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Kemp, Donna J.

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A forgotten equality: A personal reflection on trans awareness training

Donna Kemp reflects on training to promote equality for members of the trans community

I attended trans awareness training in January 2014. This was aimed at 'people that develop and implement strategy; commissioners, managers and leaders', and 'provided the opportunity to discuss legislation and organisational responsibilities, including improving the provision of all services to trans people, supporting trans staff and equality monitoring'.

The group was facilitated by Lee Gale from TransBareAll, an organisation that works with the trans community, helping people accept their bodies and live more fulfilling lives. Visit www.transbareall.co.uk for more information.

Lee was a very engaging facilitator who had a great depth of knowledge to share.

He presented the legislative responsibilities that organisations and individuals have as well as bringing examples of best practice that served to highlight the importance and relevance of being trans welcoming.

I was alarmed at recent research findings of the 2012

Trans Mental Health Study. This study, which consisted of an online questionnaire-based survey, had 889 respondents recruited via support groups, forums and existing databases.

A snowballing effect took place within the trans community, which maximised access to potential participants.

Some of the key findings particularly relevant to mental health were:

- 62% of people that had used gender identity clinic services experienced one or more negative interactions, 63% in general mental health services, and 65% in general health services.
- For nearly 30% of respondents, a healthcare professional had refused to discuss a trans-related health concern.
- Over 80% of people had experienced silent harassment (e.g. whispering and pointing).
- Over 37% had experienced physical threats or intimidation for being trans, while 19% had been hit or beaten up for being trans.
- 25% had to move away from

family or friends for being trans.

These figures shine a light on some of the values, attitudes and subsequently behaviours prevalent within both the general public and the health service.

Values and attitudes can be difficult to shift – perhaps raising awareness and understanding through education will help to improve the experience that trans people have.

I can see the value of having policies, procedures and protocols in place within organisations.

Indeed, these must be in place as 'gender reassignment' falls within one of the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.

Also, the Gender Recognition Act 2004 gives people the opportunity to acquire a Gender Recognition Certificate and importantly Section 22 affords people confidentiality, ensuring people are not 'outed' inadvertently.

The legislation goes a way to 'protect people' but in reality is limited when it comes to changing the day-to-day

experiences of people.

The document *Top Tips for Working With Trans People*, published by TransBareAll in 2013 and available at www.transbareall.co.uk, provides people with a basic understanding of trans people and their needs, and gives tips on how you can best support people in your role and in the workplace.

This is a practical guide that provides people with key actions to take to make your workplace welcoming for trans people as well as covering language, law and some learning. It is a useful guide that has been put together very well.

Overall, the training provided information and guidance that was useful, combining legislation with practical advice.

I would recommend attending this training and then sharing your learning. **MHN**

Donna Kemp is a care programme approach development manager at Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust



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