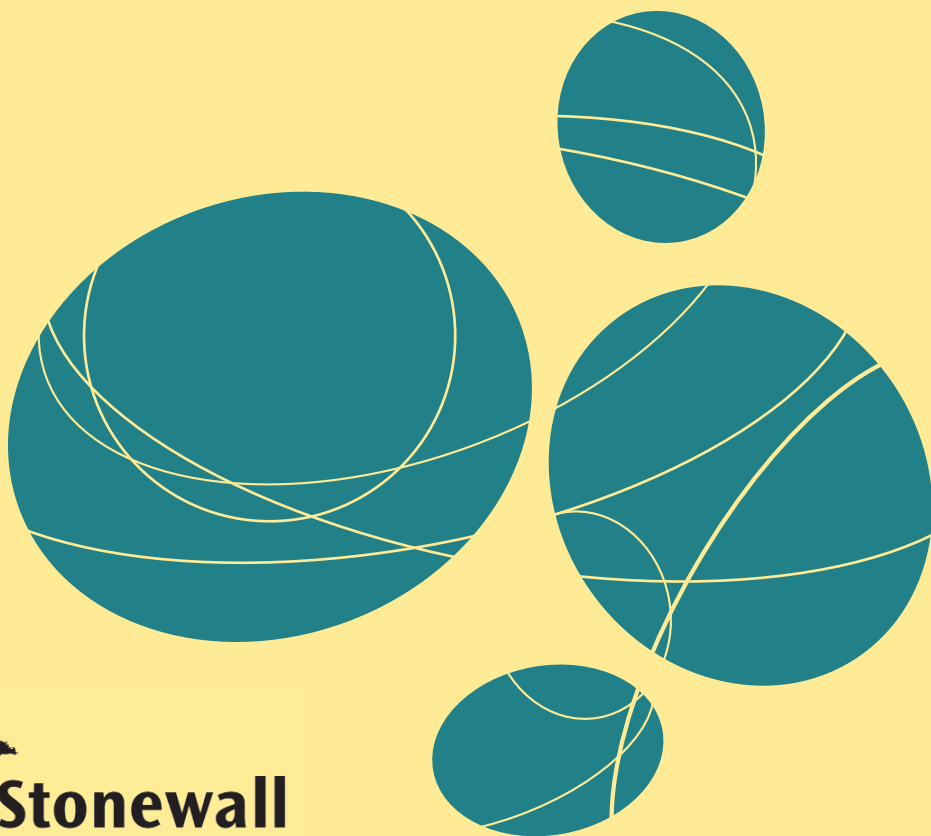


# MONITORING

How to monitor sexual orientation in the workplace



**Stonewall**  
WORKPLACE GUIDES

# MONITORING

How to monitor sexual orientation in the workplace

# FOREWORD

With government actuaries estimating that six per cent of the UK population is lesbian or gay, employers are increasingly making a public commitment to diversity and tackling discrimination in the workplace. These organisations are taking steps beyond mere compliance with the law, and are actively engaging with their gay staff. The business case for this is clear: people perform better when they can be themselves.

Every day, employers contact Stonewall to find out how they can measure their success in achieving diversity. These employers recognise that equal opportunities monitoring can play a vital role in their work to achieve race, gender and disability equality. They are keen to extend the same practices to sexual orientation equality, but are often unsure of the best approach. That's why we've produced this guide.

Sexual orientation monitoring is only possible once organisations have taken steps to create an environment that is inclusive of gay staff. In this environment, sexual orientation monitoring can provide valuable data to help shape plans and strategies to achieve an inclusive workplace, which ultimately will help your organisation's productivity and effectiveness.

We hope you find this guide useful. We're very grateful to the Stonewall Diversity Champions featured throughout the guide for giving us an invaluable insight into their own monitoring procedures.

**BEN SUMMERSKILL** Chief Executive, Stonewall

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### MONITORING

How to monitor sexual orientation in the workplace

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Stonewall Workplace Guides

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This good practice guide is the second in a series of workplace guides from Stonewall, the UK's leading lesbian and gay equality organisation.

This guide provides practical advice for employers who want to include sexual orientation in diversity monitoring processes. It demonstrates how questions on sexual orientation and discrimination can be incorporated into existing monitoring procedures across a range of Human Resources (HR) functions. It examines the organisational benefits of collecting data about the sexual orientation of employees, and how employers can use that data to understand and improve the experiences of their workforce.

The guide is based on in-depth research into organisations that monitor sexual orientation in a variety of ways. Researchers interviewed eight very different organisations, operating in a range of sectors. All eight are members of Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme.

Effective monitoring of sexual orientation can be an important tool for employers to measure performance and make improvements to the working environment, but it is not an exercise that can succeed in isolation. Monitoring should be implemented in addition to robust policies addressing inequality in the workplace, and initiatives to ensure lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) employees are treated fairly and with respect. Monitoring sexual orientation will only generate meaningful and reliable results when employees feel safe and confident in disclosing this information.

# 1 CHAPTER

## This section outlines:

- What is monitoring?
- Why monitor sexual orientation?
- The legal framework
- The benefits for organisations
- The benefits for lesbian and gay employees
- The benefits for customers and clients

## What is monitoring?

Monitoring is the collection of statistical data, through questionnaires or surveys, to measure performance and improvement. It can be done through a variety of HR functions, including recruitment, training, promotion, attitude surveys, grievances and dismissals.

Monitoring is a way of measuring change and identifying issues that affect staff. By monitoring, an employer can manage its workforce more effectively, and improve its processes to tackle problems.

