

**Feedback from**

# **Pride Week Exhibitions**

**Count Me In Too**

27<sup>th</sup> July to 2<sup>nd</sup> August at the Sallis Benney Theatre, Brighton  
&  
1<sup>st</sup> August 2009 at Preston Park, Brighton

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In consultation with:  
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## Acknowledgements

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*The volunteers who helped at the exhibition, including Phil Clements and Andrew Harder;*

*Aristea Fotopoulous for her design talents;*

*The organisers, staff and volunteers of Pride in Brighton & Hove;*

*Pride in Brighton & Hove for their support of the exhibition during the festival week and for the support to make the LGBT Research Tent possible on the park;*

*Project funders: Brighton & Sussex Community Knowledge Exchange, Brighton & Hove City Primary Care Trust, Brighton & Hove City Council, South East Coastal Communities;*

*And everyone who attended the exhibition and engaged with the project.*

## **Feedback on Count Me In Too Pride Week Exhibitions**

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## **The exhibition**

The Count Me In Too Research Project has been exploring LGBT lives in Brighton & Hove since 2005, working in partnership with LGBT people, LGBT groups, and service providers to identify issues for local LGBT people. The project has produced 10 detailed reports with local service providers on a range of themes. These include recommendations on how to address issues and needs identified from the 819 questionnaires completed by respondents and testimonies of 69 people who took part in 19 focus groups.

On April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009, the Count Me In Too project held a Community Consultation event at the Friends Meeting House in Brighton. One of the goals of this event was to show what the project had done so far, and another was to think about potential future plans. To display the work completed, a poster exhibition was designed to highlight the role that Brighton and Hove's LGBT community played in its development. It also presented findings and recommendations from the 10 reports published to date, as well as information about Count Me In Too's methods and methodology and a retrospective on the history of the project.

This exhibition proved popular, and visitors urged that it be shown more widely. Feedback called for the project to engage more with 'mainstream' LGBT communities. Responding to this feedback, the Count Me In Too research team organised an extended poster exhibition for Pride Week 09 (July 25<sup>th</sup> to August 2<sup>nd</sup>) which will be repeated in other venues over the coming year.

**This report outlines who attended, their feedback from the project so far, and their thoughts about the continuing workplan for the project.**

The Pride Week Exhibition was shown in two locations:

27<sup>th</sup> July to 2<sup>nd</sup> August : At the Sallis Benney Theatre (the University of Brighton's Grand Parade building in central Brighton), from July 25<sup>th</sup> to August 2<sup>nd</sup>. This was launched with a stakeholder celebration and cake cutting on July 25<sup>th</sup>.



1<sup>st</sup> August 2009: In the LGBT Research Tent at Brighton Pride (Preston Park, Brighton) on August 1<sup>st</sup>. Count Me In Too was exhibited alongside displays giving information about two other local LGBT research projects (The Sussex Training & Development Partnership and The Everywhere Project). These displays consisted of leaflets and short booklets describing the research, which were arranged into a display and free to take away.



## The Posters

Each of the 18 posters described a different facet of Count Me In Too, though unfortunately not all of these could be displayed due to considerations of space:

### Introductory Section:

- 'Count Me In Too Exhibition' – a title poster welcoming visitors to the exhibition;
- 'What is Brighton & Hove like for LGBT people?' – describing some of the project's initial findings;
- 'Count Me In Too Timeline' – a long poster showing the history of the Count Me In and Count Me In Too projects alongside significant contemporary events for LGBT people in the UK (only displayed at the Sallis Benney exhibition);

### Findings Section detailing some findings from its themed additional findings report:

- 'Bi Lives'
- 'Trans Lives'
- 'Safety'
- 'Domestic Violence and Abuse'
- 'Drugs and Alcohol'
- 'General Health'
- 'Mental Health'
- 'Housing'

### Methods Section:

- 'Groups' – this poster explained the different kinds of group – analysis, action and steering – that were involved in the development, practice and dissemination of the research;
- 'The Numbers' – a short poster detailing certain key numbers and statistics about the project;
- 'How did we do it? – Focus Groups' – this poster describes the project's method of using focus groups;
- 'How did we do it? – Questionnaire' – this companion poster explains the project's method of using questionnaires.
- 'Acknowledgements' – funders of the project were named and thanked on this poster.

### Outcomes Section:

- 'Using the Data' – a poster listing some uses of Count Me In Too's research in Brighton & Hove, as described by voluntary and statutory organisations.

