

# GayGlos

At our March 2019 Open Meeting, we heard from Ian Vesty from [GayGlos](#), who work with GARAS to support LGBT asylum seekers fleeing homophobic persecution in their homelands.

Ian's worked for GayGlos for thirty years, and told us:

"The fear of coming out to complete strangers at The Home Office is considerable. Many are traumatised by their treatment and experiences in their own country, and many have an absolute fear of anyone in authority, particularly those wearing a uniform such as the police or Border Force. They often do not give a good account of themselves because they are so frightened and traumatised by their journey. Some will have travelled on long journeys to get to the UK and will be tired and exhausted. Being asked a lot of questions, sometimes through an interpreter, can be both frightening and harrowing. They say things they regret and sometimes don't say the really important things because they are too afraid to say them for fear of repercussions. They don't have the language to describe their feelings about who and what they are. And they don't know how the person interviewing them will react.

"The Home Office's default position for those who are LGBT seeking Asylum, is often to say that they find their story 'not credible' so they are then faced with having to prove that they are gay/lesbian. How do you prove that you are gay? How do you prove that you are Straight or Heterosexual?

"In fairness to the Home Office, they have learnt a bit about us over the last few years. They've stopped asking for explicit pictures! They've stopped asking what we get up to in the bedroom. They have stopped looking for camp stereotypes... They have stopped asking questions about who's the man and who's the woman in the relationships etc.

"But they still ask, why don't you have a relationship? Why haven't you been out meeting other gays? How can you be gay when you have married and/or have children? Can't you just live under the radar in your country, and not rock the boat?"

This doesn't reflect the reality of people's lives:

"One guy I met from Cameroon had been living on the streets of London and in empty shops, begging for food and help, unable to understand our systems and unable to access the support and understanding they needed. Unable to speak English. Unable to tell those he was with what he really wanted to claim Asylum for, for fear of being 'outed'! With no money and no accommodation, how would they find another gay person when they couldn't even buy a coffee!"

"He said to me...

'One night the police picked me up because I was so cold and took me to the Police Station. I slept in the Police Station for the night and then the Police contacted the Red Cross who contacted another organisation who contacted the Home Office for me. I then applied to the Home Office for accommodation and they sent me to Cardiff'.

"Just as he had formed a network of support and friends in Cardiff, and without any notice, they sent him to Gloucester. He had just settled in Gloucester and we had found him local support and a network of friends then the Home Office sent him to Wakefield! We have since lost touch with him. It felt to us like a deliberate tactic of the HO to undermine his support network."

Ian concluded:

"GayGlos work with clients, supporting them to find other LGBT support, taking them along to meetings and to meet other local LGBT people. We offer them emotional support and an understanding of life in Gloucestershire and other parts of the UK for LGBT people. Going together to a Gay Pride is so liberating and life enhancing. I took one guy with me to Bristol Pride... he got so emotional ...he just couldn't believe that it was so acceptable to be out and proud as a gay person.

"We also help them put together their Gay Storyline. This is a very powerful way of establishing their gay credentials and has been a very successful way of countering the Home Office position of 'prove that you are gay'. We have also worked with Solicitors and Barristers helping them to understand how powerful their Client's Gay Storyline is in court. So far, we have had 100% success with all the cases we have supported through the Courts."

CWR and the visitors at our open meeting were extremely moved by Ian's presentation, and we decided to donate £40 of our donations for the meeting to GayGlos. They raise their funds purely through donations, with some grant funding support, and do such incredible work to help refugees directly. If you'd like to help them too, their donation page is [here](#).