## Why monitor sexual orientation?

Most organisations already collect data on the ethnicity of their employees, as well as data relating to age, gender and disability. Monitoring staff enables employers to examine the make-up of their workforce. It highlights differences between groups, such as minority groups or staff from particular teams or grades, in terms of productivity, satisfaction and progression. Monitoring sexual orientation can help an organisation identify, tackle and prevent discrimination against LGB staff, which can undermine productivity.

## The legal framework

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 do not oblige employers to monitor the sexual orientation of staff. However, employers must tackle sexual orientation discrimination in order to comply with the law. Monitoring is an effective way of identifying potential and actual incidents of discrimination. If employers can identify these kinds of incidents, they can take steps to prevent them.

In Scotland, the promotion of equal opportunities, including sexual orientation, is one of the founding principles of the Scottish Parliament. The Scotland Act 1998 makes clear that public authorities should promote equal opportunities. As a result, private and public organisations in Scotland must demonstrate their commitment to equalities, which increasingly includes workforce monitoring.

Similarly, in Wales, section 120 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 means the National Assembly must also promote equalities across all government functions. This too has had an impact on the number of organisations considering monitoring in Wales.

## The benefits for organisations

**BUILDS REPUTATION** By identifying sexual orientation discrimination through monitoring, and tackling it, an organisation can develop a reputation for valuing diversity and protecting its staff. This will have a direct impact on the perceptions of staff, customers and clients. In fact, failing to include sexual orientation in monitoring can signal to LGB staff and potential recruits that they may not be welcome.

**BOOSTS RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION** Monitoring sexual orientation enables organisations to recruit and retain the best people from the widest pool of talent, by identifying and removing barriers that LGB people may face. These barriers may include discriminatory policy or a workplace culture where homophobic banter is accepted. Thirty six per cent of LGB employees state they will change careers if discrimination against them continues.

**INCREASES PRODUCTIVITY** Using monitoring to identify and tackle sexual orientation discrimination helps staff motivation and performance. LGB employees who feel their employer has an inclusive culture feel able to be themselves at work. Staff who are able to be themselves are happier at work, and more productive.

**AVOIDS RISK** Monitoring sexual orientation can help identify discrimination within an organisation. Avoiding discrimination and actively reviewing discriminatory policies is the most effective way to comply with employment law, and avoid costly and damaging employment tribunals. Recruiting and training a replacement employee can be costly.

Sexual orientation monitoring was introduced throughout **Staffordshire Police Authority's** HR functions and included in its Employee Opinion Survey in 2001. This has fed into the organisation's diversity strategies and action plans. Over time, membership of the LGB employee network has increased and the number of out LGB officers has also risen. All officers within the force are made aware of the importance of LGB issues, in both employment and crime prevention services.

## The benefits for lesbian and gay employees

**FACILITATES COMMUNICATION** Monitoring on the basis of sexual orientation gives LGB employees an opportunity to highlight unfair practice at work, and to let their employer know what could be changed to improve their working environment.

At **Nacro**, the crime reduction charity, the annual Equality and Diversity Audit asks employees to identify their sexual orientation. It also asks employees to comment on the organisation's diversity and inclusion policies and initiatives. In the first Audit in 2000, employees established the need for an LGB employee network, which was duly set up. This has had a positive impact on staff morale, as well as the organisation's reputation and recruitment.

**ENCOURAGES ENGAGEMENT** Sexual orientation monitoring makes LGB equality visible, and helps create an environment where staff can be out if they want to be. LGB staff are more likely to be comfortable in an organisation if they are confident that their employer takes LGB equality seriously. Demonstrating a long-term commitment to equality contributes to increasing staff engagement.

**INCREASES AWARENESS** Monitoring sexual orientation at work, in conjunction with other initiatives, will normalise the idea of LGB equality in the same way that ethnic monitoring has increased awareness of race equality issues. This will reinforce all employees' understanding of – and commitment to – anti-discrimination and dignity at work policies, and will create a more inclusive working environment for all.

## The benefits for customers and clients

**IMPROVES PRODUCTS AND SERVICES** An increased awareness of LGB issues leads to better understanding of, and effective service delivery to, LGB customers. Monitoring is one way for an employer to engage with and understand LGB needs and issues.

**CUSTOMER LOYALTY** Research indicates that 74 per cent of LGB consumers and 42 per cent of straight consumers are less likely to buy products from companies that hold negative views of lesbians and gay men. LGB people are more likely to engage with organisations whose employees reflect their own identities.

**IBM's** diversity initiatives aim to create a varied workforce that will be more creative, encourage innovation, mirror the marketplace and reflect potential customers.

**Barclays** believes sexual orientation monitoring has contributed to a wider programme of work regarding LGB staff equality, and LGB equality in general. The organisation's outreach initiatives within the wider LGB community have had a positive impact on the bank's external reputation. In 2005, Barclays was voted 'top gay-friendly bank or financial institution' by readers of the Pink Paper.

### Sexual orientation monitoring requires

- An inclusive organisational culture
- Clear aims and outcomes
- Top level buy-in
- Consultation with key stakeholders
- Training and awareness raising
- Confidentiality and data protection
- Good communication

# 2

## CHAPTER

## An inclusive organisational culture

Sexual orientation monitoring is not appropriate for an organisation which has not previously engaged with LGB staff or developed initiatives to eradicate homophobia from the workplace.

### Steps to address these issues might include:

- incorporating sexual orientation in equalities policies
- training staff in diversity issues, including sexual orientation
- ensuring senior managers speak out about LGB equality
- taking steps to ensure LGB staff can report bullying and harassment
- supporting an LGB staff network

An inclusive and supportive organisational culture is essential if an LGB employee is to feel confident and safe in declaring their sexual orientation for the purposes of monitoring. One way of measuring organisational inclusion is through Stonewall's annual Workplace Equality Index.

