



## Care in a changing world

**Chair:** Steph Harland, CEO, Age UK

**Speakers:**

- Kirsty Woodard, Ageing without Children
- Jim Glennon, Training and Consultancy Manager, Opening Doors London
- Ramses Underhill-Smith, Managing Director, Alternative Care Services

**Session description:**

Our ageing population is increasingly diverse, but has the care system caught up? What requirements of the care system are common to all groups, and what areas are likely to differ? How should the care system reflect these differing needs, and what are the barriers and opportunities for change?

This session explored the misconception that all older people are heterosexual and have family to take care of them by providing a key insight into the differing and unmet health care needs of the older LGBT community as well as the 1 million older population who don't have children.

**Jim Glennon (Training and Consultancy Manager, Opening Doors London):**

- The majority of older LGBT are alone and single without any children to take of them, and many of them have been estranged from their family meaning they are more reliant on good health and social care services.
- The older LGBT community have different needs to their heterosexual peers, through looking at statistics they generally consume more alcohol and drugs and have higher mental health needs. The recent [National LGBT survey](#) showed that 24% of respondents had accessed mental health services in the last 12 months.
- There are major gaps in the knowledge and training of staff relating to LGBT people resulting in unfair treatment of LGBT patients and colleagues. In the Unhealthy Attitudes study (2014), 75% of the 3,001 patient-facing staff had not received any training on the health needs of LGBT people or the rights to same-sex partners and parents.

**Ramses Underhill-Smith (Managing Director, Alternative Care Services for LGBTQI+)**



- Ramses founded the service having seen people who lived happy and proud lives having to go back in the closet to get dignified care and support in later life.
- The staffing model now focuses on training members of the LGBT community recovering from mental health issues in order to support patients helping them feel valued and become a part of the community, creating an inclusive and holistic society through training and education. Ramses hopes to promote this model and expertise to inspire larger health organisations.

### **Kirsty Woodard (Ageing Without Children)**

- There are 1 million older people without children in the UK, and this is set to double by 2030. It is important to highlight that this group encompasses a range of older people in addition to those without biological children, including those with predeceased children, children that live far away as well as older people who are carers for their children.
- The main issues include the invisibility of the issue during government discussions with the assumption of family help being available, as well as judgements and stigma attached to those without children, particularly for older people in BME communities meaning that they may be less likely to ask for help. Furthermore there is often an assumption that older people without children will have surrogate friends and family to provide help which of course isn't always the case.

### **Questions**

**Q: Nicola Upton (CEO, Age UK Sutton) – What do you recommend as best practice to improve education and provide training to organisations with limited time and budget?**

A: The panel recognised that raising education and awareness as one of the key recommendations to help resolve the issues. Start small by initiating these conversations within teams to discuss how these issues could be resolved within your work place. Promoting leadership is also key and the best approach would be to recommend a whole organisational approach with managers taking the lead to increase awareness within their teams. Note that training is also made available through [Opening Doors London](#).



**Q: Should specialist groups be set up to address the health and social care needs for groups such as LGBT and older people without children or should these remain within the mainstream?**

A: The panel was unanimous that health and social care for these groups should remain mainstream as this provides a sense of togetherness, promotes inclusivity and diversity without prejudice. The panel commented that education and awareness was the critical in promoting understanding and zero-tolerance to prejudice.

**Key articles/publications**

The [National LGBT survey](#) (2018) had an unprecedented response with over 108,000 participants making it the largest national survey of LGBT people in the world to date.

[Unhealthy Attitudes](#) (2014) – A study into the treatment of LGBT people within health and care services