



How can I help lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) colleagues feel more comfortable and able to be themselves at work?

Managers Guide



This guidance has been developed by the LGBT+ Network Group, with the support and involvement of Workforce and Development.

Foreword from our Executive Sponsor

As Chief Executive of the Trust and sponsor for the LGB&T Network, I want to share with you the reason why this work is so important and matters to both staff and our patients.

There is a lot to be said about the importance of staff being able to be who they are without fear of discrimination and work in a culture which respects diversity. Stonewall research shows that LGB&T staff are more productive when they are able to be themselves at work. This is of grave importance given that statistics tell us that between 5-7% of the population are of LGB&T orientation. This approach works in the same way for our patients and we must ensure that our staff are equipped to understand the needs of LGB&T patients, their partners, families and friends. The network will aim to promote awareness and offer advice and guidance where required so please do not hesitate to make contact if you feel you would benefit from this.

I am delighted to support this work, and hope that together we can take it forward and set an organisational example for others to follow. I would like to thank all of those who are involved in this vital work. I look forward to seeing it 'Flourish' during 2017.



Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender: what does it mean?

This guide is intended for managers and supervisors, but will equally be of use to any colleague. For the most part, managing LGB&T staff is no different from managing any member of staff. The same Workforce policies and principles of leadership and management apply to all staff. However, there are some specific issues about managing LGB staff which this guide will help you to understand.

This guidance does not specifically cover transgender issues. LGB issues centre on sexual orientation, while transgender is about gender identity. There are overlaps, but there are also lots of differences. Please see UHMB Transgender Care Policy and Guidance Documents.

- **Lesbian** is a term usually used to describe a female whose sexual orientation is to other women.
- **Gay** is a term which can be used for either men or women who are sexually attracted to the same gender, but it's usually used to describe men.
- **Bisexual** refers to someone who is sexually attracted to both males and females.
- **Transgender** is considered an umbrella term for all people who cross gender boundaries. It is used to describe people whose gender is not the same as or does not identify with, the sex they were assigned at birth.

Further information is available in the UHMB Transgender Care Policy and Guidance Documents.

Top Tip: remember that lesbian, gay and bisexual people may have common experiences, but there are also differences. Bisexual people may be assumed to be 'straight' when they are in a heterosexual relationship.

What does the law say?

The Equality Act 2010 offers everyone protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and makes harassment and victimisation due to sexual orientation unlawful. This can be in relation to a person's real or perceived/assumed sexual orientation, and may be 'associative' – where a person is discriminated against or harassed due to the sexual orientation of someone they are connected to, such as a family member, rather than their own. Bear in mind that that protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation extends to 'straight' (heterosexual) people as well as LGB people.

Protection under the Equality Act 2010 applies during recruitment and continues throughout employment, and LGB people have the same rights and responsibilities as straight/heterosexual people in the workplace. This includes access to training, benefits and employment-related policies and procedures, and also the right to work in a safe environment.

Top Tip: Make sure you and your staff are aware of their responsibilities under the Equalities Act. Think about whether any of your policies or practices are inadvertently discriminatory.

What do UHMB's policies say?

The Trust is committed to equality of opportunity in service delivery and employment, and has published an Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2016-2021. The Trust does not tolerate discrimination including on the basis of sexual orientation, and will take appropriate action wherever it may occur. This means staff and managers must also behave in a way which reflects these commitments.

The Trust as a Stonewall Diversity Champion Programme Partner has worked to ensure all policies are gender neutral and inclusive.

UHMB offers a range of work-related benefits, which are equally available to LGB and non-LGB employees. Policies and guidance relating to employee benefits have been developed in an inclusive way, with wording designed to make clear that sexual orientation will not bar anyone from accessing them and that where benefits involve partners of employees;

- Adoption Leave, Maternity and Paternity Guidelines
- Attendance Management at Work Policy
- Carer Leave, Compassionate Leave and Special Leave Guidelines
- Work-life Harmony Policy

“The policies at UHMB are very clear and supportive. I’ve always felt like it was safe to be open about my sexual orientation here but I know not everybody will feel the same.” Lucy, Operational Performance and UHMB LGBT Network Member

What is 'Coming out' and what has it got to do with work?

