

# SAND Matters

SAND's journey towards making Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin a better place for LGBT+ people to age

sand

Safe Ageing No Discrimination

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS

# INTRODUCTION

Safe Ageing No Discrimination (SAND) formed in 2012, when a group of local people began discussing some of the issues which specifically affect lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people as they age; issues which are not typically recognised by the people who provide health, social care and other relevant support services in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. SAND set about changing this – not to provide distinct LGBT+ services, but to influence existing service provision.

This booklet tells SAND's story and the progress we have made so far, as we work towards embedding inclusion so that everybody's experiences are as good as they can be.

It also illustrates how SAND cannot do this alone and how you can help. Whether you identify as LGBT+, you're an ally or you work in local organisations that serve older and old LGBT+ people in the county, we show how you can contribute to making Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin a better place for LGBT+ people to age.

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# THE START



## IN FEBRUARY 2012, OVER 100 PEOPLE WENT TO THE HIVE IN SHREWSBURY TO WATCH A DOCUMENTARY FILM

Shropshire Rainbow Film Festival were screening Gen Silent as part of LGBT+ History Month. This documentary was to change everything!

The audience learned that:

- There is an epidemic of LGBT+ elders going back into the closet - because they are afraid
- LGBT+ elders are not seeking or receiving the care they need

People were horrified, and keen to find out if Shropshire was any different from Boston USA, the scene of the film. People left their contact details and began to meet. In July 2013, the meetings became monthly and the SAND Action Group was formed.

# 2013–2015

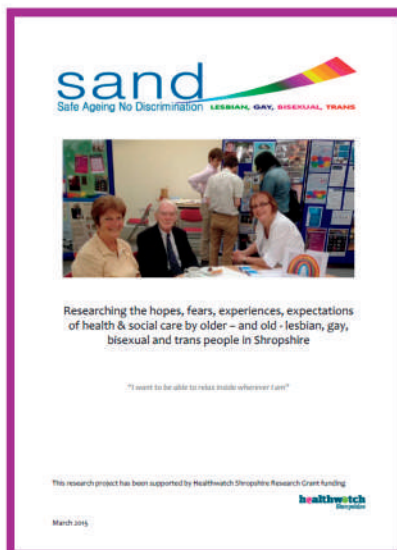
## SAND SECURED A SMALL AMOUNT OF MONEY TO CARRY OUT OUR OWN RESEARCH

We found the same as the Gen Silent film, and the same as all other research being carried out in the UK.

As they age, many LGBT+ people in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin are:

- Fearful, based on previous poor experiences
- Worried about prejudice & discrimination
- Feeling isolated and alone

These findings made the SAND Action Group form a plan. We were interested in meaningful change, influencing organisations to be better at understanding and responding to our needs.



# HIGHLIGHTS

## **IN 2017 SAND WON THE NATIONAL AGEUK SPIRIT OF AGE AWARD FOR EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

In addition to research, we started looking for creative ways to explore issues impacting on older and old LGBT+ people.



## **IN 2018, WE HOSTED THE ONE-MAN 'GAY DEMENTIA PLAY,' THE PURPLE LIST**

SAND has also hosted 'Creative Conversations' animation-activity workshops, Sandy Island Discs, audio sessions, photographic showreels and, of course, many film screenings as we recognise the power of the moving picture.

We have been out and about at Cultural Diversity Days across the county, visited LGBT+ groups and taken part in Pride and LGBT+ History Festival events.

# INFLUENCE

## SAND'S FOCUS IS ON INFLUENCING

By this, we mean we want to:

- Make people's experiences better
- Make a difference
- Be a catalyst for change
- Lead by example

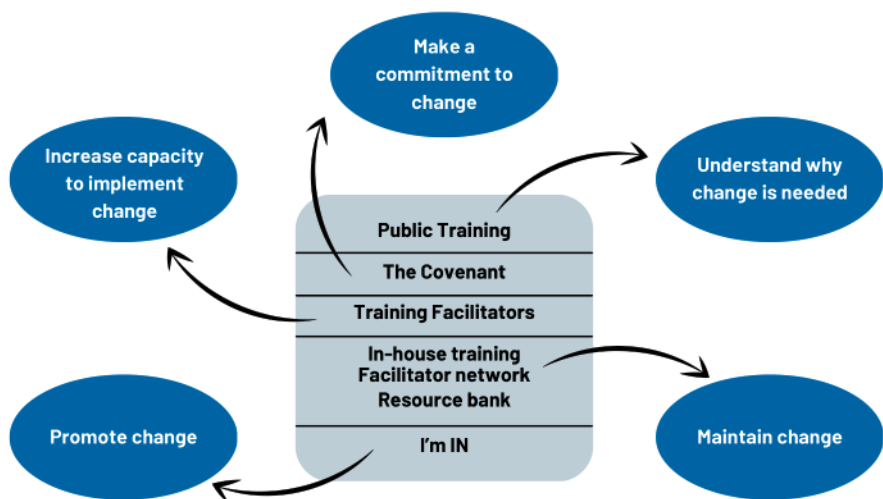


In 2019, after many bids, SAND secured long-term funding from the National Lottery Community Fund. This provided approx £30,000 per year for 5 years for a project which encouraged Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin to **EMBRACE A Culture of Inclusion**.