### Feedback Section:

- 'Have Your Say' – a poster explaining how to feed back comments or criticism to the project.

## Takeaway resources and feedback mechanisms

At both locations, in addition to the display of posters, visitors were invited take away Community Summary sheets which outlined key findings and issues, and to respond to the exhibition. The exhibitions also gave information about the LGBT Research Information Desk, which forms a new phase of the project.

Visitors and were invited to give brief feedback to 4 statements posed by the research team, circling an answer on a rating scale to indicate extent to which individuals (dis)agreed with the statements. They were also invited to add written comments (either about a statement or about something else). The feedback form appears on page 12.

Visitors were also invited to write down what they wish for on tags and hang it on a 'wish tree' where the wishes of all visitors and volunteers were displayed. This provided space for framing and sharing of aspirations not linked to aspects of the project. The wish tree was first used at the April 1<sup>st</sup> community consultation event.

The wish tree simply asked, 'what do you wish for?'. While we hoped this would elicit information about visitors longings regarding improving the lives of LGBT people, this was not explicitly stated and wishes hung on the tree also included 'shelter from the rain' and 'more sunshine' (rainy day at the Pride tent), and Doctor Who toys.

The contributions to the wish tree will be presented as an on line display linked to the Count Me In Too website ([www.countmeintoo.co.uk](http://www.countmeintoo.co.uk)).



## Who Attended?

No formal monitoring was done at either exhibition, but some assertions can be made about the visitors to the exhibitions. The stakeholder celebration launching the Sallis Benney exhibition was attended by around 20 people and included interested members of the community, academics and service providers. 9 feedback forms were received over the week; a further 6 were received at the Preston Park exhibition. Additionally around 20 tags were placed on the 'wish tree' during the week, including some which suggest children attended.

The Preston Park exhibition on August 1<sup>st</sup> was, according to the 2 staff and 2 volunteers, well attended. Though the initial number of visitors (pre-noon) was small this seemed to be the case throughout the Community Village. During the afternoon the number of visitors increased considerably. A last-minute change in the layout of the exhibition, twinned with the arrival and dispersal of the Pride parade at the Park explain this large increase in traffic.



Regarding lack of formal monitoring, at the Sallis Benney exhibition this would have been either arbitrary (relying on visitors to sign a book) or beyond the project's capacity (having a project worker at the exhibition to record details). At the Preston Park exhibition this would have been impractical (given the staff:visitor ratio and the 'free-flowing' nature of the event). Quantitative monitoring data would have provided inaccurate data regarding the number of visitors to the Preston Park exhibition for several reasons. Firstly the exhibition was part of a larger LGBT research tent, and therefore it is impossible to accurately measure which visitors engaged solely, mainly or even tangentially with the Count Me In Too research. Secondly, owing to the 'open' nature of the research tent, the 'festival' nature of Brighton Pride and the inclement weather, there were times when the research tent (the largest tent in the Community Village) was full to capacity. Many people sheltered from the persistent rain and while it could be argued that such 'opportunistic' visitors did not enter the tent with the intention of engaging with the research, it is likely that some did in fact read the posters, complete feedback and pick up literature while waiting for the downpours to cease.



**Identities:**

While we did not ask people to complete qualitative monitoring feedback regarding their identities, during conversations with staff visitors identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Trans, as well as queer and straight. Some visitors expressed their identity as a part of their verbal feedback and comment on the project. For example, one man identified himself as bisexual within the context of talking about the Bi Lives research conducted by Count Me In Too. Other visitors identified as Trans in relation to the Trans Lives poster.

Some visitors commented that their identities were not represented. An example of this would be a lesbian mother who was looking for information on LGBT parenting in the exhibition.

**Previous Involvement with Count Me In Too:**

Several stated that they had previously completed the Count Me In Too survey and that they were pleased to see what had happened to the project following this. For some visitors, this was the first time that they had engaged with the research since completing the survey some three years ago and they were not aware of the considerable body of work that the project had undertaken since that time.

**Reasons for Interest:**

When discussions took place between staff / volunteers and visitors, these were often initiated by visitors and communicated the reasons for their interest in the exhibition/research. These visitors expressed interest in the research due to its relevance to their own identities, previous participation in CMIT research, and because some posters encouraged them to ask about certain other community stalls – for example, one visitor who was looking for Broken Rainbow (an LGBT domestic violence charity) asked Count Me In Too because they saw the poster about domestic violence and abuse. Several people used the research as a jumping off point for personal reflection in discussion with other visitors, staff or volunteers. Comments such as ‘it’s so different today’ and ‘young gay people have a different and better world than the one I came out in to’ are typical of such visitor responses. These comments, usually from people above the age of 45, were not in any way hostile, but the research seemed to provoke a sense of reflection and of ‘taking stock’.

