

Feedback from

LGBT History Month Pre-Launch Exhibition

Count Me In Too

19th November 2009 at the British Museum, London

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In consultation with:
The Count Me In Too research team

Acknowledgements

The Count Me In Too research team would like to thank the following for their assistance in making our Pride Week exhibitions a success:

Phil Clements, for volunteering to help at the exhibition;

Aristea Fotopoulous for her design talents;

Sue Saunders and the other organisers of LGBT History Month;

The staff of the British Museum;

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.

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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.

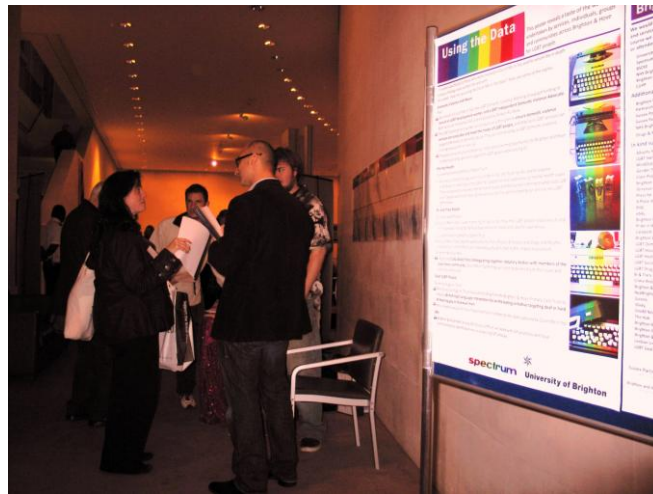
On April 1st 2009, the Count Me In Too project held a Community Consultation event at the Friends Meeting House in Brighton. One of the goals of this event was to show what the project had done so far, and another was to think about potential future plans. To display the work completed, a poster exhibition 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 gratefully accepted an offer by LGBT History Month to exhibit a poster display of the project's history and findings at their pre-launch event at the British Museum in November 2009. This was one of a series of poster exhibitions, including an extended poster exhibition for Pride Week (July 25th to August 2nd 2009) and for LGBT History Month (Feb 1st to Feb 26th 2010) in Brighton. See the website (www.countmeintoo.co.uk) for reports relating to these other exhibitions.

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

The LGBT History Month pre-launch exhibition was displayed at an afternoon event in the British Museum, London. Many other LGBT groups and organisations were also present.

The posters



For this exhibition Count Me In Too had 18 posters at its disposal, each describing a different facet of Count Me In Too, and as well as a large timeline of the project from the year 2000:

Introductory posters:

- 'Count Me In Too Exhibition' – a title poster welcoming visitors to the exhibition;
- 'Count Me In Too' – a new poster created for this exhibition and those in the future. It outlines the project as a whole along with some selected findings, and includes three buttons containing audio quotes from the project's qualitative data;
- '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;

Findings posters 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 posters:

- '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 posters:

- '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.

Unfortunately not all of these could be displayed at the British Museum due to considerations of space. The research team decided that the title poster, the new poster, the timeline, the acknowledgements poster and the using the data poster were the most important for showcasing the project to this particular audience (expected to be a combination of professionals, community group members, national organisation members and school pupils). Regarding the findings posters, it was agreed that since bi and trans issues are often overlooked, these two posters should be displayed.

Takeaway resources and feedback mechanisms

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.

The foregoing Pride exhibitions suggested that written feedback responses might not be successful. As such visitors were not invited to answer any formal questions about the project – though they certainly discussed the project with volunteers and members of the research team. However visitors were 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 1st community consultation event and has proved popular at every exhibition since. 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).



At this exhibition it was expected that a significant number of school pupils and teachers would attend. Bearing this in mind alongside the suggestions from the April 1st Community Consultation event (to share the project with wider audiences, particularly schools), the research team decided to debut a new kind of takeaway resource. This decision was also informed by the feedback report from Count Me In Too’s Pride Week exhibitions, in which it was suggested that more take-away resources like booklets or pamphlets might be desirable. This new resource came in the form of an 18-page Community Summary Resource Pack, which collates all of the current Community Summaries along with information about the project and information about how to use Count Me In Too in high school classes. It also includes a DVD with copies of all of the project’s reports plus a powerpoint presentation on some of the key findings.

Finally, some of Count Me In Too’s posters – particularly its long timeline – proved so attractive that some visitors asked where they could get their own copies. However, the team agreed that providing resources like this would be expensive and outside of the project’s remit, and additionally that the timeline in particular would not be particularly effective as a timeline of LGBT issues in the UK.

Who visited?

No formal monitoring was done at this exhibition, but some assertions can be made about the visitors.

During the first half of the day visitors were limited to the organisers of LGBT History Month, British Museum staff and members of the other groups and organisations who were exhibiting. This proved a useful opportunity to introduce national LGBT organisations to the research and its findings. Though Count Me In Too's work is geographically limited to Brighton & Hove, some members of these organisations suggested that this actually lent the work an air of importance due to Brighton's perceived status as 'the Gay Capital of the UK'. Additionally, some researchers from further afield than the South East spoke to the research team to say that they had used Count Me In Too's findings in their own research – this proves that the project's work has spread farther than initially expected, though this is outwith the capacity of the research team to track.



The second half of the day included more school staff and pupils, as well as members of statutory services (such as the Metropolitan Police) and officials from the government. People from each of these sectors engaged with the project and expressed their appreciation that this kind of LGBT research (community-engaged and looking at multiple marginalisation) was being carried out. Some pointed out that Count Me In Too was the only research project present at the event and that they were glad there was 'at least one'. Particular interest came from the Government Equalities Office, who subsequently arranged discussions of future LGBT-related research with the Count Me In Too research team. Those working in education were also pleased by the concession to teaching made in the new Community Summary Resource Pack, as this was easier to integrate into lessons.

In general it can be said that Count Me In Too's exhibition attracted a great amount of interest – many people from many different employment sectors and parts of the country wanted to speak with the research team and volunteers, and receipt of the new take-away resources was considerably higher than expected.

Conclusions

Given some of the exhibition feedback from Count Me In Too's April 1st 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, and also to record the project's dissemination and engagement practices.

- **Feedback was collected through interactions with visitors and was 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 - at the Pride exhibitions visitor feedback via the anonymous feedback sheets was numerically low while visible attendance was high. However verbal feedback was almost entirely positive.

- **The new Community Summary Pack resource, including its tailoring to schools, was welcomed;**

Receipt of this resource was higher than expected, and visitors commented how useful it was to have the accessible summary information all in one place.

- **The Count Me In Too research has spread farther than the project's ability to track, including into the national policy sphere.**

Some visitors were familiar with Count Me In Too – researchers have used it in their own work, and members of statutory services and government offices knew of it and were interested in finding out more, particularly regarding the project's participatory methodology.

- **Logistical planning has improved from previous exhibitions;**

Previous events have provided experience in setting up the exhibitions. Research team members and volunteers now have a fair idea of what to expect in setting up the display equipment and displaying the resources and of what equipment will be needed. In general the set-up and take-down went smoother than at previous exhibitions.