Guidance for school leaders on supporting

# LGB+ staff

NAHT

FOR LEADERS, FOR LEARNERS

Stonewall

**Acceptance without exception**

## Introduction

Some LGB+ staff members may choose not to be open about their sexual orientation at work. While for some this choice is a personal preference, others do not feel able to be open because of fear of discrimination, bullying or harassment.

Many LGB+ people report facing harassment and discrimination at work even though this is unlawful. A large-scale study in 2014 by Manchester Business School, which looked into the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual workers, found that LGB individuals were more than twice as likely as heterosexual individuals to be bullied or discriminated against in the workplace. The resulting report revealed a strong correlation between these negative experiences and poor physical and psychological health in LGB workers[1].

Later in this document, we set out further relevant research on the experiences and treatment of LGB+ staff members, both in schools and the wider workforce.

The evidence is clear: people perform better and are happier when they can be themselves in the workplace. Stonewall's research shows that if an employee is 'out' at work about their sexual orientation, they are more likely to be satisfied with their job security, their sense of achievement and the support they receive from their manager[2]. School leaders should, therefore, seek to develop and maintain an environment that welcomes diversity, champions equality and encourages staff members to be their own authentic selves.

In turn, the evidence sets out that when LGB+ staff members are able to be 'out' in their school, they can provide an important role model for pupils. When pupils see that staff members are able to be authentic about themselves within the school community and are treated with equal respect and acceptance, they are more likely to feel able to be authentic and open themselves as well as encouraged to treat all members of the school community with equal respect.

[1] Manchester Business School, Ups and Downs of LGB Workplace Experiences, 2014. http://bit.ly/2v7uisM
[2] Stonewall Workplace Equality Index Survey (91,248 responses), 2017

## Homophobic and biphobic bullying

Homophobic and biphobic bullying and the use of homophobic or biphobic language are widespread in schools. If teachers are not allowed – or don't know if they are allowed – to educate students about LGB+ issues, it is difficult for them to tackle and challenge homophobia when it arises. This can lead to a school environment that is not safe or inclusive for LGB+ staff members or pupils.

Research from Stonewall shows that half of LGBT pupils (52 per cent) hear homophobic language 'frequently' or 'often' at school, and more than one-third (36 per cent) hear biphobic language 'frequently' or 'often'[3]. Sixty-eight per cent of LGBT pupils report that teachers or school staff only 'sometimes' or 'never' challenge homophobic or biphobic language when they hear it. Worryingly, Stonewall's 2014 Teachers' Report found that 29 per cent of primary school teachers and 36 per cent of secondary school teachers surveyed reported that they had heard homophobic language or negative remarks about lesbian, gay or bisexual people from other school staff members[4].

Schools must represent an inclusive and safe environment for LGB+ staff members. All teachers should feel able and empowered to teach and be open about LGB+ issues, and all staff members and pupils should feel able to confront and challenge homophobic language and bullying in the same way that they would challenge, for example, racist language or behaviour.

## The role of school leaders in creating an inclusive environment

School leaders are in a position to demonstrate strong leadership and take responsibility for promoting, developing and defending an inclusive school environment. As school leaders, NAHT members are in an ideal place to create environments where their staff members can feel safe to be open with colleagues and pupils.

• School leaders have a duty to communicate to all staff members that creating and maintaining an inclusive school environment is central to the school's ethos as well as being an expectation of the UK's government and the inspectorate

• LGB+ and equalities issues should not be automatically delegated to the equalities lead or an LGB+ member of staff. All staff members - in particular, school leaders - should take responsibility for promoting an inclusive school environment and tackling homophobic and biphobic bullying

• It is important not to allow complaints (or fear of complaints) from parents, governors or staff members to interfere with their commitment to an inclusive school environment - any more than one would allow complaints to interfere with a commitment to supporting black, asian or minority ethnic (BAME) staff members. School leaders can make it clear to all staff members that they will be supported and defended by the school's leadership team in such matters

[3] Stonewall, School Report, 2017
[4] Stonewall, The Teachers' Report 2014

- It is also important to make it clear to all staff members that it is appropriate and encouraged to teach about LGB+ issues in an accessible and appropriate way. This expectation can be communicated to staff members in person as well as being clearly stated in the school's policy documents available to new and existing staff

- Code of conduct policies can set out the expectation that all staff members should model the school's values and behaviours, for example, by never using homophobic or biphobic language

- School leaders have a role to play in demonstrating strong leadership by developing clear policies and whole-school strategies to tackle and prevent homophobic bullying. There should be a zero-tolerance approach to homophobic and biphobic 'banter' alongside other types of harassment to recognise the power of such language to harass and discriminate

- School leaders can ensure LGB+ people, issues and experiences are reflected across the curriculum to celebrate diversity and ensure visibility of LGB+ perspectives

- School leaders can also strive to ensure relationships and sex education (RSE) is inclusive of LGB+ people and their experiences, including in discussions around online safety.