A noticeable proportion of visitors to the LGBT research tent were people from outside of Brighton and Hove, visiting for Pride. Although some expressed frustration that the Count Me In Too research is specific to Brighton & Hove and suggested that national research would be more desirable, many in turn commented that they wanted this kind of research in their home regions, and wondered what results it would show for those regions. Some explicitly expressed a desire for a ‘Count Me In Too’ in their home location.

Further interest in the project was spurred on by the (sometimes cynical) visitor question of ‘Well, what has this all achieved?’ or ‘What difference does any of this make?’. In responding to this kind of very valid questioning, the new ‘Using the Data’ poster that details some responses from local statutory and volunteers groups and organisations was a fantastic resource and proved to be popular amongst visitors. The presence of this poster significantly augmented the ways in which research can be seen as useful relevant and worthy of attention and participation.

## Feedback on the project so far

The low numbers of responses on feedback forms relative to total number of visitors indicates that these views may not be representative of all visitors.

So what do you think? If you would like to, please circle the answer that most represents your view in the box below. Please add your own comments below each question and use the back of the page to add anything else you would like to say. Only the research team will have access to this information, and you do not have to complete or submit the form. We will use this to evaluate the exhibition and the research, and may use it as part of our publications. You will not be identifiable in any way.

1) 'I think this exhibition is useful and informative.'

Strongly disagree Disagree Don't know Agree Strongly agree

Comments:

2) 'I think the Count Me In Too research will effect positive change for LGBT people.'

Strongly disagree Disagree Don't know Agree Strongly agree

Comments:

3) 'The Count Me In Too research has changed how I think about LGBT people.'

Strongly disagree Disagree Don't know Agree Strongly agree

Comments:

4) 'Research projects should involve people from the communities that they investigate in developing and carrying out the research.'

Strongly disagree Disagree Don't know Agree Strongly agree

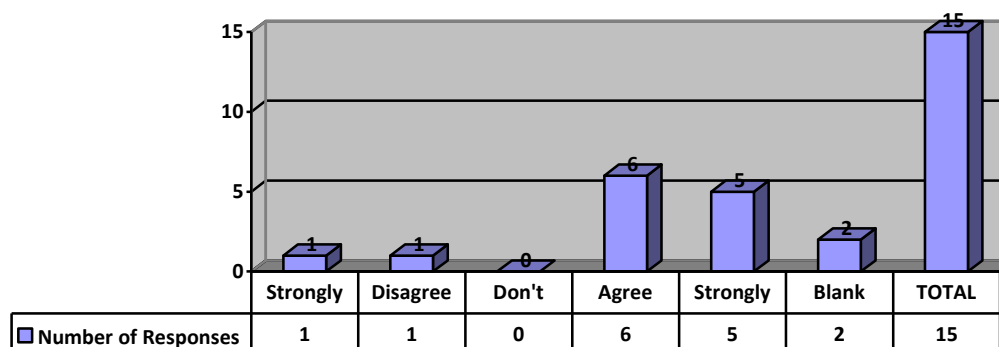
Comments:

University of Brighton spectrum hqfce

Figure 1: Exhibition Feedback Sheet

Around 15 people participated in this (although not all chose to answer every question) and their feedback, and observation from the research team, is summarised below.

### Statement 1 – 'I THINK THIS EXHIBITION IS USEFUL AND INFORMATIVE.'



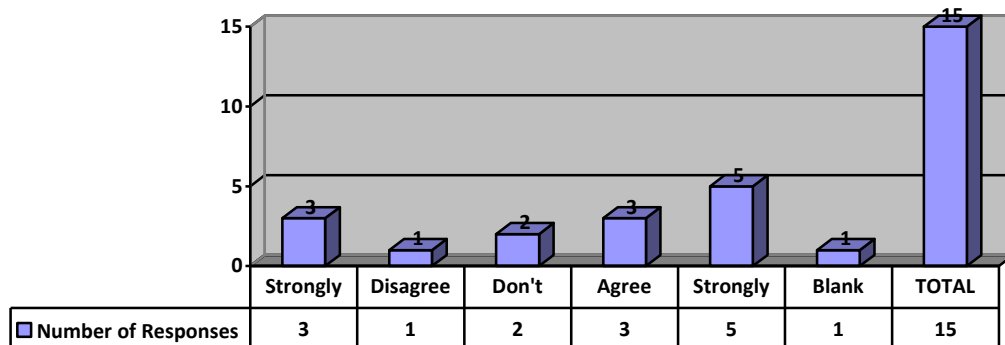
Additional comment from people who responded:

- 'Gives good and valid information' (Strongly agree).