## Clear aims and outcomes

Monitoring for the sake of it is generally unsuccessful. Before sexual orientation monitoring is introduced, it is important that employers identify why they want to ask about sexual orientation, what they want to find out and what they will do with the information.

Establishing a clear set of aims and objectives for monitoring is essential. This should feed into a business case, which will ensure top level buy-in.

**For example, monitoring can be used to find out:**

- Are LGB people applying for jobs in the organisation?
- Are LGB people represented at all levels of the organisation?
- Do LGB staff experience higher levels of absenteeism or stress than their colleagues?
- Are LGB staff more likely to leave than other employees?

**JPMorgan**, part of the global JPMorgan Chase financial services organisation, formed nine Task Forces to assess the impact of the firm's equality and diversity work through focus groups and surveys. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Task Force concluded that voluntary self-identification of sexual orientation and gender identity needed to be included in the firm's Global Employee Opinion Survey. Without this it was difficult to know about the views of LGBT employees in particular, and whether their sexual orientation or gender identity impacted on their experience in the workplace. Using the survey data to establish a baseline enables the firm to measure progress in creating an inclusive environment for LGBT employees.

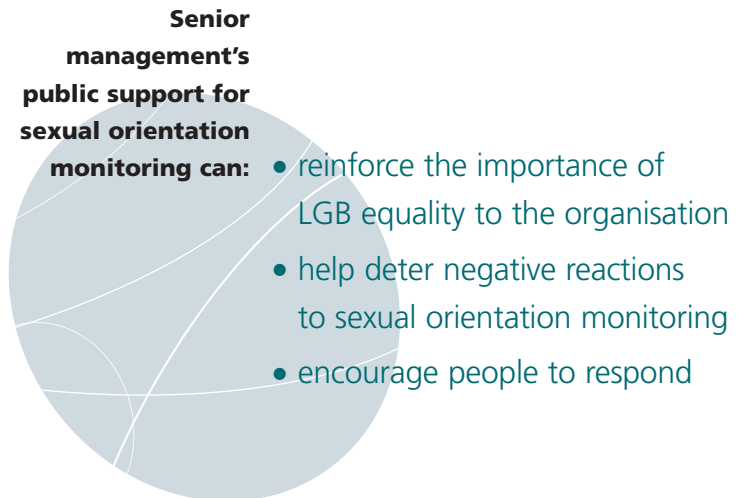
Before introducing sexual orientation monitoring, the **Home Office** LGBT employee network, Spectrum, was set up. The group developed a dialogue with the organisation, and engaged in activities such as awareness raising and community outreach. Members of the group felt the Home Office lacked official knowledge about the specific needs and experiences of LGB staff, such as potential barriers to progression or views on the organisation as an employer. Spectrum members believed they should have the choice to identify themselves as LGB in equal opportunities monitoring. Sexual orientation statistics were also required to inform policy and procedure, and to justify organisational spend on the group.

Barclays relaunched its Employee Opinion Survey in 2003, and simultaneously introduced optional questions on sexual orientation, disability and age. It did this in order to:

- pinpoint areas of concern for employees
- understand issues and barriers employees may face
- examine employee development and progress
- demonstrate a commitment to treating all employees fairly

## Top level buy-in

Sexual orientation monitoring will only work if senior staff support the initiative. A robust business case for monitoring, with clearly detailed aims, benefits and outcomes for the organisation, is an essential tool for gaining that support.



Following consultation with the LGB staff network, **Nacro's** Head of Equality Strategy gained senior support for sexual orientation monitoring by presenting the business case to the board. She explained why sexual orientation mattered at work and why it was important to understand the needs of different groups of staff members to ensure representation and to act on key concerns. She described how in the long term sexual orientation monitoring would lead to better employee relations and improved service provision.

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive at **Nottinghamshire County Council** are both official Equality Champions. A joint letter from them accompanies the organisation's Equality and Diversity Survey, encouraging staff to respond. This letter explains why the council monitors equality and diversity, describes the positive changes achieved through previous surveys and guarantees that the survey is confidential and anonymous.

**JPMorgan** experienced some objections from a minority of staff when sexual orientation was introduced into the firm's equalities monitoring and diversity agenda. In response, the CEO publicly championed diversity and inclusion, including LGB colleagues. He made it clear that while people have a right to their beliefs, hostility towards others on the basis of those beliefs will not be tolerated.

## Consultation with key stakeholders

Proper consultation ensures that sexual orientation monitoring is tailored to the needs and expectations of an organisation. It is important to gain support from key stakeholders, and to reassure LGBT stakeholders that the exercise will be valuable and confidential. These groups will play a vital role when implementing and communicating new monitoring procedures to the wider organisation.

**Consider consulting with:**

- LGBT staff and network groups
- senior management
- LGBT organisations
- trade unions or staff associations
- employers' associations

These groups will be able to offer advice on the most appropriate questions to ask, and may highlight concerns and challenges. They may also have ideas about how to publicise and gain staff support for sexual orientation monitoring.

Some organisations have learned valuable lessons from representatives of other diversity groups, including black and minority ethnic staff and people with disabilities. These groups generally have more experience of being monitored for equal opportunities, and many of the challenges they have dealt with are similar to the challenges regarding sexual orientation monitoring.

**Staffordshire Police Authority** held meetings to discuss the potential implementation of sexual orientation monitoring with its LGBT staff network, a number of its other staff networks, other forces who were already monitoring sexual orientation and trade unions. They sought advice on language, communications, training and benchmarking, and were advised that it could take three to four years to set meaningful and useful benchmarks.