Every day at work, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) colleagues face the choice between being open and honest about their sexuality, avoiding the issue, or lying about themselves and their sexuality to colleagues and managers.

'Coming out' is a term used by LGB people for the process of telling people your sexual orientation. Many people think of this as being a 'one off' event in your life, but actually LGB people come out many times in their lives, sometimes every day. For example: you might 'come out' when you start work in a new team or even when a new team member starts, and when interacting with patients.

The decision to "come out" is an intensely personal one, influenced, in part by the confidence the individual feels about the support and response they will get. Someone who has had an experience of discrimination or harassment may be more anxious about 'coming out' in a new team, for example. Many lesbians, gay men and bisexuals feel they do not wish to come out and their decision should be respected.

So what has being 'out' got to do with work? Isn't this a private matter? Well, clearly our main role at work is to do our job. But actually you perform best at work if you are able to be authentic, to be yourself and you are not wasting energy worrying about covering up your sexual orientation. Research from Stonewall shows that LGB staff are more productive when they are able to be out at work. So it's a patient care benefit to have a culture where people feel able to be 'out'.

Each LGB person has to decide who to be 'out' to, and this can be complicated. For example, if you work in a patient-facing role, are you out to patients/their relatives? You might think this is unnecessary: but actually straight people inadvertently tell patients their sexual orientation all the time. For example, if a patient asks a worker about their weekend plans, a straight worker might mention their husband/wife.

An LGBT worker may respond quite differently for fear of abuse and discrimination. Your staff may need your support in this area.

If an LGBT colleague hears derogatory comments or homophobic 'banter' or jokes in their place of work, they are likely to feel uncomfortable and intimidated. They are therefore unlikely to be giving 100% to their job. As a manager, why would you not want every team member to be giving you 100%?

Even if you do not have any openly LGBT colleagues working with you, don't assume that you don't have any LGBT colleagues. The reality is that you really do not know the sexual orientation of anyone you work with, unless they have chosen to tell you.

Anyone who is not comfortable to be open about their sexual orientation at work will work hard to conceal it, and will often do so very successfully throughout their working life (potentially at great cost to their health and well-being and to their performance).

- LGBT people most definitely do not match the stereotypes which society commonly attributes to them – for example, assumptions of femininity in gay men, or of masculine traits in the appearance of lesbians.
- Statistically it is estimated that between 5-7% of the population are lesbian, gay or bisexual, so this might be likely to be the case at UHMB too. Don't just assume that you know your colleagues.

Top Tip: the best way to help someone feel it's safe to be out at work is to create an inclusive culture where people feel supported.

"Being accepted by my colleagues has made me feel comfortable and confident in and out of work." Lee, CSW Medicine Division and UHMB LGBT Network Member

How can I help the Trust with its Inclusion and Diversity Agenda?

Encourage all staff to self-certify their sexuality, **whatever that may be**.

NHS Trusts have captured data on their employees' gender and ethnicity to understand their workforce, evaluate and improve recruitment and retention and meet legal requirements.

LGB&T data tells organisations about the number of LGB&T employees and how their experiences compare to those of their colleagues. Employers can assess job satisfaction among LGB&T staff or identify barriers to their career development. For example, barriers may include the fear that coming out will prevent LGB&T employees being considered for promotion.

In essence, data helps identify opportunities to develop targeted initiatives to improve the workplace for LGBT employees. All employees may confidentially or anonymously answer data questions, regardless of whether they are out or not in the workplace.

Please encourage all staff to complete their sexuality in their Electronic Staff Record (ESR) account via Employee Self Service.

Top Tip: remember, you don't have to be LGB to experience homophobic bullying: a straight person might be bullied because they are perceived to be gay.

Creating an inclusive culture

Managers have an important role to play in creating and maintaining a culture that is accepting and supportive of LGB people so that your LGB colleagues know that they can rely on your support, and know that they are respected and valued by you.

If staff feel that they have to hide their sexuality, they may be more likely to feel isolated and stressed, and as a result may be less productive. You may even lose a valuable team member if they feel they have no other option than to move on.

