



LGBTQ+

Engagement

Employers toolkit

A guide is for anyone employing,
working with and/or providing services
to LGBTQ+ people



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Introduction

This guide is for anyone employing, working with and/or providing services (or likely to be) to LGBTQ+ people. This guide offers useful guidance for organisations large and small, public and private.

All organisations should effectively engage with individuals of diverse identities and backgrounds, as colleagues, customers, and clients. Like everyone else, those in the LGBTQ+ community want to feel safe, supported and understood by the organisations they work for and engage with. The LGBTQ+ community shares a long history of discrimination and stigma by society at large. This guide helps organisations utilise best practices for positive and productive engagement with the LGBTQ+ community. An organization never knows when the next person being recruited for a job or the next colleague, customer and client calling on the phone will be a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

- [A report by the CIPD](#) revealed LGBTQ+ staff are more likely to experience conflict and harassment at work than their heterosexual and cisgender colleagues.
- The 2020 NHS staff survey found that 13.7% of gay or lesbian staff reported discrimination from patients or the public, and 11.8% from their colleagues.
- A [BMJ article](#) highlighted that COVID-19 had exacerbated LGBTQ+ health inequalities.
- [Stonewall research](#) into LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace found that:
 - One in 10 LGBTQ+ people have experienced barriers to progression
 - One in 8 LGBTQ+ people don't feel able to disclose their identity to their colleagues
 - One in 5 LGBTQ+ job searchers felt discriminated against
- According to the [LGBT In Britain – Health Report by Stonewall](#), one in five LGBT people (19%) aren't out to any healthcare professional about their sexual orientation when seeking general medical care. This number rises to 40% of bisexual men and 29% of bisexual women.

This guide will look at LGBTQ+ employee networks, ally programmes, working with community assets, partnership working, communications (internal and external) and provide general tips for better engagement and useful resources.

Summary

How can your organisation play a role in supporting the LGBTQ+ community?

This guide provides an overview of good practice and easy to implement principles.

All organisations and workplaces can help people and communities together and support the LGBTQ+ community (including their colleagues, customers and clients) by:

- **Ensuring a diverse workforce** – recruiting and retaining a workforce that fully reflects the diversity of our wider society across all levels.
- **Creating an inclusive culture** – one that celebrates differences in experiences, backgrounds and ways of thinking. Considerable research shows that inclusive businesses have more highly engaged, motivated and productive workforces.
- **Partner with community assets** – working with an LGBTQ+ community group or charity as part of an ongoing relationship. This may involve sponsorship or support-in-kind.
- **Employee volunteering** – enabling and empowering staff volunteering through a company-wide programme, provides a valuable employee benefit and supports local LGBTQ+ community groups and charities.
- **Consistent and authentic communication** – communications, both internal and external, is key to any brand and if your organisation brand is one that aims to be inclusive for the LGBTQ+ community, it must be consistent and authentic.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** - organisations should (where appropriate) monitor, evaluate and revise the impact of work that they are doing to support the LGBTQ+ community.



Recruitment & retention

Key considerations and strategies for recruiting to promote LGBTQ+ inclusiveness

- The language used in job postings can have a big impact on who applies for the position. Using inclusive language that highlights the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion can help attract a diverse pool of candidates.
- Partnering with LGBTQ+ organizations and attending LGBTQ+ job fairs can help attract LGBTQ+ candidates who may not have otherwise applied. This can also help demonstrate the company's commitment to inclusivity.
- Unconscious biases can impact the hiring process, so it's important to provide training to help recruiters and hiring managers identify and overcome these biases.
- Providing gender-neutral options on application forms and in the workplace can help create a more inclusive environment for transgender and non-binary employees.
- Having a diverse interview panel can help ensure that candidates from different backgrounds feel welcome and are evaluated fairly.
- Benefits such as healthcare coverage for gender confirmation surgery and family leave policies that include same-sex couples can help support LGBTQ+ employees and their families.



LGBTQ+ employee networks

Employee networks provide an opportunity to ensure voices are heard around policy and practice. Many large and small organisations already have networks in place, these may be formal or informal groups for employees to join in their workplace based on shared characteristics or life experiences. Sometimes referred to as affinity networks, employee resources groups or business resource groups, these networks often represent shared characteristics.

These networks have typically been focused underrepresented groups, for example women, sexual orientation, gender, etc. More recently these have expanding to “interest-based” groups gathered around particular activities including job responsibility, environmental advocacy, community service and volunteerism, and workplace wellness.

- *If your organisation is looking to create some employee networks, but don't know where to start, reach out to other organisations. Typically, they will be happy to have a chat about their journey!*
- *Senior leadership support of employee networks demonstrates a commitment to these groups and helps ensure they are represented at all levels of the organisation.*

An organisation should

- Provide time and resources to allow the network to develop and build momentum
- Ensure executive support through a sponsor or leadership endorsement
- Value the input from the network.

