liz Woodhouse.

Slough Age Concern: Les Bullion.

### 2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Lesley Sherwood (Reading AC).

### 3. Meeting with Local Age Concern Representatives

Jenny welcomed the Age Concern (AC) representatives and outlined to them the history of the Forum and some of the issues that Older Lesbians and Gay Men face that straight older people do not, such as partnership rights, inheritance, next of kin issues if partner goes into hospital. The Steering Group hoped that AC would support campaigning in this area.

Reminiscing was also an important topic. It can be difficult in residential accommodation, surrounded by heterosexual staff and other residents. The forum hopes to be able to offer befriending service with volunteers in the future.

Berkshire AC have an advocacy service for those who have no relatives and are already encountering this issue. Residential Care Staff are asking about training. Whilst this is still in its infancy it is starting to be recognized. Liz described the role of volunteer advocates within Berkshires AC as befrienders - in the past they have also assisted with finances. This ceased after a government paper called Home Life.

With the skills that already exist in the forum one of the things we hope to do in the future is provide training for agencies in contact with this client group.

Les explained that in Slough they have an advocacy service but it is more hospital advocacy - support with medical decisions, and other activities in hospitals. They also have community advocacy. Les's main role is group advocacy - looking at group issues and campaigning for what's needed. If issues are local or National, he is happy to take them forward including using links with AC nationally. The needs of older L&G people was raised as an issue at a recent Help the Aged conference he had attended in Bristol.

An Older People's Forum has just been established in Wokingham. Jenny has contacted them offering BOLGaF as a resource.

We noted that the West Berkshire Older People's Forum were setting up a

day conference early in 2003, hosted by Newbury Age Concern, for all agencies working with older people.

The Reading Older people's Forum is taking off. its first task will be to find the main issues for that group. Lead people from local authority are involved but it has been set up independent of the local authority.

We all felt that the time is more ripe now when older people who have been out, are staying out. With 25% of the population, retired the "Grey vote" is increasingly important with a Generation who know their rights. This generation includes people who were L&G in the 60s, campaigning for Gay rights. However people who are in their 80s now are less likely to want to be open about their sexuality and may be unhappy about describing themselves as gay/lesbian. Families can also be unaware or unwilling to acknowledge this.

Berkshire AC Advocate volunteers have a half-day training, once every six months. one of these sessions Would be an ideal opportunity for BOLGaF to be involved. Slough advocates also have on going training. So there may be opportunities for our involvement here also.

We noted that from January there will be Patients' Forum in the Primary Care Trusts.

AC, Gloucestershire have moved ahead with setting up an Opening Doors project as a result of the AC conference. They have received funding from Stonewall and the Lottery "Awards for All" fund. They have conference on 6<sup>th</sup> November.

We talked about the avenues available for funding of BOLGaF. Berkshire Age Concern have professional fund-raiser who we could contact. We also need to find out what the issues are in setting up such conference as the one in Gloucester. The Steering Group agreed that Jenny would represent us at the conference.

We also agreed that we need to pace ourselves and not rush in to organizing too many things. We need to plan each new activity and how we are going to do it.

One item high on AC Berkshire's agenda next year is their event on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2003, at the Renaissance Hotel. It's focus is to be safety. This ties in well with Anti-homophobia issues.

We asked the AC representatives how much contact they had with solicitors and what advice they are giving to older people. They have contacts with a company who specialise in advice to older people.

The AC Berkshire advocacy service matches volunteers to clients. It would be very valuable to match a gay volunteer to a gay client, and they would be happy to do this.

Liz said she would be in touch about an invitation to Berkshire AC volunteer advocates next meeting. Les said an invitation to Slough AC would also come in the future.

Jenny thanked Liz, Geoff and Les much for coming. The meeting had shown given us confirmation that there is a need for support to older Lesbians and

Gay men and that it was already evident.

This group has multi-generational members. Great support for otherwise one-generation friends - all grow older together.

Talk to people doing inspections National Care Standards Commission, based in Theale, about what they are doing about lesbian and gay issues.

#### **4. Notes of Last Meeting**

The notes were agreed as a true record.

#### **5. Matters Arising**

##### **a. Publicity Material**

Tony Short has agreed to prepare a basic letterhead for us.

Tony

##### **b. Age and opportunity Conference**

Huge success. Roger... Alzheimer's hardly dry eye in the house. Ran workshop which was oversubscribed.

We had stand with information - prepared by Tony. Thanks

#### **6. Events**

##### **a. Tea Dance**

The October tea dance had been a great success and had made approximately £250. Many thanks are due to everybody who played a part in getting it organised.

Jenny

It was agreed that we should hold another tea dance. If at all possible this would be on 9<sup>th</sup> February – the week before Valentine's Day. Jenny will investigate a newly opened hall in Earley to ring the changes. The Coronation Hall had had a good floor for dancing!

#### **7. Any Other Business**

##### **a. Communication**

Rebecca will to contact Tony about forum on beCONNECTED for us. She will also set up 2 Yahoo groups. One for the Steering Group and one for anyone interested in being on a list to get current information.

Rebecca

##### **b. Website**

Rebecca had brought along an outline for the website. She will take away comments and start to put the web site together. Jenny will send Rebecca copies of Tony's leaflet to possibly use some of the text

Rebecca

Jenny

#### **8. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is to be held on Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> December at Rupert Street. We will plan further events during the meeting.

Dates for further meetings were agreed for:

16<sup>th</sup> January, 2003

27<sup>th</sup> February, 2003