## Training and awareness raising

Staff involved in the sexual orientation monitoring process will need to be trained to ensure they understand what the exercise will entail, and its purpose. Staff who already work in monitoring and research will be familiar with issues around data collection; the principles for sexual orientation monitoring are the same. Monitoring staff need to be able to articulate to colleagues why sexual orientation data is being collected, particularly if staff do not understand the issues and raise objections. This also applies to managers who are responsible for implementing monitoring within their own team.

Some organisations have added a module on sexual orientation monitoring into existing diversity training and staff inductions. This means that all staff have the chance to see a sample monitoring form, and have the reasons for monitoring explained to them.

Equalities training for all staff, which includes sexual orientation issues, can gradually familiarise the concept of LGBT equality. Organisations already monitoring sexual orientation have found that the more familiar staff are with the issues, the less likely they are to object when monitoring is introduced.

## Confidentiality and data protection

Stonewall research has found that LGBT employees' key concern about sexual orientation monitoring is confidentiality. Even when an employee can respond anonymously, care should be taken to reassure staff that the data will be treated sensitively. If LGBT employees fear that disclosing their sexual orientation for monitoring will expose them to gossip or harassment, they will not do so.

Organisations have been collecting confidential information about race, disability and gender for some time now, so it is likely that secure systems will already be in place for storing data. Usually, these systems can be replicated for the storage of information relating to sexual orientation. Some organisations have updated their IT systems to introduce self-completion for new monitoring categories, including sexual orientation, faith and disability.



**Organisations considering monitoring staff sexual orientation need to demonstrate unequivocally that the data will be totally secure.**

- Ensure and explicitly state that only a limited number of trained, and named, HR staff will have access to the data.
- If the data is not anonymous, the Data Protection Act applies. State how the information will be used, and include a tick box that enables the employee to consent to the information being used.
- If the data is published, this must be done in a way that does not identify any individual. Particular care must be taken when dealing with low numbers of respondents.

Failure to do this can result in damaged relations with LGB staff, as well as wasted resources. There are legal implications if an individual's data is misused: disclosing someone's sexual orientation to others without their consent could constitute harassment.

Two per cent of respondents voluntarily identified as LGBT in **JPMorgan's** first anonymous Global Employee Opinion Survey. The second survey was not anonymous, but was explicitly and clearly confidential. This streamlined the form, as many demographic details could be cross-referenced with existing employee records. Nearly four per cent voluntarily identified as LGBT in the second survey. This increase seems to be a result of growing trust in the firm's handling of the data, and its positive stance on equality.

In order to allay staff concerns about confidentiality, **Barclays'** Employee Opinion Survey is managed by an external consultancy. Staff are asked where they work, but for teams of less than 20 people, the data is amalgamated with data from the next staff grade level or organisational tier before any diversity analysis is reported back.

## Good communication

In addition to consulting key stakeholders on proposals to monitor sexual orientation, it is essential to communicate with the wider organisation so that everyone knows why a question on sexual orientation is being added to equal opportunities monitoring.

**Communication on sexual orientation monitoring should:**

- explain its purpose
- demonstrate the commitment of senior management
- describe what will be done with the data
- identify who will have access to the data
- give a named contact for further information
- stress the usefulness of taking part
- emphasise where positive change has happened as a result of monitoring

It is important to ensure that ongoing communications about monitoring reach staff at all levels of the organisation, including part-time staff and those who do not have access to some forms of communication, such as e-mail or a staff intranet. Staff newsletters, posters, payslips and staff briefings can help to communicate key messages to all staff.

Communications on sexual orientation monitoring should always reiterate how monitoring can help to develop a more inclusive workplace. Sexual orientation is an equalities issue; it is paramount that all staff understand and are familiar with this concept.

Stonewall research has found that good communication and education will ensure that the overall response rate to existing surveys will not be adversely affected by the inclusion of questions on sexual orientation.

**Other ways to encourage a good response**

- include:**
- sensitive timing – do not attempt to monitor during a holiday period, or during a time of redundancy
  - using managers to encourage staff participation

## 3 CHAPTER

Staff at **Nacro** receive training on equality and diversity policy and practice including sexual orientation monitoring, and information is available on the organisation's intranet. Equality and diversity issues are also covered at staff induction days and information on staff networks is given to all new staff. Articles, including some written by the Chief Executive, have appeared in the organisation's equality and diversity newsletter, covering key events and issues. A summary of the Equality and Diversity Audit findings is also communicated in the newsletter along with a review of equality work over the year.

**Staffordshire Police Authority** set up a facility on the force's intranet to enable staff to post anonymous questions about monitoring, which are answered by the Diversity Steering Group.

The **Home Office** and its LGBT network, Spectrum, have developed a series of Frequently Asked Questions on monitoring, including questions on sexual orientation, which are available to all staff on the intranet.

### To monitor sexual orientation, the following need to be considered:

- Explaining the process
- Language and questions
- Monitoring at different stages and grades
- Staff satisfaction surveys
- Equality and diversity surveys

Diversity monitoring can be conducted at various stages of an employee's career. A question on sexual orientation may be added to existing monitoring systems, such as recruitment monitoring, staff satisfaction surveys, and monitoring relating to training, grievances and exits. It is vital to establish how questions relating to sexual orientation will be explained and asked.

### Explaining the process

Most organisations' equality monitoring forms contain an explanation of why the data is being collected, and how the data will be used. To encourage response, this message must explain the reasons for monitoring and should emphasise confidentiality.

The **Home Office** Equal Opportunities Diversity Monitoring Form contains the following introduction:

*We need to carry out diversity monitoring in order to meet our statutory obligations and to make sure our HR processes are fair for all staff. Please help us do this by completing and returning the attached form.*

JPMorgan's Global Employee Opinion Survey makes the following statement to explain the collection of diversity data:  
*Feedback from employees tells us that it is important to address diversity in the broadest sense, beyond race and gender. One way to achieve this is to better understand those aspects of diversity that are not immediately obvious. With this in mind, please check off any of the following categories where you want to include your responses. Your answers are voluntary, confidential and will be used ONLY to understand and address issues that may exist in our business.*

For many, sexual orientation monitoring is a relatively new concept. Organisations may also wish to state why they are interested in the subject, and should reiterate that the information will not be misused in any way.

