

Pathways between LGBTQ migration, social isolation and distress: Liberation, care and loneliness

Authors: Zoë Boden-Stuart, Nicholas McGlynn,
Matt C. Smith, Helen Jones & Rita Hirani

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'Pathways between LGBTQ migration, social isolation and mental distress' is a research project that ran from September 2020 to September 2022. It was a collaboration between researchers from the Centre for Transforming Sexuality and Gender at the University of Brighton and the Brighton-based LGBTQ mental health charity, MindOut. The research was funded by UK Research and Innovation via the Loneliness and Social Isolation in Mental Health Research Network, hosted at University College London.

The project aimed to understand the significance of LGBTQ people's migration histories and how they shape their experiences of mental health, loneliness/belonging and social isolation/inclusion. The project looked at both international and intra-national displacement and relocation, where sexuality and/or gender identity were factors in the move to Brighton. This report presents the findings from this project, which were collected through in-depth interviews and creative methods. These included the participants annotating maps of Brighton and drawing representations of their migratory journeys.

Key Findings

The report presents the findings as four main themes:

Queer quests: Pathways to Brighton

Having often already felt lonely and isolated, participants saw Brighton as a place to escape to. The LGBTQ mental health services, trans health care and the perception that health and social care would be LGBTQ-aware were major factors in people's choice to relocate.

An LGBTQ city: "Find my community, finding myself"

This theme describes how liberating people found living in a city with a high number of LGBTQ people, how they felt relatively safe and connected there, and how their experiences of the place shaped their mental health, particularly their healing experiences of Brighton's green and blue spaces.

Cheated expectations This theme describes the disappointment of continued loneliness and experiences of exclusion on the grounds of mental health status, neurodiversity and other intersectional issues such as

age, gender, class and financial resources.

Epilogue: Taking your troubles with you and finding safe havens

The last theme describes people's hesitation to move elsewhere and the belief that, whilst Brighton has provided a lot, it may be impossible to escape from some experiences and feelings. Finding safe havens, such as MindOut's services, have been the key to surviving and thriving in the city.

Selected Recommendations

The report ends with a summary and recommendations that are relevant for LGBTQ support services, funding bodies, local government, families and carers, and LGBTQ people with lived experience of mental health difficulties. They include:

- Provide tailored support for LGBTQ newcomers experiencing distress
- Destigmatise loneliness within LGBTQ communities and beyond
- Fund LGBTQ mental health services to provide long-term support
- Make LGBTQ spaces more inclusive of people with mental health needs

