

Stripped of Pride

Homophobic abuse in Care settings

By Eileen Chubb ©

Our helpline has to date received 423 reports of homophobic abuse in care homes, this is likely to be the tip of the iceberg.

Source of abuse reports

246 cases were reported to us by whistleblowers.

177 cases were reported to us by the partner of the victims.

4 cases were reported to the authorities after contacting our helpline.

419 cases had already been reported to the relevant authorities prior to contacting our helpline.

392 people felt the relevant authorities had failed to take the issue seriously.

The remaining 31 have ongoing cases.

Please note* The failures of regulators and other authorities will be reported in detail in our forthcoming comprehensive report on this issue.

The Abuse

All the below are real helpline cases, we have anonymised all the details so that no one can be identified.

“ My partner of over 40 years was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, I looked after them at home for a long time but became ill myself and could not cope. We chose a home nearby so I could visit daily. It was after X had been in the home about three weeks that I noticed hostility from three particular staff members. These three staff would hang around in the hallway near Xs room and there would be very loud

laughter. Then the verbal abuse started, full of hate and threats. I was told that that I should not be visiting X, that X would soon die and burn in hell for being gay”

“ I had worked in the home for some years and the staff were all really nice, really caring. My home circumstances changed, and I asked if I could change to night shifts due to child care issues.

I had only been working nights for a couple of shifts when I witnessed the most awful abuse. The night staff called me into a residents bedroom and told me the person was gay and verbally abused him.

Later that same night I was in the laundry room when I heard this man screaming and I quietly went down the hallway and saw through the half open door these two staff repeatedly hit the man in the groin area. I reported it to the manager the next morning, but nothing happened. The two abusive night staff turned on me and threatened me, they said the manager was God fearing like them and that I may as well keep my mouth shut. I left and went to the authorities”

“ I have a gay sibling and came from an environment where it never occurred to me that there were people so full of hate. It was my first job.

I first started to see the hate of a gay resident in subtle ways. When some staff were on shift this gay resident was always given food or drink last, ignored when they called for help. After working there a few weeks these staff stopped me when I went to help this resident, saying so and so needs help first.

Initially I doubted myself, I thought, am I making too much of this, but as time went on and my confidence as a care worker grew, I started to question these staff when they tried to stop me helping this person.

One day I overheard these staff calling this person a perverted bastard, and that he was evil. I told them I was reporting them, and I went to the manager. This kind of incident happened around eight times and

each time I reported it. The final time I went to management, they said I was like a broken record and that I should learn to be less sensitive. I went to the authorities and then handed in my notice”

“ I worked for an agency visiting people in their own homes, one of my visits was to a gay couple in their early nineties. They barely spoke to me for weeks and I eventually discovered after building trust with them that some of the other care workers verbally and physically abused them because they were gay. It was appalling what was happening to them and I reported it to the agency and said those staff should not be allowed near them ever again. I could not believe it when no action was taken. I went to the authorities; I was on a zero-hour contract and got no work after that”

“ I can still see the absolute fear and pain they suffered, and their face still haunts me. This person’s life was made hell. When this abusive staff member came on shift my heart sank. I reported them every single time I saw them abuse this gay resident and every single time nothing was done. I went to the residents partner and told them what was going on, I knew I had to do something. I was on a zero-hour contract and never got another shift”

“ Every time I went to visit, I felt the hostility as soon as I went through the door. I would find B covered in bruises all the time. B told me they verbally and physically abused him; He begged me to get him out of there”

“ M was a lovely man, and it broke my heart to see what these staff did to him, he lived in fear. When any of these staff were on shift, when these staff were all on shift together it was the worst of all as they egged each other on, it was pure hate and the management did nothing to stop it”

“ It’s the power they have over you, no one believes you when you tell them what’s happening. D was my life, we went through hell to be together all those years ago and in the end, we went through hell again.

When I raised concerns about the injuries I found on D, the home pulled down the shutters, every time I walked out of the home after visiting D, I would end up sitting in the car sobbing my heart out”

“ Every time I visited M I would find a bible had been put on his bedside table, I kept removing it and going to the staff and asking why they kept putting this bible in the room. Some staff clearly did not know anything about it, but there were particular staff who were very cold. One day I asked one of these staff about the bible and they turned to me and said, why do think? M is evil and needs to be constantly reminded that he is a sinner. M could not tell me what they were saying to him as he was too sick, but I could see the pain in his eyes when certain staff entered the room”

“ They make you feel ashamed, I really hated visiting R, it’s hard enough when you lose someone you love, I feel they stole precious time and more from us. All our life we celebrated who we were, we never let anyone make us feel ashamed. They strip all pride from you, and you are powerless to do anything about it because no one cares. The whole experience of care? Punishment, judgement, abuse, I would rather die of neglect than ever go into care”

Summery

We will cover the issue of LGBTQ whistleblowers in a separate report.

Nearly all the abuse cases were motivated by a personal belief often linked to a religious bigotry.

There needs to be much more public awareness of the issue.

This type of abuse needs to be specially recorded as homophobic abuse in a care setting.

Staff being interviewed for a care position need to be asked if they hold a personal or religious belief regarding this issue which would make them unsuitable to be care workers.

The authorities abysmal failure to act on all abuse will be covered in our next report.

Edna's Law would make it a criminal offence to fail to act on the concerns of a whistleblower. In the cases we listed above, the employer would have one hour to remove all abusive staff from the premises and failure to act would always result in criminal proceedings. Please see

<https://www.change.org/p/protect-the-protectors-with-edna-s-law-need-one-law-for-all-whistleblowers>

Please contact us if you would like more detailed information on Edna's Law info@compassionincare.com

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See below for links to our previous work on this issue.

<https://compassionincare.com/news/theft-and-homophobic-abuse-in-care-homes/>

<https://compassionincare.com/news/our-work-on-homophobic-abuse-in-care-homes/>

<https://compassionincare.com/news/homophobic-abuse-in-care-homes/>