



A Guide for Managers Supporting Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Staff

“people perform better when they can be themselves”

[Stonewall]



Stonewall

DIVERSITY CHAMPION

1. Welcome to the Guide!



Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Northumberland County Council are fully committed to equality of opportunity and to promoting diversity. The organisations value all staff regardless of their sexual orientation. Furthermore, we aim to create an environment in which all staff, whatever their sexuality feel equally welcomed and valued, and in which homophobic and other discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated.

This guide is aimed at managers who have lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) staff in their teams and individuals who might want to be “out” at work. The aim is to help managers create an inclusive culture in their workplace and provide the right support to their LGB employees.

2. The problems of not being out at work



Many LGB staff can find it difficult to fully be themselves in the workplace. Not being out about their sexual orientation can have an impact on their efficiency, their ability to build relationships with colleagues and clients, their confidence and their motivation. It can also cause a great deal of stress and anxiety. This in turn impacts on the organisation.

However, many LGB people still have negative experiences because of their sexual orientation and feel unable to be out at work. Research shows that 2 in 5 gay people still do not feel able to be out to their managers, and 3 in 4 do not feel able to be out with clients (Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, 2011). The decision to come out is therefore not always an easy one, and as a manager, you have a key role in making the decision to come out at work easier.

3. What the Law says

Under the Equality Act 2010 people with different sexual orientations have protection from discrimination. Under the Act, it is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of someone's sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation. It also prohibits discriminating against someone because of their association with someone who is lesbian, gay or bisexual. This applies to all employers.

The Civil Partnerships Act (2005) creates rights that are equivalent to marriage so that same sex couples can register their civil partnership.

The law says that an employee who has had a civil partnership is entitled to:

- ✓ Take their partners name
- ✓ Have the same rights as married heterosexual couples under Next of kin rights
- ✓ Rights in relation to their partners children
- ✓ Certain tax rights, including the same inheritance rights as married heterosexual couples
- ✓ Pension rights
- ✓ Some welfare benefits
- ✓ The same "perks" and benefits at work as married couples.

Other rights can relate to:

- ✓ Adoption, paternity leave and housing.



4. What you can do as a Manager

There are some practical things you can do yourself as a Manager to create an inclusive culture within your service and team, and to support LGB individuals in the workplace and those who want to come out at work.



Generally...

- ✓ Make sure all of your staff are aware of the organisation's policies relating to equality and bullying and harassment. You might want to display these policies in a prominent position in your work bases.
- ✓ Make sure you and all of your staff have had up to date equality training.
- ✓ Challenge any homophobic comments or 'banter' firmly and immediately. Simply explaining to staff why something they've said is inappropriate is often an effective way to make them think about it and to change their behaviour.
- ✓ Talk openly about your own lesbian, gay and bisexual friends and family at work.
- ✓ Don't be afraid of saying the wrong thing, just ask gay colleagues and friends for advice.
- ✓ Talk to your gay friends and colleagues about what challenges they face at work.

- ✓ Encourage staff to complete equality monitoring exercises and take part in staff surveys.
- ✓ Use inclusive language in any communications to your services and teams.
- ✓ Show your support at any lesbian and gay community groups or events that may be happening in the local area e.g. Pride events.

Specifically Supporting an Individual...

- ✓ If a staff member wants to come out be clear you will support them.
- ✓ Signpost them to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) staff champion for additional support.
- ✓ Make them aware of the joint LGBT staff network group (details on the back of this leaflet). Be flexible in enabling them to attend these meetings.
- ✓ Consider providing additional time for supervision.
- ✓ Signpost them to information and resources that might be of interest (see list at the end of this leaflet).
- ✓ Formally recognise the contribution of staff involved in any network groups through the performance appraisal process.

5. Recognising Bullying and Harassment



In order to prevent bullying and harassment of LGB staff, organisations need to recognise it as a specific form of bullying. They should be clear about the nature of the problem and the ways it can occur. As a manager it is important that you are able to recognise the signs of homophobic bullying and harassment so that you can take action. This may include:

- ✗ making homophobic insults and threats
- ✗ making unnecessary and degrading references to an individual's sexual orientation
- ✗ engaging in banter or making jokes which are degrading to a person's sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation
- ✗ outing an individual as LGB without their permission
- ✗ ignoring or excluding a colleague because they are LGB
- ✗ spreading rumours or gossip
- ✗ asking intrusive questions about their private life
- ✗ making assumptions and judgements about a colleague based on their sexual orientation
- ✗ using religious belief to justify anti-gay bullying and harassment.

If you witness or are told about any of this happening in your service or team, you have a responsibility as a manager to act. In extreme cases, this form of harassment could be classed as a 'Hate Crime'. Research suggests that although a high proportion of LGB individuals have suffered from some form of hate crime, it is not often reported to the police.

An employee may wish to talk to you as their manager about such incidents. The effects on the employee can impact heavily on the organisation and on their ability to work. Your support could play a vital role in making sure this is reported and addressed.

Case Study

I have worked in local government for around 10 years in a stereotypical male dominated role and environment. I didn't come out to my colleagues at work that I was gay because of the fear of rejection, the perceived homophobic culture.

However, when the opportunity arose for me to take up a role to help support a regional LGBT event, I needed to approach work to see if they would free up my time to let me help with this.

Initially I had reservations about talking to my manager but I heard about the LGBT staff network and contacted the LGBT Champion Patrick Price who provided the advice and support that I needed to be able to move forward.

When I came out to my colleagues they were shocked and surprised, they did not believe as they had no idea but now, after discussing it openly with colleagues I realise there was no reason to hide or fear as coming out has made very little difference and it has been well accepted by work colleagues.

County Council Employee

Comments from LGBT Trust Employees:

“Previously I would have said the Trust wasn't very 'gay-friendly' but I am glad to see there is a LGBT group that has a high profile in the staff newsletter.”

“As a gay female myself, I have never had a problem being 'out' at work. I don't broadcast it every day, but everyone in my workplace knows, and they have always been fine with me.”

“I myself am gay and have had flak from staff at the hospital.”

6. What support is available locally?

Both the Trust and the Council have a range of different equality related policies in place to support all staff including LGBT employees at work. These include:

For the Council...	For the Trust...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Equality and Diversity✓ Diversity and Equality in Employment✓ Harassment Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Dignity at Work✓ Bullying and Harassment

For more information, look on your organisation's intranet site or contact the respective HR department. There are a number of LGB Groups and Help lines that are readily accessible via the internet or through local LGBT services and some of these are described below.

7. Useful contacts and resources

- Patrick Price, LGBT Champion, Tel: (01670) 840 894
Email: Patrick.Price@northumbria-healthcare.nhs.uk
- LGBT Staff Network Webpage: www.tinyurl.com/LGBTnetwork
- Stonewall (Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Charity):
www.stonewall.org.uk
- MESMAC North East (Charity for Gay and Bisexual Men):
www.mesmacnortheast.com
- LGF (Lesbian and Gay Foundation): www.lgf.org.uk



This guide was developed by Thomas Millen MBE and members of the joint LGBT Staff Network Group using resources from Stonewall