In its LGBT Staff Survey, the **Greater London Authority (GLA)** states:  
*Monitoring LGBT staff and job applicants will be a significant step towards acknowledging LGBT employees, and a major preliminary step for the GLA in considering many of the issues affecting LGBT people in the workplace. LGBT monitoring will also help to inform the GLA's Sexual Orientation Equality Scheme, currently under development. Essentially and quite fundamentally, LGBT monitoring will have a role in encouraging a culture of inclusion for LGBT staff within the GLA.*

## Language and questions

The language people use to reflect their identity can change between generations, and across cultures. Just as with measuring ethnicity, the monitoring of sexual orientation will never perfectly reflect the complete range of human identities. Rather, it is designed to give some idea about the issues staff experience on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Sexuality can be a personal and private issue, but it can also have very clear relevance in the workplace, particularly where discrimination, equalities policies and partner or family benefits are concerned.

The way in which the question is asked is extremely important: inappropriate language can create a further barrier for LGB inclusion and equality.

**Best practice, based on Stonewall research, suggests that the question should be phrased in the following way:**

**What is your sexual orientation?**

Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gay man	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gay woman/lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heterosexual/straight	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

As an alternative, some organisations only provide one option (Lesbian/Gay), rather than two, and then cross-reference the results with their data on gender in order to examine differences in experiences between gay men and gay women. It also acknowledges that some women identify themselves as gay rather than lesbian.

'Other' provides an opportunity for staff to identify in a different way if they do not feel the alternative categories are suitable. Some organisations include a space for staff to indicate themselves how they identify their sexual orientation.

When used in common with other categories, such as disability and race, 'Prefer not to say' enables staff to not answer at all, without leaving the whole section blank. It acknowledges an individual's right not to identify their sexual orientation. These responses should be treated separately: it is important that no inference is made about a person's sexual orientation because they have preferred not to disclose it.

Some organisations that have been monitoring for a number of years have seen a decrease in the number of 'Prefer not to say' responses, as employees see that the data is being used for positive purposes, and has not led to the identification of individuals or an increase in harassment.

Gender identity (transsexual or transgender status) is not a sexual orientation, and should not be included in the section on sexual orientation. Instead, it should have a section of its own, or be included with questions relating to gender. For further information on gender identity issues, contact Press for Change – [www.pfc.org.uk](http://www.pfc.org.uk).

In some monitoring exercises, such as staff satisfaction surveys, it is also appropriate to ask a follow-up question about how open, or out, the employee is about their sexual orientation. An employee self-identifying as LGB in a survey does not necessarily mean the workplace is free from harassment or discrimination – the employee may still have concerns about homophobia.

**A question about how out an employee is might read:**

If you are lesbian, gay or bisexual, are you open about your sexual orientation:

	Yes	Partially	No
At home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With your manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
At work generally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If a considerable number of people indicate that they are out at home but not at work, or are out to colleagues but not to their manager, this could indicate an organisational issue that needs to be addressed.

**Nottinghamshire County Council** asks staff, through an anonymous equality and diversity survey, if they are out at work. In the survey's first year, 30 per cent of LGB staff were not out at all in the workplace, 38 per cent were out selectively and 33 per cent were out completely. The next year, the number of staff who were out at work increased: 26 per cent were not out at all, 38 per cent were out selectively and 37 per cent were out completely. This demonstrates that the council's changes to policies and procedures are having a positive impact on LGB employees.

## Monitoring at different stages and grades

The fundamental purpose of workplace monitoring across all stages and grades is to provide a mechanism for evaluating whether all employees are treated fairly in the workplace.

**Monitoring can be used to analyse staff in terms of:**

- recruitment
- training
- appraisals
- promotions
- grievances
- disciplinary action
- dismissals and other ways of leaving

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 protect job applicants as well as employees. Recruitment monitoring should be anonymous, as forms are separated from applications and not handled by shortlisting panels.

Some organisations introduce recruitment monitoring as a first step. If tracked, monitoring potential staff on the grounds of sexual orientation can supply organisations with useful information:

- Do LGB people want to work for them?
- Are LGB people being shortlisted for interview?
- Are LGB people in fact being recruited?

On its recruitment monitoring form, **Staffordshire Police Authority** states:

*Staffordshire Police is an equal opportunity employer and is determined to ensure that:*

- *The workforce reflects the diverse society which it serves and that the working environment is free from any form of harassment, intimidation, bullying or victimisation.*
- *No job applicant or employee is treated more or less favourably on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, creed or religion.*

*To implement and monitor the effectiveness of its equal opportunity policy the following information is required. The information you give will NOT affect your application in any way.*

Assessing ethnicity across other HR functions is often achieved by connecting equal opportunities information with an employee.

Using confidential HR filing systems, an employee's record can be cross-referenced with their equality information. Patterns are then analysed, such as length of time in current grade, terms of employment, earnings and benefits. This can identify potential

barriers or discrimination, which can then be removed.

Including sexual orientation in employee records can only be done if staff have been assured of their employer's commitment to tackling discrimination. This is not something that can be introduced as a first step – it can only be taken following full and thorough consultation with all staff. An employer must demonstrate an explicit commitment to confidentiality, and compliance with the Data Protection Act.