- *'Could be more creative' (Agree)*
- *'If one had not been on-planet for 50 years or so then it might have some merit, now's it's just more back-slapping!' (Disagree)*

Though most respondents (n. 11) agreed that the exhibition was useful and informative, there were some (n.2) dissenting voices.

**Statement 2** – 'I THINK THE COUNT ME IN TOO RESEARCH WILL EFFECT POSITIVE CHANGE FOR LGBT PEOPLE.'



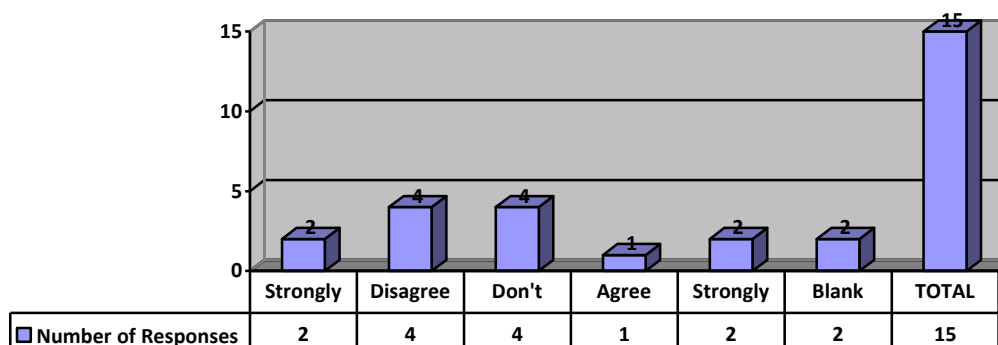
*Additional comments from people who responded:*

- *'All work in schools and with the teaching profession is especially valuable' (Agree).*
- *'The campaign isn't strong enough' (Disagree).*
- *'Because' (Strongly disagree).*
- *'Oh, come on!' (Strongly disagree).*

Respondents gave a variety of responses to this question – while most agreed or strongly agreed (n. 8), others weren't sure (n. 2) or disagreed or strongly disagreed (n. 4). The respondent who replied 'Oh, come on!' is the same as the one who earlier described the exhibition as 'just more back-slapping', perhaps indicating an uncertainty as to whether research like the Count Me In Too project (or perhaps any research) can progress positive change for the LGBT people.

Additionally, the comment that 'the campaign isn't strong enough' indicates that the research project may have been misunderstood as a political or activist 'campaign'. This perhaps suggests that more information on the nature of the project – including its goal of supporting the progression of social change and methods – might be usefully provided in future. It may also indicate the desire for 'campaigning' arising from research.

**Statement 3** – ‘THE COUNT ME IN TOO RESEARCH HAS CHANGED HOW I THINK ABOUT LGBT PEOPLE.’

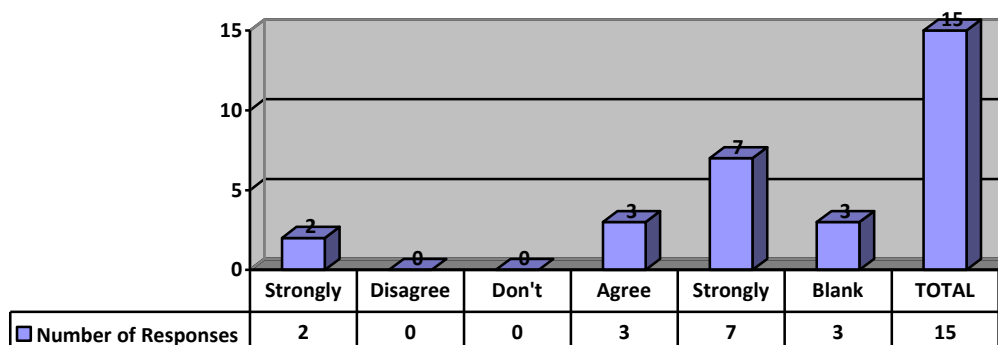


*Additional comments from people who responded:*

- ‘Gay already’ (Disagree).
- ‘As I gay political man I think I knew already’ (Disagree).
- ‘The facts are non-emotional’ (Disagree).
- ‘So naïve’ (Strongly disagree).