The project includes events for older and old LGBT+ people to gain and exchange information and knowledge about the local services they may need as they age, including home care, wills and pensions. The aim is also to learn about less familiar services, such as social prescribing and extra care housing.

# EMBRACE 2019 - 2024

## THE PROJECT ALSO INCLUDES A STRATEGY FOR PROVIDERS OF LOCAL SERVICES TO CHANGE THE WAY THEY DO THINGS



The diagram illustrates how this moves from understanding that change is needed in the first place, through to maintaining change once it has happened.

To date, SAND has trained over 600 staff working in healthcare or social care. The course they have received is a general LGBT+ awareness course with a specific focus on issues which may impact on older and old LGBT+ people.

We have written and produced short films, with local stories and local voices, which bring to life different aspects of the training.

In 2022, we trained the first cohort of 13 staff and volunteers working in these organisations, so that they can now deliver this course in their own workplaces.

# EMBRACE COVENANT

## LOCAL ORGANISATIONS SIGN UP TO THE EMBRACE COVENANT

Signing up means making a series of commitments to:

- Provide the best possible quality services for older and old LGBT+ people
- Learn what life can be – and has been – like for different LGBT+ people
- Vocally and visually support groups working with and for older and old LGBT+ people
- Create meaningful opportunities for LGBT+ people and groups to influence what they do
- Assess and evidence change, including work carried out to engage LGBT+ people (within the group/organisation and outside it)

Once they have signed up, SAND helps the Covenantees to develop and implement an action plan.





# COVENANTEES

## WHO HAS SIGNED UP?

Organisations are now signing up all the time. They can do this on the SAND website. We help them to make sure their Action Plan:

- Makes sense for them
- Takes account of what they already have in place
- Is realistic, given everything else they have to do

Here are the first ones to sign up:

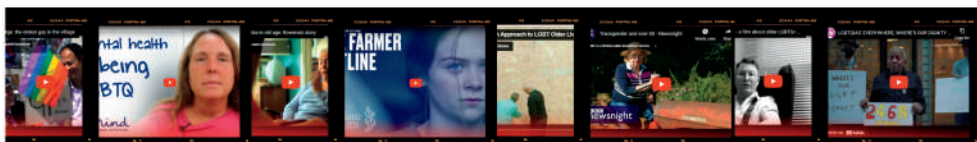


# RESOURCES

SAND has been collecting and producing all sorts of resources to help to explain why we do what we do and to help organisations and individuals to understand more.

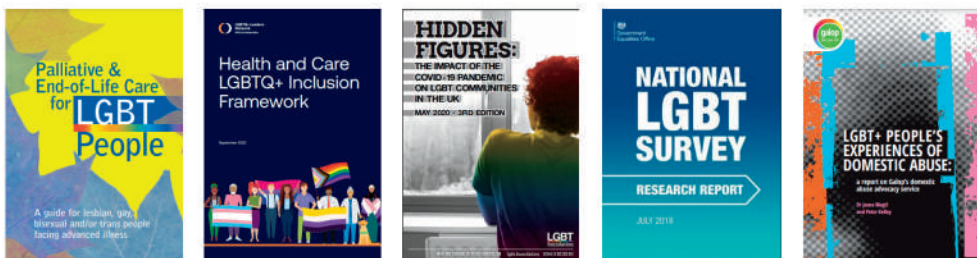
We have links to all of these and more on our website:  
[www.lgbtsand.com/resources](http://www.lgbtsand.com/resources).

## VIDEOS



## PUBLICATIONS

There are over 120 publications on the site, searchable by clicking on a 'tag'.