**Staffordshire Police Authority** has included sexual orientation in its workforce monitoring since 2001. An electronic system is used to allow staff to update their details independently, privately and securely. Employees are asked to update the system every two years, but can amend their record at any time. The only people who have direct access to an employee's file are the employee themselves and a small number of HR personnel trained in confidentiality and diversity. Since the system was introduced, the percentage of staff identifying as LGB has increased from four per cent to nine per cent.

The **Home Office** has introduced a sexual orientation category to a number of their equal opportunities monitoring procedures. These include:

*Training:* on completing any form of internal training, employees are given a detachable equal opportunities monitoring form which can remain anonymous. If they are not comfortable submitting this to the trainer, they can complete it later and return it to a freepost address. The Home Office can therefore assess whether or not LGB staff are benefiting from training.

*Progression:* internal career progression is monitored to ensure equal opportunities. Employees complete a detachable form, which is sent back to a different address from their other paperwork, meaning no one involved in the selection procedure will see the monitoring forms. This enables the Home Office to establish whether or not LGB employees are developing their careers within the organisation.

At **IBM**, a system of 'top tracking', in addition to other methods, has been introduced. This is a list of top-level employees who have been identified as having high potential. These employees are asked to participate in equal opportunities monitoring, which includes sexual orientation. The firm can therefore establish whether LGB employees are progressing to this 'Top Talent' level, and if necessary remove any barriers preventing career success. It is also coupled with a proactive mentoring programme for all Top Talent individuals. Mentors often come from within the LGBT executive group at IBM.

## Staff satisfaction surveys

When surveys include questions relating to sexual orientation, organisations can gain a better understanding of their LGB staff, which can help equality and diversity teams to tackle causes of discrimination.

Staff satisfaction surveys provide an opportunity for organisations to evaluate staff experiences. They can find out:

- how changes in policies, practices and procedures are affecting staff
- how effectively policies and procedures have been communicated to all staff
- whether there are high or low levels of staff morale
- whether any particular group experiences a higher or lower level of morale at work

**Staffordshire Police Authority** conducts a secure online Staff Perception Survey every two years. Staff complete the survey anonymously, and the question on sexual orientation is optional. To examine the state of the working environment, and the ways in which it may impact on the performance of LGB staff, all staff are asked:

*Have you, in the last 12 months, witnessed or experienced any of the following at work, and if so did you confront or report the issue? (please cross all those boxes that are appropriate and consider only incidents between employees of Staffordshire Police.)*

*Homophobic jokes/comments:*

Witnessed  Experienced  Confronted  Reported

*If you witnessed or experienced any of the behaviours above and took no further action please indicate why (please cross all that apply).*

Advised not to proceed  Fear of reprisals   
I did not consider it to be important  Unsure of how to proceed   
Unsure of level of support from colleagues  Other

**Barclays'** Employee Opinion Survey asks staff to voluntarily – and anonymously – identify their sexual orientation. The results of this question are cross-correlated with answers to further diversity questions, enabling the firm to establish how their equalities policies are working, and identify any room for improvement. For example, employees are asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- *Management supports equality and diversity in the workplace.*
- *Most of the time it is safe to speak up in Barclays.*
- *If I were bullied or harassed I would feel happy to raise it without fear of penalty.*
- *I believe that Barclays Group Executive genuinely wants to lead the way in equality and diversity.*
- *I feel the internal recruitment and assessment process is fair.*
- *I would recommend Barclays as a good place to work.*

The views of LGB IBM staff are captured by a Global Work Life Survey, which is conducted every five years. This enables the firm to assess the impact of their initiatives designed to promote the value and inclusion of all colleagues and clients.

JPMorgan conducts a confidential Global Employee Opinion Survey every year. It includes a voluntary question on sexual orientation, recognising that in some countries voluntarily self-identifying as LGB is less accepted than in others. The survey enables the firm to find out about and respond to the experiences of their LGB employees by asking questions relating to:

- overall satisfaction with the organisation
- experiences with clients
- employees' intentions to stay in the organisation
- satisfaction with the firm's diversity and inclusion agenda
- views on promotion opportunities, supervision and communications

An employer may not have received any complaints about harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation, but this may mean that LGB people do not feel comfortable about making complaints. Anonymous staff satisfaction surveys provide an opportunity to investigate whether this is the case.

Staff satisfaction surveys can also raise awareness about organisational commitment to sexual orientation, and increase employees' confidence in support structures.

## Equality and diversity surveys

As well as conducting staff satisfaction surveys, a number of organisations carry out equality and diversity surveys, specifically to assess the effectiveness of organisations' diversity strategies.

As well as measuring positive impacts, these tailored surveys can clarify any remaining areas of disadvantage or discrimination that need to be addressed.

Nacro's annual Equality and Diversity Audit has included a question on sexual orientation since its inception in 2001. This enables the organisation to see if any specific issues faced by particular groups need to be addressed through the equality and diversity strategy. The data on LGB staff can be cross-referenced with data on bullying and harassment, as well as views on what Nacro can do to create a fairer working environment. For instance, the survey asks about the usefulness of Nacro's quarterly equalities newsletter. The survey also asks LGB staff to say whether they are out at work – and if not, why not. After five years of monitoring, the organisation has established that eight per cent of staff are LGB, of which 57 per cent are out. This is an increase from six per cent of staff identifying as LGB in 2002. Staff were not asked at this stage whether or not they were out at work.

Nottinghamshire County Council carries out an annual Equality and Diversity Survey. It asks staff to identify their sexual orientation, and to indicate how out they are in different situations at work, including during the recruitment process. The survey also asks a range of other questions relating to LGB issues and sexual orientation discrimination, including:

*In the last 12 months have you heard jokes or comments in the workplace that you consider to be... homophobic?* Yes  No

*Who were the comments made by?*

Colleagues  Managers  Customers  Consultants   
Contractors  Councillors  Others (please specify) .....