Again, respondents gave a range of answers here. Most disagreed or strongly disagreed (n. 6), while a substantial portion didn’t know (n. 4), and some others agreed or strongly disagreed (n. 3). Given that the exhibition was at Pride and was advertised only in the gay press, and in light of the comments that one respondent is ‘gay already’ and that another ‘knew already’ due to being a ‘gay political man’, it is possible that some respondents feel being gay equates to a knowledge of LGBT (not just gay) people. It could also be that LGBT has been read for ‘gay’. Interestingly it is this ‘gay’ group that we were asked to target to educate about the diversity of LGBT lives beyond ‘gay’ identifications. However, this can be set against a comment made to staff at the Pride exhibition in which one woman stated that the exhibition had made her realise how broad the LGBT community really is. Further consideration will be given to this issue.

**Statement 4** – ‘RESEARCH PROJECTS SHOULD INVOLVE PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITIES THAT THEY INVESTIGATE IN DEVELOPING AND CARRYING OUT THE RESEARCH.’



*Additional comments from people who responded:*

- ‘Keep up the good work!’ (Strongly disagree).
- ‘Keep up the good work!’ (Strongly agree).
- ‘Local knowledge is invaluable but national work is key’ (Agree).

The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (n. 10), while a couple disagreed (n. 2). However, as one of the Strongly Disagreeing respondents commented 'Keep up the good work!' it is possible that there was some misunderstanding here.

### **Additional Feedback**

The feedback sheets also provided space for respondents to include their own opinions and thoughts aside from commenting on the four statements given. Therefore in addition to these comments, one respondent asked a more general question about representation in the project's reports, asking:

- *'What about people with learning difficulties – why are they not represented here!'*

Despite the exhibition's large number of posters and the breadth of LGBT life captured by its themed analysis reports, we know that Count me In Too did not count everyone, or address all aspects of LGBT lives and this has been acknowledged at each stage of the project and barriers and potential strategies have been examined. We are keeping a list of themes and identities that have been highlighted as 'not addressed' and the project's LGBT Research Information Desk, which was advertised at the exhibition, offers opportunities for people to ask the project to seek out research information on these issues.

## Conclusions

Given some of the exhibition feedback from Count Me In Too's April 1<sup>st</sup> community consultation ('Repeat, repeat, repeat!'), this report aims to inform the planning of the Count Me In Too exhibition and other activities in the future.

### Feedback on the Exhibition:

- **Feedback was collected through interactions with visitors support by written feedback which was numerically low but overwhelmingly positive**

The main ways to assess this are feedback from visitors to the exhibition, and feedback from exhibition staff and volunteers. Attendance figures are difficult to track and would have been inaccurate. Visitor feedback via the anonymous feedback sheets was numerically low. However, those feedback sheets which were returned were overwhelmingly in favour of the exhibition (11 for and 2 against). Visitors' verbal feedback to exhibition staff and volunteers was more complex, but mostly positive.

- **This was the first time some participants in the research had encountered the project again, and they were pleased to do so;**

Some visitors' comments included 'It's really good to do this exhibition, 'cause sometimes there's research then you never hear about it again' (from a group of students). Several visitors remarked that, having completed the Count Me In Too survey in 2006, this was the first time that they had heard anything about the results and what had happened to the survey data.

- **Messages about the diversity of LGBT people should be stressed: there is also a need to more clearly get across messages regarding the diversity of LGBT people, so that 'gay people' may indeed learn something from Count Me In Too.**

Several people commented that seeing the bi and trans findings in this kind of research space was important as it reminds people they're also part of the community. In a similar vein, one woman mentioned that the exhibition made her realise how broad the LGBT community is.

- **The exhibition needs to reach more people, including the 'mainstream' LGBT community.**

Comments on changed perceptions, together with the comparatively high footfall at the Pride tent exhibition demonstrates the need for Count Me In Too to be more pro-active in disseminating findings beyond the relatively small (though nevertheless incredibly important) audience of activists, community organisers and statutory service representatives. While Count Me In Too's findings highlight the continuing issues of safety, discrimination, trans-, bi- and homophobia that members of the LGBT community experience, these findings need to reach both the margin AND the centre of Brighton's LGBT community. In light of this, there is a clear and identifiable need for the exhibition to be mounted in a number of environments, including those that engage the wider LGBT community (including the mainstream gay community).