## Adopting a whole-school approach

It is good practice to ensure that the school's commitment to an inclusive learning and working environment is celebrated and made clearly visible to staff members, pupils, parents and governors from day one. The following activities demonstrate how this might be implemented:

- All staff members and pupils need to know that developing an inclusive environment and tackling homophobic and biphobic bullying are a priority for the school's leadership team. School leaders can clearly and regularly communicate their commitment to these aims through newsletters, meetings and assemblies

- School policies on developing an inclusive and diverse environment should be clearly displayed and publicised throughout the school, including on the school's website and regularly promoted in handbooks, annual reports and induction packs for new staff members

- The school's commitment to equality and inclusion should be clearly communicated to parents and carers through newsletters, social media and other channels, with specific mention made in relation to LGB+ inclusion

- Schools should try to ensure parents and carers understand and sign up to the school's inclusion and anti-bullying policies. Letters or emails may be sent to explain the school's policies, and parents and carers may be regularly consulted through surveys, forums or meetings

- Equality and diversity policies should specifically mention LGB+ issues rather than being a broad or general statement. It may be useful to develop a detailed contract of inclusivity that everybody signs, including new staff members, parents, governors and pupils

- Job advertisements can explicitly confirm the school's commitment to LGB+ inclusion and equality.

## Working with other schools and organisations

- School leaders can develop their work by partnering with other schools and colleges who are already engaged in work to tackle homophobic and biphobic bullying and improve inclusivity, such as combining resources and sharing knowledge on LGB+ issues

- This could include working with feeder schools to ensure a consistent approach when pupils move from primary to secondary school. This may include developing joint policies with shared values, commitments and expectations of behaviour from all pupils and staff members

- School leaders may want to consider joining Stonewall's school champions programme, which offers teacher training and a network of schools that shares best practice and support.

## Training and continuing professional development

Stonewall's 2017 Education Equality Index[5] highlighted the fact that teachers lack training, noting that 90 per cent of teachers have never been trained in how to tackle homophobic or biphobic bullying. Lack of staff members' confidence and awareness can be major barriers to teaching about LGB+ issues and tackling homophobic bullying in schools.

- School leaders need to ensure all staff members receive specific training on how to identify, challenge and prevent homophobic and biphobic bullying as well as how to challenge homophobic and biphobic language

- School leaders should ensure training and continuing professional development (CPD) are available to all staff members on how to develop and maintain an active commitment to inclusivity. This may include general training on LGB+ inclusivity within the workplace or more specific training on including LGB+ issues and perspectives in an inclusive curriculum. Related training may be particularly useful for teachers of RSE

- Ensure training and CPD are available for all staff members on LGB+ issues and how to interact respectfully with LGB+ people. Ensure all staff members at every level understand the policy on confidentiality and harassment.

[5] Stonewall Education Equality Index, 2017, http://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/education_equality_index_report_2017.pdf

## Confidentiality and reporting

Confidentiality is a key issue when it comes to LGB+ staff members (and pupils). The choice to come out is a highly personal one for an individual, and it depends on a number of factors – staff members should not feel pressured in any way to come out or not come out, and they should be supported either way. Staff members and pupils should be able to raise concerns, report bullying and provide feedback anonymously if they wish.

- If staff members decide to be open with their school leader or particular co-workers, this information should not be shared any further without their consent and knowledge. Ensure all staff members are aware and the school's policies explicitly state that disclosing someone's sexual orientation or gender identity without their consent constitutes a breach of confidentiality, and it will be treated in accordance with relevant policies on harassment

- Consider implementing mechanisms by which pupils and staff members can report prejudice-based bullying and incidents anonymously. Some organisations offer purpose-built bullying reporting facilities (eg apps) that allow pupils and staff members to report incidents of bullying anonymously. Such facilities can also be implemented at little to no cost, and schools should ensure they explicitly reference homophobic and biphobic bullying

- School leaders should regularly review the effectiveness of any policy adopted with the aim of improving inclusivity. Careful records should be kept of the number of complaints made by LGB+ staff members, pupils and parents, and the outcomes of these complaints

- All bullying incidents that are motivated by a prejudice should be carefully recorded, monitored and reported. The information from such recordings can be used to target future anti-bullying interventions and amend inclusion policies and approaches

- All-staff surveys can be a useful way to gauge levels of support for policies and obtain feedback on further improvements to be made. Individuals should be able to respond anonymously to such surveys to avoid any concerns about being outed or singled out

- Low levels of complaints may suggest individuals have little faith that their complaints will be taken seriously or addressed satisfactorily. An increase in complaints can suggest workers trust the complaints process and trust that the school's leadership team will take steps to improve conditions.