*Do you feel that you have been discriminated against in relation to your career development or progression on the basis of any of the following? Sexual orientation:* Yes  No

*Are you aware of and do you attend any of the County Council's self-managed staff groups?*

Corporate LGB group: Yes  No  Group member  Attend sometimes

*Does your manager willingly make provision for you to attend the groups listed above?*

Yes  No  Not asked to attend

*Have you felt dissuaded from attending?* Yes  No

*What, if anything, would you change about the council as a workplace in respect of equality (equal treatment) and diversity (disability, race, sexual orientation, age, gender, religion, belief)? Please describe.*

An equalities review at the Greater London Authority (GLA) in 2002 found sexual orientation to be an under-developed workplace diversity strand, and identified LGB people as a target group for equalities work. In light of the impending Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations, the organisation wanted to increase awareness of sexual orientation equality and to acknowledge the valuable contribution of LGB staff. It also wanted to demonstrate best practice, in both sexual orientation and gender identity. An LGBT Staff Survey was developed to inform work programmes and to encourage a culture of inclusion. The survey aimed to build up a profile of LGBT employees as a starting point for further planning and discussion. It specifically asked LGB staff:

*Are you out at work?*

Yes to all staff  No  Only to certain groups/staff members

*If 'yes' or 'only to certain groups/staff members' then what have your general experiences been?*

*If 'no' then what are your reasons for this?*

*Please highlight any ideas you may have about how the GLA can further acknowledge and/or deal with LGBT issues.*

Once an organisation has implemented sexual orientation monitoring, next steps include:

- Interpreting the data
- Reporting back
- Outputs
- Future sexual orientation monitoring

# 4

## CHAPTER

### Interpreting the data

Stonewall research shows that being able to demonstrate positive changes as a result of sexual orientation monitoring encourages increased response rates in future exercises. This ensures valuable information continues to be captured, and used, for future developments and benchmarking.

Expect a lower response rate to the sexual orientation question the first time it is introduced, compared with more established monitoring questions. Treat this data with caution: do not impose rapid solutions based on potentially false findings. LGB staff may be initially cautious about disclosure, but this should improve as trust in the organisation's commitment to tackling discrimination increases.

Due to the lack of national and local data on LGB populations for comparison, most organisations initially focus on evidence of experiences, progress and distribution, rather than actual numbers and targets. Government actuaries estimate six per cent of the UK population to be LGB, although this proportion will inevitably vary by location. Research suggests that an internal benchmark of an accurate number of LGB staff may be set after monitoring has been carried out for at least three to five years.

When interpreting sexual orientation data, bear in mind the following points:

- Do not assume that staff who tick 'Prefer not to say' or 'Other' are LGB.
- Information should not be given on behalf of anyone else. It is inappropriate for anyone to try and identify another person's sexual orientation.
- Make the distinction between men and women, rather than assuming that LGB people are a homogenous group – only ask 'Are you lesbian/gay' as a single question if it can be cross-referenced with a question on gender.
- Examine differences between, as well as a lack of response from, LGB people according to other aspects of their identity, such as their ethnicity, disability and age.
- Facetious responses, such as male employees ticking 'Lesbian', can happen when sexual orientation monitoring is still a novelty. Educate staff about the importance of monitoring – ensure they know why it is happening.
- Offensive remarks or the defacing of forms are an indication that homophobia is an issue in the workplace, which by law needs to be tackled. Equalities training should be undertaken.

The **Greater London Authority (GLA)** acknowledged concerns about the impact of low numbers responding to the LGBT Staff Survey: *Gaining some statistical knowledge of the approximate number of LGBT people both in employment and applying for posts is important. In doing so, there is at least a quantitative figure from which future direction and lead can be taken with respect to assessing targets for LGBT employees.*

In order to validate the results and improve the monitoring process, **Nottinghamshire County Council** follows its Equality and Diversity Survey with a series of focus groups. Respondents can indicate an interest in participating by including their details on the survey, or by sending back a separate form.

### Reporting back

Most organisations will have structures in place for internal reporting on equal opportunities monitoring. Detailed reports will generally go to management and those with an equalities remit. Summaries and main findings should be made available to all staff,

for example through intranet systems and newsletters. Organisations should aim to give feedback specifically to their LGB staff, for example through the LGB staff network.

With sexual orientation data, however, it is essential that no individuals can be identified. Detailed analysis must not be made available beyond the limited personnel who have access to the raw data. Findings from small numbers should be omitted from public reports, or be combined with other data to protect confidentiality. Exposing an individual's identity could constitute harassment, which is unlawful. It will also have repercussions in terms of organisational reputation and employee relations.

## Outputs

The purpose of monitoring sexual orientation is to be able to take action to increase workplace inclusion, which can improve the productivity of the organisation as a whole. It is important to demonstrate that responding to surveys will have positive, practical outputs.

### These might include:

- improving access to bullying and harassment reporting mechanisms, as a result of survey findings indicating that LGB staff do not feel able to report incidents
- ensuring managers support staff attendance at LGB staff network meetings, following indications that some LGB staff feel dissuaded from participating
- promoting the organisation's diversity agenda with equal reference to LGB equality and other groups, following suggestions that new recruits are not confident coming out at work
- considering participation in LGB events and advertising in the pink media to increase the number of job applications from LGB people
- removing barriers preventing LGB applicants from being shortlisted or appointed, for example by training managers or HR staff in equalities and employment law
- developing comprehensive sexual orientation equalities training for all staff, following comments that LGB issues are not relevant to the workplace

**Nottinghamshire County Council** promotes the positive changes made through its anonymous Equality and Diversity Survey:

*The results provide a benchmark for future planning and will be used to monitor whether or not we are making the improvements you need and want in your working environment. Last year, the information you provided was used to improve services to you and inform policy changes:*

- *we improved our business/equality planning to allow us to respond faster to the concerns of self-managed staff groups*
- *we started a programme of mandatory equality and diversity training for all staff*
- *we are planning to extend our mediation service for staff.*

In **Nacro's** first equality and diversity survey, staff were asked if they wanted an LGB employee network group. Response was positive and 'Pride at Nacro' was formed.