- **Visitors want to know 'what the research does': more information could be given about the nature of the project as carrying out research to support social change for LGBT people**

Visitor feedback and volunteer experiences suggest that there needs to be a better explanation of Count Me In Too - perhaps a sign or poster explaining that it is a research project, and explicitly not a political campaign. A pamphlet of this nature, also explaining the basics of Count Me In Too, was also requested by several visitors. Finally, to encourage people to engage with the research more, it may also be important that visitors know what they themselves can do with this research, e.g. use the evidence in campaigning.

- **More logistical planning will be useful in future, including offering more promotional materials**

On a logistical note the site specificity of each exhibition needs to be recognised, and a comprehensive planning exercise should take place in advance in order to identify whether additional resources may be required. Regarding the outdoors Pride tent, the poor weather was a decisive factor in operating the tent, leading to a visitor standstill and early closure – additionally, several posters did not survive the wet weather. In future the posters should certainly be laminated, and the weather checked well in advance in order to prepare for the worst. These extra resources would also involve more staff who were briefed in the aims, objectives and outcomes of the project. It would be advisable to have more members of the project team on hand during the day, and that overall management of this resource be handled by an individual (or individuals) capable of co-ordinate the set-up and take-down of the exhibition on the day itself. More ‘take-away’ pocket-sized information resources and ‘free stuff’/promotional materials may be required, if only because this is expected at such events. Regarding the week-long indoor exhibition, two mid-week visits to the exhibition were sufficient to ensure that it remained intact. The fact that the exhibition was in a relatively out-of-the-way space and that it was only advertised in LGBT media may have helped avoid trouble. There is almost no way of knowing about visitor feedback aside from the few feedback sheets completed – in future a simple visitor book might be advisable alongside the feedback sheets.

#### **Feedback on the Project:**

- **Visitors questioned the relevance of the project to people outside of Brighton and Hove:**

While a lot of people from outside Brighton were interested and wanted a Count Me In Too-like project in their area, the geographic specificity of the project means that it just might not appeal as much to people in other areas. Visitors were quick to pick up on the ‘Brighton-only’ approach of the project so visitors in other areas might justifiably not be as interested, unless there is some explanation of why this matters to them. This could involve a discussion of Count Me In Too’s inclusive, power-sharing methodology and how/if this might inform similar research in their area, or the fact that LGBT Brighton remains troubled despite being perceived as ‘the best there is’ for LGBT people. There may also be other aspects that are transferable - for example the experience of bi and trans people in LGBT scenes; experiences with GPs; experiences of hate crimes. Further work could be done to highlight that while this research addressed Brighton & Hove, there are issues which are pertinent to LGBT people more broadly.

- **Visitors commented on ‘missing’ identities and issues**

Some visitors commented, both to staff and on feedback sheets, that some identities and issues remain invisible in Count Me In Too. It is hoped that the project’s LGBT Research Information Desk, which will summarise data gathered by the project on request and highlight other LGBT research, will be able to help people address these issues.

#### **Feedback on the LGBT Research Tent at Pride:**

- **There may be benefits to exhibiting alongside other local LGBT projects: stronger connections with other LGBT research could encourage the feeling that research ‘matters’, and could help foster the idea that the project is not *only* relevant to Brighton and Hove**

Although the Pride tent posited itself as an ‘LGBT Research Tent’, the two other research projects that exhibited alongside Count Me In Too were small and in some ways lost amongst the large Count Me In Too project. Additionally the tent was almost entirely staffed only by Count Me In Too project members and volunteers. Forging stronger connections with other LGBT research and encouraging researchers to display alongside Count Me In Too could strengthen the feeling that research is important, open different research projects to a wider variety of people and, if other research was based ‘locally’, help counter the perception of Count Me In Too as having relevance only to Brighton & Hove.

- **Thought should be given to linkups with community groups via exhibitions**

There is also the possibility of linking up with other community groups via such exhibitions. For example, those reading the Domestic Violence & Abuse poster asked whether Broken Rainbow were represented in the Park on the day. Similar questions were asked about Gender Trust and Clare Project in relation to the Trans findings. Being able (at the very least) to point visitors in the right direction would be useful step towards embedding the project within the Pride event specifically. Future exhibitions could ask local organisations to leave appropriate literature in relevant areas of the exhibition.