## Developing an inclusive school environment

Developing an inclusive school environment will also support staff members for the reasons outlined above. There are a number of key approaches that can support or undermine this as outlined below:

| Dos and don'ts | |
|---|---|
| **Do:** ensure that the school's policies and processes are appropriate to all types of family relationships, including same-sex relationships (eg ensure forms or permission slips refer to parents and carers, rather than mothers and fathers) | **Don't:** advise or instruct school staff members not to disclose or talk about their sexuality in the workplace. LGB+ individuals should be able to talk openly about their partners or spouses just as heterosexual colleagues are able to talk about their partners or spouses |
| **Do:** make it clear that incidents of whistleblowing, and complaints or concerns raised will be taken seriously; and staff members' confidentiality will be respected | **Don't:** allow the school's firewalls and IT filters to automatically screen and block content containing words such as lesbian, gay or bisexual |
| **Do:** take a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination and harassment from both staff members and pupils. Where such incidents do occur, there should be clear disciplinary procedures in place for the person responsible and support for the victim | **Don't:** automatically assume there is malicious intent behind incidents of homophobic or biphobic bullying. There are many reasons as to why pupils (perhaps as a result of circumstances beyond their control) need support in understanding why homophobic and biphobic bullying is wrong |
| **Do:** proactively reach out to same-sex parents, and ensure all parents and carers feel able to take part in school life. For instance, through attending events or joining the PTA, parents' council or the school's governing body | **Don't:** address letters as 'sir/madam' or any other form of assignation that automatically assumes stereotypical family units. |
| **Do:** ensure that LGB+ students and children of same-sex parents feel included in their learning, and LGB+ staff members feel positively represented in lesson content and welcomed in the school environment. Primary school leaders may want to ensure books featuring same-sex families are included in the curriculum and display Stonewall's different families posters around their school | |
| **Do:** ensure the school celebrates diversity by inviting external speakers and by marking events that celebrate diversity, for instance, LGBT history month in February. Consider joining Stonewall's school champions programme, which enables members to access visits from LGBT role models who are trained to speak to pupils about celebrating different identities. | |

## Research on the experiences of LGB+ people in the workplace

In 2017, the TUC carried out an online survey of LGBT+ workers, and it found only half (51 per cent) of all respondents were 'out' to everyone at work[6]. More than one-quarter (27 per cent) of bisexual people were out to no one. The issue is likely to be even more pronounced in schools where concerns about the responses of pupils and parents – as well as the responses of colleagues, managers and governors – may deter staff members from being open about their sexual orientation with close colleagues, let alone more widely in the school.

A school that does not offer an inclusive working environment can have a serious impact on the mental health, happiness and motivation of school staff members as well as pupils. A work environment that is negative or hostile to LGB+ individuals and issues is not one in which LGB+ workers will feel encouraged to disclose their sexuality to colleagues. A 2015 study of 200 senior LGB workers in the business sector found 80 per cent of respondents felt if people are not openly themselves at work, it damaged their confidence; eighty-six per cent felt it left them isolated from their colleagues, and 86 per cent felt the fear of being 'found out' caused anxiety.

'Closeted' LGB+ individuals often have to spend a great deal of energy pretending to be someone they're not and can experience high levels of stress as a result of hiding key parts of their life or relationships from colleagues and pupils.

Stonewall's ongoing research regularly concludes that people who can be open about their identity are more likely to enjoy going to work, be productive, form honest relationships with colleagues and be more confident. In a 2016 survey of more than 90,000 staff members from across the public, private and third sector, Stonewall found LGBT people who were comfortable being completely open about their sexual orientation in work were 71 per cent more likely to be satisfied with the support they receive from their manager, 67 per cent more likely to be satisfied with their sense of achievement and 65 per cent more likely to be satisfied with their job security compared with those who are not comfortable being out to anyone[7].

## Visibility of LGB+ issues, individuals and perspectives

Stonewall's 2014 Teachers' Report found that more than 10 years on from the repeal of Section 28, 39 per cent of primary school teachers and 11 per cent of secondary school teachers reported that their school did not allow them to teach about lesbian, gay or bisexual issues. The survey also revealed high levels of uncertainty about the subject among school staff members, with 29 per cent of secondary school teachers and 37 per cent of primary school teachers reporting that they didn't know whether or not they were allowed to teach about LGB issues.