## Future sexual orientation monitoring

In the long term, the comprehensive collection of sexual orientation data will have a positive impact on business performance and the working environment. Organisations already monitoring are excited about the data they can generate to inform business plans and diversity strategies. In turn, this helps to ensure they get the most from their staff and provide the best service possible to customers and clients.

### Plans for future sexual orientation monitoring might include:

- benchmarking
- diversity impact assessments to include sexual orientation
- positive action programmes to encourage the recruitment, retention and progression of talented LGB staff (in addition to race and gender initiatives)
- programmes to develop a more diverse senior workforce
- monitoring service users
- targeted marketing and new business objectives



# TEN STEPS TO MONITORING SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN THE WORKPLACE

1

Ensure that the culture of your organisation is LGB-inclusive and that you have developed policies and practices to make homophobia and discrimination unacceptable in the workplace.

2

Establish the business case for monitoring sexual orientation. Know why you are monitoring and what you want to find out.

3

Gain the support of senior management to demonstrate to the wider workforce that sexual orientation monitoring is an essential component of the corporate equalities agenda.

4

Consult with key stakeholders, including LGB staff, to establish the best way to introduce sexual orientation to your existing monitoring procedures.

5

Develop IT systems to support the addition of sexual orientation data to existing diversity monitoring, such as recruitment monitoring and staff surveys.

6

Be clear about what the data will be used for, and how findings will be reported back. Guarantee confidentiality and compliance with the Data Protection Act, and ensure individuals cannot be identified from the findings.

7

Communicate the purpose and importance of sexual orientation monitoring to the wider workforce, especially LGB staff. Emphasise confidentiality and data protection, identifying which trained personnel will have access to the data.

8

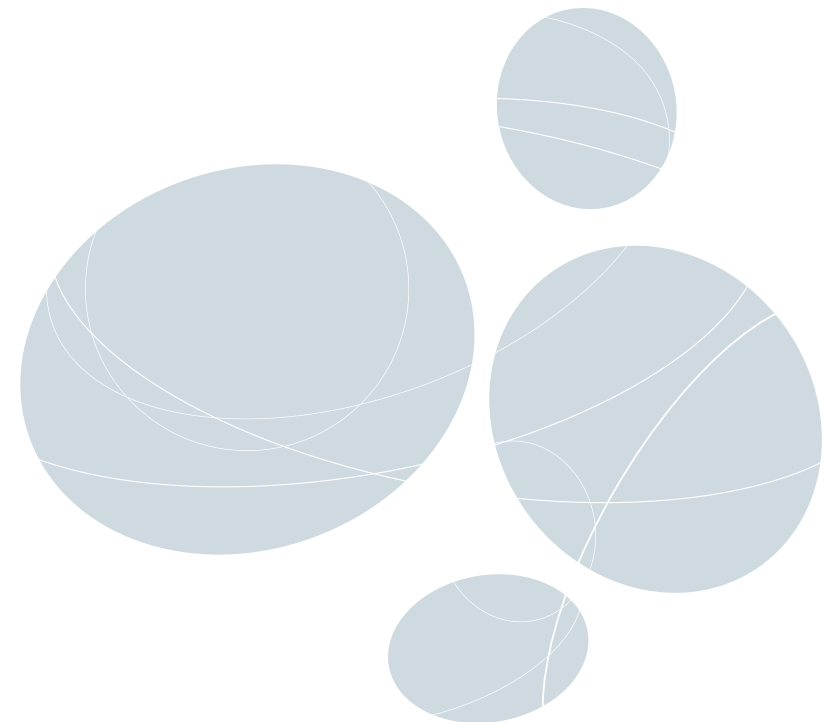
Treat preliminary data with caution. It may take up to five years for the numerical data to become reliable, as staff get used to the process and LGB staff develop the confidence to self-identify. Commit to repeating the exercise so that an internal benchmark can be established over time, to measure performance and progress.

9

Take positive action to address any issues revealed by monitoring. Make this known widely, to encourage staff participation in monitoring exercises.

10

Treat monitoring as just one part of an integrated sexual orientation equality programme. It is not a substitute for robust policy, training or workplace initiatives such as LGB staff networks.



**Thanks to the following Stonewall Diversity Champions who took part in this research:**

**Barclays:** [www.barclays.com](http://www.barclays.com)

**Greater London Authority:** [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)

**Home Office:** [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

**IBM:** [www.ibm.com](http://www.ibm.com)

**JPMorgan:** [www.jpmorganchase.com](http://www.jpmorganchase.com)

**Nacro:** [www.nacro.org.uk](http://www.nacro.org.uk)

**Nottinghamshire County Council:** [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk)

**Staffordshire Police Authority:** [www.staffordshire.police.uk](http://www.staffordshire.police.uk)

### **Stonewall Diversity Champions programme**

Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme is Britain's good practice forum on sexual orientation in which employers can work with Stonewall, and each other, to promote diversity in the workplace. [www.stonewall.org.uk/diversitychampions](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/diversitychampions)

For further information on Stonewall's workplace initiatives, including the Workplace Equality Index of the top 100 employers in the UK for gay people, the recruitment guide *Starting Out* and the Stonewall Leadership Programme, go to [www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace)

Also in this series of **Workplace Guides:**

Network Groups: Setting up networks for lesbian, gay and bisexual employees.

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