

LGBT Timelines: a storytelling activity

Developed by Richard Bliss and Kate Sweeney of [Equal Arts](#)

Aim:

This activity is designed to help participants to put themselves in the shoes of an older LGBT person. Many older LGBT people worry about encountering prejudice in services, because they have experienced severe discrimination and stigma throughout their lives. This means that they may avoid accessing services, or hide their LGBT identity when they do. For this reason, even if your service is doing a great job of tackling discrimination, it's really important to be visibly welcoming and inclusive of LGBT people.

By exploring the life stories of older LGBT people, this activity will help participants to understand some of the things that older LGBT people have experienced, and will illustrate why they may be worried about discrimination.



Materials

- A3 timeline of events in LGBT history (available [here](#))
- Pens
- Enough space to split into groups of two or three

Set up:

Hand out the A3 timeline to groups of two or three. Tell them that they are going to write the life story of an LGBT person who is turning 90 today! Ask them to have a read through the timeline, and to write about the life of their character with reference to the legal and social landmarks listed (they don't have to talk about all of them – just the ones that are relevant). Prompt them to decide on a gender identity, sexual orientation, birthplace, family background, etc, then give them around 30 minutes to come up with the whole story. There is space to write it on the timeline worksheet.

During the activity:

Keep people on track by letting them know whereabouts on the timeline they should be as time goes on – otherwise people can get so absorbed that they spend the whole time on a detailed portrait of their character's childhood! So after 10 minutes they should be writing about their character's thirties, after 20 minutes they should be in their sixties, and (hopefully) after 30 minutes they should have reached ninety. Sometime people won't make it all the way to ninety, which is OK.

Telling the stories:

Ask someone from each group to tell the story they have come up with. Look out for things which illustrate issues really well – did any of them speak about someone getting married because they felt they had to, and coming out in later life? Being rejected by their family? Building a non-traditional family? Also look out for any stereotypes – if you feel that their character is stereotypical, you can remind the group that some LGBT people have those characteristics, but there are literally millions of different people – and stories – out there.

More resources – including a short film, Top Tips booklet & Audit Tool – are available for free at <http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk/services-support/lgbt-age/professional-resources/>