Words can cause immense pain, and in particular if the person feels threatened or intimidated by the language used then it is unacceptable. For example, saying “that’s gay” to indicate that something is not good could imply that being gay has negative attributes, so is not appropriate. Failure to tackle instances like this send staff a message that their manager thinks such behaviour is acceptable.

Intervention need not be confrontational. After the initial public intervention to stop the banter in its tracks, more in depth discussion should then take place with the perpetrator in private, to reinforce UHMB’s core values – ‘Respect at Work’ (as outlined in the Trust’s “Behavioural Standards Framework”) and to ensure that they understand the serious consequences for themselves if they fail to apply this value in the workplace.

Top Tip: If someone discloses their sexual orientation to you, or you become aware of it some other way, under no circumstances, including when seeking advice, reveal this to anyone else without the individual’s express consent. To do so would be a serious breach of confidentiality.

Here's our **Top Tips** for individual managers on creating an inclusive culture, which will benefit all your staff:

- Think about the language you use – keep it gender neutral, and don't assume everyone is straight as your starting point. For example use: 'What does your partner do?'
- Don't assume anyone's sexual orientation. Despite what you may think, you can't always tell.
- Challenge potentially offensive language and behaviour firmly and immediately, and empower your team to do the same. For example, 'I don't want someone like that looking after me.'
- Talk to/get advice from a Respect Champion. Do you have one in your department or office?
- Don't be afraid to speak with your LGB&T colleagues - don't break confidentiality, as 'outing' someone could affect your working relationship.
- Contact us at the Network - we're also here to support managers.
- Remember patients can hear what we say, and it affects their care too.

"My supervisor once asked a patient who was looking after them - she said, 'Was it the gay lad?' Although I knew it wasn't meant in a derogatory way, the patient complained thinking her language was unprofessional." Andy, Medicine Division and UHMB LGBT+ Network Member.

Need further information or have specific questions? There is a range of further advice and information available to you.

LGB&T employees, volunteers, temporary workers and students are welcome to join the UHMB LGB&T Network, which aims to eliminate discrimination, influence policy making, support colleagues, train staff, highlight health inequalities that affect service delivery and promote the Trust services as provider and employer within the local LGB&T communities. The Network meets every two months around the Trust. Contact the LGB&T network confidentially at: lgbt.network@mbht.nhs.uk

- You can find many resources under the UHMB LGB&T page of the internet.
- Follow the LGBT Network on Twitter @LGBT_UHMBT
- Contact a Respect at Work Champion
- Consult the Dignity at Work Policy

Stonewall are a national organisation who campaign, research and provide information on lots of LGB&T related issues. They have an excellent website, with lots of free to download resources: www.stonewall.org.uk.

For the RLI and North Lancashire Region

- LGBT Lancashire www.lancslgbt.org.uk
- Out in the Bay www.oitb.co.uk/

For FGH, WGH and South Cumbria Region

- OUTReach Cumbria www.outreachcumbria.co.uk

Contact your designated Workforce Advisor for assistance. If you are a union member, your union is likely to have resources available to advise you on LGBT issues.

Other formats

If you would like to receive this information in an alternative format, then please contact : **01539 795497**

Travelling to our hospitals

For the best way to plan your journey visit our website: <http://www.uhmb.nhs.uk/> or contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): **01539 795497**

Useful Contact Details

NHS Direct (24 hour health advice): **111**

LGBT Network
lgbt.network@mbht.nhs.uk

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Your Information:

If you would like to know how we use, share, disclose and secure your information and your rights of access to the information we hold about you, visit the Trust's website: <http://www.uhmb.nhs.uk/> or contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) **01539 795497**

References

Details of the references used in writing this leaflet are available on request from: Patient Information Officer **01524 512476**

Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment, please speak to a member of staff or contact PALS: **01539 795497**



UHMBT is a no smoking Trust. Smoking is not permitted on any of the hospital sites. Giving up smoking is the best thing you can do for your health.

Contact your local NHS stop smoking service:

NHS North Lancashire: **01524 845145**

NHS Cumbria: **01900 324222**

**A great place to
be cared for;
a great place
to work**

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