[6] Trades Union Congress, The Cost of Being Out at Work, 2017. https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/LGBTreport17.pdf
[7] Stonewall Workplace Equality Index Survey (91,248 responses), 2017

Stonewall's 2017 School Report found 40 per cent of LGBT pupils are never taught anything about LGBT issues at school, and only 20 per cent of LGBT pupils had been taught about safe sex in relation to same-sex relationships. The report also found just four per cent of LGBT pupils know of an openly bi member of staff, 27 per cent know of an openly gay member of staff and 22 per cent know of an openly lesbian member of staff.

Reluctance or anxiety around teaching LGB+ issues and a lack of visible LGB+ role models (whether in the school staff or represented throughout the curriculum) have a knock-on effect on pupils and the wider school community because it diminishes the visibility and perceived acceptance of LGB individuals.

## Further resources

- Educate and Celebrate offers a training programme 'PRIDE in Organisations' for workplaces, businesses and organisations that enables key team members to lead on LGBT+ inclusive initiatives to gain LGBT+ friendly status

- Inclusion For All provides multi-award winning positive LGBT+ inclusion training across the UK for primary and secondary schools for school staff, school leadership teams and school governors devised and led by ex-school leader, homophobia survivor, NAHT member and 'point of light' @ShaunDellenty

- Just Like Us provides resources for schools and supports secondary school visits from LGBT+ volunteers

- Unison offers a range of resources, including fact sheets on workforce monitoring for sexual orientation and gender identity, and LGB workers rights

- Galop is an LGBT+ anti-violence charity for those experiencing hate crime, sexual violence or domestic abuse

- Schools Out offers a range of resources aimed at making schools and educational institutions safe spaces for LGB&T individuals and communities

- Stonewall's train the trainer courses give staff members the knowledge, skills and confidence to train their colleagues on homophobic and biphobic bullying, and successfully implement the templates and checklists in this toolkit. Participating schools are also automatically enrolled in Stonewall's school champions programme

- Stonewall's workplace resources – a range of resources for organisations to use to support and empower LGBT staff members.

# Glossary

Different individuals prefer to use the below terms in different ways to describe their sexual orientation or gender identity. The terms that individuals use to describe themselves, their sexual orientation or their gender identity may change over time.

The below glossary provides a brief overview of some commonly used LGBT+ terms and descriptors.

**Biphobia** - the fear or dislike of someone who identifies as bisexual

**Bisexual** - an umbrella term that refers to a person who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender. The term 'bi' is also used

**Closeted** - a term used to describe a person who is not open about their sexual orientation or gender identity

**Coming out** - when a person first tells someone/others about their identity as lesbian, gay or bisexual. This can be an ongoing process rather than a one-off event

**Gay** - refers to a man who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. Also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality – some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian

**Gender stereotypes** - the ways we expect people to behave in society according to their gender or what is commonly accepted as 'normal' for someone of that gender

**Homophobia** - the fear or dislike of someone who identifies as lesbian or gay

**Homosexual** - this might be considered a more medical term used to describe someone who has an emotional romantic and/or sexual orientation towards someone of the same gender. The term 'gay' is now more generally used

**Lesbian** - refers to a woman who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women

**LGBT+** - the acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and people who define themselves as, for example, queer, asexual or pansexual

**Outed** - when a lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans person's sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed to someone else without their consent

**Pansexual** - refers to a person who has a sexual, romantic or emotional attraction towards people regardless of their sex or gender identity

**Pronoun** - words we use to refer to people's genders in conversation. For example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender-neutral language and use pronouns such as they/their

**Queer** - in the past, a derogatory term for LGBT individuals. The term has been reclaimed by some LGBT individuals who don't identify with traditional categories around gender identity and sexual orientation, but it is still viewed to be derogatory by some

**Questioning** - the process of exploring one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity

**Sexual orientation** - a person's emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to another person.

# NAHT

FOR LEADERS, FOR LEARNERS

**NAHT**

1 Heath Square  |  Boltro Road  |  Haywards Heath  |  West Sussex  |  RH16 1BL

naht.org.uk

info@naht.org.uk

0300 30 30 333

Follow us @NAHTnews

**NAHT Northern Ireland**

Carnmoney House  |  Edgewater Office Park  |  Belfast  |  BT3 9JQ

naht.org.uk/northern-ireland

nahtni@naht.org.uk

02890 776633

Follow us @NAHTNInews

**NAHT Cymru**

9 Rhodfa Columbus  |  Maes Brigantîn  |  Caerdydd  |  CF10 4BY

9 Columbus Walk  |  Brigantine Place  |  Cardiff  |  CF10 4BY

naht.org.uk/cymru

cymru@naht.org.uk

029 20484546

Follow us @CymruNAHT