The network must

- Be clear on their purpose to unite members and have organisational support
- Ensure space for personal stories to build mutual support
- Get to know members to address under-representation
- Work with external partners and other networks for new ideas and maximum impact

Ally programmes

Developing an LGBTQ+ ally programme, can be really powerful in alleviating LGBTQ+ people's anxieties about engaging with a service. Staff wearing rainbow lanyards or badges, for example, is a simple but effective way of showing support.

Allies have to be supported through training and awareness raising about the issues the facing LGBTQ+ community if they are asserting their ally status by wearing rainbow lanyards or badges. Learn from others who have put this in place and integrate your community assets too. Getting this right can make our working and service environments inclusive and welcoming places.

Be mindful of ally programmes. An authentic programme can make working and service environments inclusive and welcoming places. Getting this wrong can damage reputation and trust amongst the LGBTQ+ community and hurt individuals.

Working with community assets

Work with the LGBTQ+ services, such as at The Brunswick Centre, to establish a working and mutually supportive relationship with their voice and influence work. Develop and establish relationships with local and, where appropriate, regional, and national LGBTQ+ community assets/resources.

Embracing a coproduction approach will mean you are not alone in what you can do. There are a large number of community assets that you can work with and draw upon many are highlighted in the [LGBTQ+ Engagement Toolkit](#) which was produced in partnership with local CCGs.

Develop approaches to include joint delivery of engagement work by trusted LGBTQ+ services and those with an LGBTQ+ advocacy role. These may be local, regional, or national organisations include The Brunswick Centre as well as Stonewall, the LGBTQ+ Foundation, the LGBTQ+ Partnership. Part of this approach may include spot-purchasing, commissioning, or contract enhancement for ongoing work.

This will provide an opportunity to:

- Get advice on different approaches direct from community members
- Provide insight from community members
- Share and learn from each other
- Improve capabilities and gain further knowledge and information about the LGBTQ+ community
- Get information and intelligence on community assets you may not be aware of
- Identify and gaps in community assets



Working with community assets (contd)

To facilitate this process, show commitment and value to what can be obtained from LGBTQ+ community assets, consider:

- Funding community assets for their support and input. They are likely to be voluntary led and resource-poor. Even small amounts of funding can have a big impact;
- Sponsoring LGBTQ+ community events such as Pride will show our support of and commitment to the communities. There is considerable value in having your logo as part of local Pride events, as this sends a very positive message;
- Attending / having representation at Pride events provides an excellent engagement opportunity but also sends a positive message to the LGBTQ+ community. There are lots of Pride resources on www.thebrunswickcentre.org.uk
- Establishing and/or pump priming community assets if there are gaps. E.g., is their scope and need for a local LGBTQ+ engagement advisory group or would a task and finish group model work better? These can be virtual or physical-presence groups. Setting these up in partnership with other statutory and/or community assets is worth considering.

It is important that you don't rely on one or two community assets who are easy to engage with. Work towards building a broad coalition so that you have greater diversity and a broader perspective.

Relationships must be developed and sustained for the long term. Remember that you may, in many cases, be fighting resistance (see more below) and a sense of suspicion so it's imperative that you go out to meet and talk with your community assets. Setting a meeting for people to come to you is probably not going to work at an early stage in LGBTQ+ engagement work.

Community assets may be resource poor in terms of capacity, time, and money and, in many cases, will be voluntary led. They will have their own remit so we must be mindful of any unreasonable demands on time or other resource. You need to build the capacity of our community assets by offering time, expertise, items-in-kind, and funding where possible. This is another reason to pool resources with partners, to have a greater ability to build the capacity of community assets.

Employee volunteering

Employer-supported volunteering (ESV) provides employees with the opportunity to volunteer during working hours. Organisations can have a direct impact on the communities in which they operate, and many employers have introduced different types of volunteering. This may be a structured initiative or more informal. Volunteering with LGBTQ+ community assets is a great way to build a strong relationship with these groups and demonstrate a commitment to engaging with the LGBTQ+ community.

It could be as simple as volunteering to support those organisations at one-off activities such as Pride events, or support ongoing activities such as group work, befriending schemes etc. Additionally, the organisation may benefit from more specialized support around PR, marketing, finance etc.

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development provide a range of information and resources on [employer-led volunteering](#).

Many individuals have volunteered on an ongoing basis with the Brunswick Centre as part of an employee volunteering programme. Additionally, The Brunswick Centre regularly welcomes large groups for one-off initiatives such as helping with condom packs.

