

LGBTI groups and coping with Covid local lockdown uncertainties

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Session Outline

- Current Covid-19 guidelines
- Recognising the impact of lockdown on group members
- Basic emotional support for group members
- Group meetings during lockdown uncertainties

Current Scottish Covid-19 guidelines

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Current Scottish Covid-19 guidelines

Updates and current measures are available on the Scottish govt. website under the heading:

<https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

- **Please note:** We have deleted the Covid restriction slides presented in the original training as new measures are in place and they are now out of date
- The information in this slide is current as of the date of sending
- On the page linked above, you can find links to the current Covid protection levels your area falls under as well as guidance for the festive period:

 COVID protection levels: [check the protection level for your area](#) and find out what you can and cannot do under each level.

View [guidance for the festive period](#).

Impacts on LGBTI people?



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Impacts on LGBTI people

- Isolation and loneliness
- Alcohol and drug use
- Access to mental health services
- Access to physical health services
- Access to disability and/or age related social care services
- Domestic abuse
- Lack of privacy within family home
- Unemployment and financial difficulties
- ???



Providing basic emotional support

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Looking after each other

- Difficult time for everyone and group members should keep an eye on and look out for one another
 - This doesn't have to be intrusive, just watch for when people are behaving out of character or haven't been in touch
 - Also remember to watch out for the group leaders who may be equally vulnerable and stressed
- It is okay to physically visit a person's home if necessary to provide them with urgent practical assistance or support
 - This is legal and the police have assured us that they accept this
 - The police can do a welfare check as a last resort, but that can severely distress some LGBTI people

Boundaries – when someone is seeking support

- It is fine to tell someone kindly and directly that you aren't able to talk
- Be particularly mindful about engaging with young people online (and that it can be hard to know someone's age)
- Think about how having a conversation impacts expectations
- You can manage these by moving them to a different place
 - WhatsApp, messenger etc. have sense of immediacy & read notifications!
 - FB threads & Twitter are public – increase pressure, decrease privacy
 - You can ask someone to email or phone you instead

Boundaries – while you are providing support

- Think about **where and when** you are doing it – e.g. avoid your bed, or having conversations far outside of normal working hours
- Feel free to let the person know that you're only available until a certain time, and to gently remind them say ten minutes before
- Be mindful about how much personal information you share about yourself
- Avoid using Xs or s in emails or messages
- If you are frequently providing support, you may need to revisit whether you are maintaining good boundaries

Listen, don't problem solve

- ✓ Listen to people
- ✓ Reflect back to them what they have said about how they are feeling
- ✓ Acknowledge that they are in pain/distressed/lonely
- ✓ Empathise with their situation
- ✓ **Ask them** if they would like you to signpost them to other organisations that may be able to provide emotional support
- ✓ **Ask them** if they already have coping strategies that have helped them in the past

Listen, don't problem solve

Do not:

- × Instantly jump to signposting (unless they've asked when reaching out)
- × Accidentally minimise/dismiss how someone is feeling
 - × “We're all stuck inside at the moment, so we're all feeling cut off”
 - × “It's not so bad, at least we've still got Facebook/zoom/text to talk”
- × Try to give advice or provide solutions outside of what you are able to
- × Try to solve the situation or fix things – you are not a professional

Remember that for lots of people, reaching out/the conversation is what they are looking for. If you jump to trying to “solve” the problem, you've missed your opportunity to help.

What if you think someone is in danger?

- May be situations where you are genuinely concerned about someone's safety, particularly around:
 - Self-harm and suicide
 - Domestic abuse
- Try to empower them to tell you what they feel might be helpful or unhelpful, or what they have sometimes found helpful in the past
- If possible, signpost them to relevant organisations
- If they need medical help, you could offer to call 999 on their behalf
- Sometimes, you won't have the information to do this (don't have a person's address) or they may not want you to



Caring for yourself afterwards

- It can be demoralising to feel as though you haven't "helped", or to talk to someone who seems as if they are exactly where they were (or doing worse) than the last time you spoke
- Remember to focus on each conversation. Your role is to:
 - Listen;
 - Be kind;
 - And be led by what the person wants
- It can be difficult to have a conversation with someone in distress and not know what the outcome was
- Can be useful to "debrief" with someone else, just to:
 - share any frustrations/worries about the person you talked to
 - get a temperature check on how the conversation went

Group meetings during lockdown uncertainties



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Face-to-face meetings

- Restrictions will be lifted at some point. Whether lockdown is over or we just have a week of reprieve, have a plan in place for that day
- Planning for a happier tomorrow rather than a grumpy today
 - Keeping folks going through this is important, but we have to anticipate a better tomorrow
- Planning for the day you get an all-clear – safe venues
 - Need a plan in place because it may come suddenly
 - People may pent up energy and be anxious to do something
 - Perhaps get ideas among the group about how they might like to re-engage once it's possible.
 - Logistics
- Be flexible: restrictions may change at the last minute so have a plan B that includes online or hybrid meetings.



Face-to-face meetings (cont.)

- Keep in mind the logistics
 - Weather – especially as it gets colder, what will it be like on the day?
 - Will people want to meet indoors or outdoors?
 - Will people want a gathering among themselves or be out doing something at a venue?
 - If your gathering costs money (e.g. food or entrance) or involves travel (even to-and-from), how can you support members whose finances have been depleted
- Safety
 - Social distancing
 - Masks
 - Adhering to the current regulations
 - Accommodating those who are shielding or vulnerable?
 - E.g. Face-time to include those who can't attend

Hybrid meetings

- Hybrid meetings include a mix of face-to-face and online
 - Some people are now more included than ever before
- Some issues to keep in mind:
 - Recognise that online participants might like to be there in person
 - Takes effort in a face-to-face setting to remember that online folk are there
 - Directly and specifically include and ask online folks for their input, and repeat or describe things to them that may not be directly visible or audible
 - How to schedule and accommodate the meetings e.g. alternate in-person and online meetings? Have all of them hybrid? This will be a very group specific thing
 - Consider things like data usage and cost (esp. if not on wi-fi) and tech access for members



Participant comments/suggestions

- Importance of networking and sharing knowledge to avoid re-inventing the wheel
 - Social media, mailing lists, Menti
- Also have a knowledge of what's beyond LGBT groups e.g. local businesses
- Get creative with online events
 - At a youth Pride, each login time/band was classed as a different tent e.g. one doing crafts, another poetry, etc.
- Text In was mentioned as a platform to check in with people via text
 - For those who don't like to or can't talk

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