

10 Steps to LGB&T inclusive communications

1. **Use inclusive language in all communications.** “Partner”, “parent” and “child” are a good starting point (see our neutral language guide on the back of this leaflet for advice on inclusive language).
2. **Use visual cues.** If you are a member of a Stonewall Scotland programme make sure you use the logo. Stonewall is the best known LGB&T organisation in the UK and this instantly sends a strong message that your organisation is committed to LGB&T equality. Other useful visual cues can include using same-sex couples in imagery and using the rainbow flag.
3. **Include relevant links on your website.** For example links to LGB&T information, support and advocacy organisations such as Stonewall Scotland.
4. **Check your “search” function.** Make sure that the search function on your website includes links to relevant equality information. If “gay” produces no search results this instantly suggests that your organisation might not have considered LGB&T people’s needs in their policies and service delivery. You should also double check that your firewall does not block words such as “bisexual” and “lesbian” which would prevent legitimate communications on sexual orientation issues.
5. **Include LGB&T news across your everyday communications.** Include information about LGB&T events or groups in your mainstream communications – for example if you have a stall at pride include this in your staff magazine, your website and advertise it on social media. This will send a powerful message that LGB&T inclusion is not just a tick box exercise but a central part of your organisation’s values.
6. **Be consistent.** This should not be a one off exercise – make sure that from now on all of your communications use inclusive language and send positive messages about LGB&T people.
7. **Make use of your senior buy-in.** If a senior figure within your organisation is supportive of your LGB&T equality work, try to get a quote or statement from them that you can publicise both internally or externally. Any sceptics will be put off making homophobic remarks if they know that they will not be tolerated by senior management.
8. **Celebrate success.** Do you have a senior member of staff who is openly gay? Has someone in your network group recently won an award or been successful in a particular project? Profiling these people will send a positive message that your organisation is one which values all staff and service users regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
9. **Make sure your public spaces are inclusive environments.** Make sure that your equality and diversity policies are visible and that staff are confident

implementing them. Make sure you also have LGB&T friendly posters, leaflets and information readily available – Stonewall Scotland can provide relevant materials.

10. **Make sure frontline staff are trained!** If your website suggests that you are inclusive organisation this illusion will be quickly shattered by any experiences of discrimination from your staff or service users. Stonewall Scotland's Online Learning Resource is an easy way to roll out training across your organisation and is freely available at www.lgbtgoodpractice.org.uk.

Neutral Language Guide

This isn't meant to be scary, and it's not about political correctness. This is about not jumping to the wrong conclusions about your customers or service users. If you get it wrong, the best case scenario is they are slightly irritated. The worst case scenario is that you could make them feel unable to access your service, and other services they need in their day-to-day life. LGB&T people's experience of unintentional discrimination has led to high levels of mental health problems within this group of people. The words that you use are incredibly powerful and can have a huge impact on how people feel about themselves.

If you don't know for certain what gender to use when talking about a person's loved ones, or if you aren't sure whether someone identifies as male or female, here are a few tips on how to keep your language neutral until you know what terms they prefer to use:

Boyfriend/ girlfriend = partner
Husband/ wife = spouse
Mum/ Dad = parent
Son/ Daughter = child
He/ she = they
Him/ her = their

And remember: just because someone wears a wedding ring, it does not mean that their partner is the opposite sex. Many couples in Civil-Partnerships, and many same-sex couples who have made a long term commitment to each other, wear commitment rings exactly like married couples.

If you use the wrong term and they correct you, apologise sincerely and move on – don't dwell on it or make it into a big deal (this will be more embarrassing for both of you!)