Partnership working

As well as engaging with community assets, consider working with other organisations. Pooling resources with partners is important when budgets are tight but is something to consider as ongoing good practice. It gives best value to everyone involved, including the LGBTQ+ community.

This could include working with suppliers and even those organisations that may be considered competitors. Consider hosting joint events such as panel discussions on relevant topics.

Communications

Work towards embedding inclusive messaging across organisations. This should cover both internal and external communications.

Clear signs of LGBTQ+ community inclusion, such as ally logos or a statement on LGBTQ+ policy and procedure, are simple and effective. If these are backed up with staff displaying rainbow lanyards or badges this will further support inclusive messaging. Such imagery and messaging can reduce anxiety and indicate safety to people from the LGBTQ+ community. Their absence may deter LGBTQ+ people from using a service for fear of discrimination.

Inclusive messaging is a crucial part of engagement and communication. The use of language and imagery (including that of people) can include or exclude groups and people.

There is greater diversity being represented in adverts and in the media, but LGBTQ+ people have limited representation.

The same can be said of people of colour and/or people with different abilities have limited representation. This has consequences as to whether people feel seen and valued.

Support the review and development of communications and engagement strategies so they acknowledge the LGBTQ+ community. Recognising the LGBTQ+ community as part of these strategies will support the broader engagement work across the organisation.

Showing support for the LGBTQ+ community during Pride month (in June each year) has become common practice for any private and public sector organisations. However, it is vital that this commitment of support is demonstrated throughout the year to avoid being perceived as 'pink washing' or 'rainbow capitalism'.

- *Ensuring regular content from LGBTQ+ internal networks, charity partners, other groups etc on internal communications such as employee newsletters is a great way to showcase the company commitment.*

- *Positive role models from across the organisation, who are happy and willing to share their story, are a great way to increase engagement.*

A large, stylized graphic of the letters 'LGBTQ+' in a bold, sans-serif font. Each letter is filled with a different color from the rainbow spectrum, creating a vibrant, multi-colored effect. The plus sign is a solid dark blue.

Communications (contd)

Consider using a social media influencer to reach LGBTQ+ young people in particular. Social media influencers can reach thousands, if not tens of thousands of people, promoting brands and sharing responsibility messages. There are risks and pitfalls for sure but with careful consideration this could be a very useful and powerful way to reach those LGBTQ+ people furthest away from us.

Consider participating in local or regional Pride events and promote this internally and externally. See our guide on www.thebrunswickcentre.org.uk



Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring equality and diversity through your engagement activities (both targeted and generic) is crucial to demonstrate how effective your approach to improve engagement with the LGBTQ+ community is. It will also highlight where further action or targeted activity is needed, such as only reaching a narrow groups of LGBTQ+ people. A lack of routine recorded data makes it difficult to assess the needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

Reluctance and resistance

Taking risks and stepping out of your comfort zone may be a challenge as you work to better improve engagement with the LGBTQ+ community. However, as long as you are not reckless there are opportunities to lead and develop ways of engaging that can influence work across the board.

Resistance may be experienced, as targetted work can often lead to allegations of special treatment of groups. This can come from within as well as outside our organisations! It is vital to give a robust defence of our need to engage with the LGBTQ+ community. The evidence on health inequalities and poor outcomes supports our case but it is also important to say that we have a duty through the Equality Act to engage with all our communities, including those least likely to be heard from. It is also democratic and, importantly, it is the right thing to do.

Showcasing activities supporting the LGBTQ+ community on social channels is a great way to demonstrate what you do. However, there is likely to be some negative comments and having a simple strategy in place to deal with these is essential!

There may be a reluctance to be involved by those we are hoping to engage, as they may be suspicious of the sudden interest and activity, especially if this has never happened before. If the LGBTQ+ community are reluctant or resistant to engage be patient, acknowledge the lack of engagement effort in the past and highlight what is different now. Show that you want them to be part of the process so you can work together to improve outcomes. Make sure you feedback on the outcome of any engagement activity. This helps to build trust and shows people their voice has been heard.

Useful resources

There are a huge range of useful resources available to help better engage with the LGBTQ+ community and provide a better understanding of issues facing the community.

A good example is to promote and share the LGBTQ+ resources developed by NHS England across organisations, commissioned services, and other partners to facilitate better understanding of the LGBTQ+ community and their needs.

Understand the [Government's LGBTQ+ Action Plan 2018: Improving the lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People](#).

[Stonewall Inclusive Workplaces](#) have a number of resources and initiatives to help unlock the potential of your LGBTQ+ workforce.

More resources and toolkits are available at www.thebrunswickcentre.org.uk

The Brunswick Centre provide a range of services in Calderdale and Kirklees including HIV prevention and support and working with young LGBTQ+ people.

www.thebrunswickcentre.org.uk

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The Brunswick Centre is a member of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)