## TAGS

Accreditation and Frameworks Anecdotes BAME and Race Bereavement Bisexual Case Studies Coming Out COVID-19 Debate Dementia Documentary  
Domestic Violence Dramatisation Employment End of Life Farmer Finance Gay GP Practices Hate Crime Healthcare HIV Housing Intersectionality Interests LGB  
LGBT LGBT History LGBT Women Mental Health Monitoring NEWS Non-Binary Non-LGBT Old and Older Palliative Care Practitioners Primary Care Psychotherapy Publicity  
Published by SAND Social Care Terms and Definitions Trailer Trans

# LGBT SHROPSHIRE

LGBT+ people in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin who would like to meet others, should type in this web address to see a list of local groups:

**[WWW.LGBTSAND.COM/LOCAL-GROUPS](http://WWW.LGBTSAND.COM/LOCAL-GROUPS)**

**The Wave Project** is an exhibition of nearly 50 photos of LGBT+ people aged 50-90+ waving to camera – making themselves visible to all those people who have never thought about us! The photographs were exhibited at the Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery during June 2023, with a smaller selection in view at Theatre Severn (June & July 2023). Sections of the exhibition will be available to tour in the county. Would you like it to come to a venue near you?



**Shropshire Senior Rainbow Friends** (formerly In the Café) is a social group for older and old LGBT+ people who live, work or play in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. It meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month, usually in Shrewsbury. It is an opportunity to meet, chat, discuss and share.

If you'd like more information, please email or call us:

**[info@lgbtsand.com](mailto:info@lgbtsand.com) / 01743 590023**

The Office for National Statistics (2021 Census) tell us that there are 32,700 people over the age of 65 in Telford and 82,000 in Shropshire. Arguments abound over the number of LGBT people present in our populations but, conservatively, lesbian and gay populations can be said to range from 2.5 – 5.8%. This means that, in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin we are likely to have anywhere from 2,867 to 6,652 LGBT people over the age of 65 – and many others below that age. Once we add in bisexual and trans, we clearly have more than that.

# HOW YOU CAN HELP

## IT'S YOUR LIFE

If you are LGBT+, aged 50-100+, and live, work or play in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, you can help SAND by:

- Asking questions about what you can expect, as an LGBT+ person when you need care, housing, information or support
- If you have a poor experience, make sure you complain about it and hold organisations to account
- Encourage your friends, families and allies to question, complain and talk about LGBT+ experiences too; the more we talk about all these things, the more usual it will be!
- Oh, and talk about good experiences too!



## LGBT+ STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

- As above, plus talking and sharing with colleagues within your organisation or group
- Thinking about your own practice

## ALLIES

- Recognising the people you know, who identify as LGBT+ - this may be family, friends, colleagues or neighbours
- Open up conversations
- Avoid making assumptions

# HOW YOU CAN HELP

## LOCAL ORGANISATIONS CAN GO BEYOND THE TICKBOX AND HELP SAND BY:

- Signing up to the Covenant—it's free!
- Taking part in training
- Changing practice
- Linking with others
- Advertising your good practice
- Staying the course with existing commitments to inclusion, not just in your own organisation, but supporting others in the county
- Making yourselves available to receive and respond to complaints and compliments



For more information, and to sign up, visit:

[WWW.LGBTSAND.COM/PROJECTS/EMBRACE/COVENANT](http://WWW.LGBTSAND.COM/PROJECTS/EMBRACE/COVENANT)

# SO WHAT?

## ALL OF THIS HAS BEEN HAPPENING FOR SOME TIME NOW, SO WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

We don't know it all but we can give you a flavour...



As a result of SAND's work, some LGBT+ people in the county have:

- Chosen to have a civil partnership specifically to ensure that their relationships and wishes are more secure
- Started exploring housing and care options, including home care and extra care
- Dug deep and written their wills
- Come out to the care staff where they live
- Been talking to organisations about what they can do to be more inclusive
- Started talking to each other about their concerns and ideas about ageing well
- Taken part in events to understand more about what they can do to help themselves
- Shared examples of both good - and less good - experiences

# SO WHAT?

## WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE TO ORGANISATIONS?

Both inside, amongst their staff and volunteers and outside, when at work delivering their service to you



Some health and social care providers across the county have:

- Seen more of their staff coming out
- Been working on their Covenant action plans
- Raised issues with other organisations
- Talked to people in their organisations
- Worked with SAND to produce useful resources
- Undertaken training in LGBT+ awareness
- Trained people within their own organisations to increase their LGBT+ awareness
- Identified LGBT+ champions in the workplace
- Actively supported LGBT+ people in their care to come out



**Reach** 

## Reach offers support to our older LGBT+ community through telephone companionship

We provide older LGBT+ people with a regular, confidential phone call from a friendly volunteer.

You choose what you would like to talk about. We have someone who will listen.

In partnership with:

**sand**  
Safe Ageing No Discrimination LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS

**Herefordshire  
& Worcestershire  
ageUK**

For more information please call

**01743 233 123**

email [enquiries@ageukstw.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ageukstw.org.uk)

or visit [ageukshropshireandtelford.org.uk](http://ageukshropshireandtelford.org.uk)