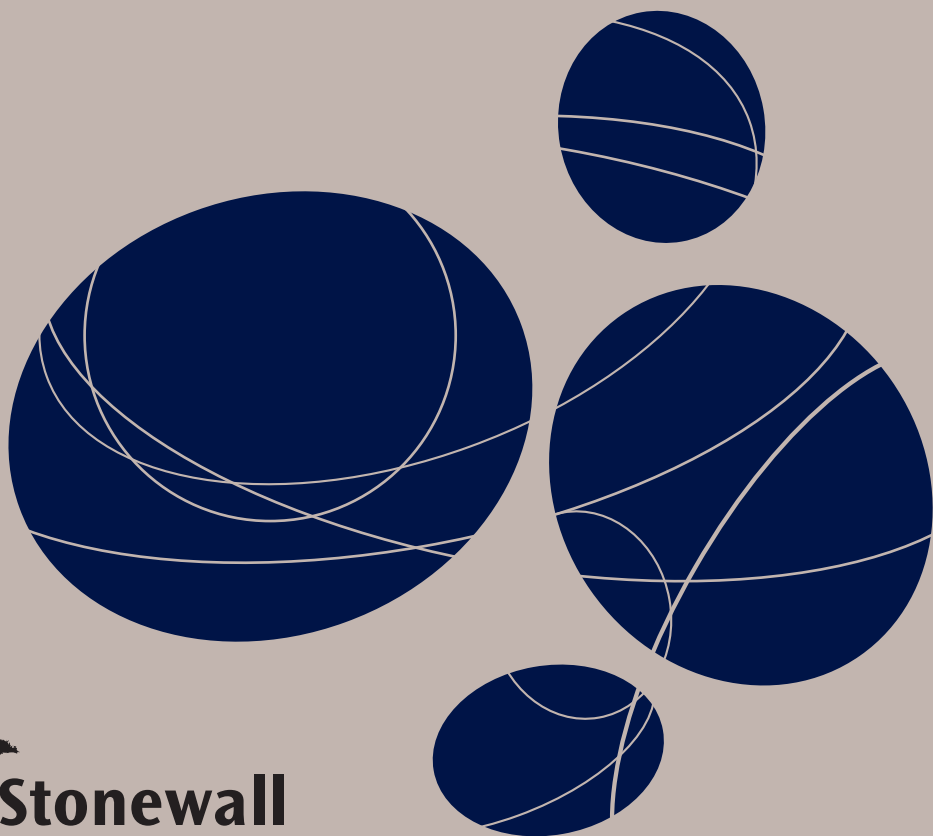


BISEXUAL PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE

Practical advice for employers



Stonewall
WORKPLACE GUIDES

BISEXUAL PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE

Practical advice for employers

by Brent Chamberlain

Interviews and focus groups conducted

by Professor Gill Valentine



Supported by



FOREWORD

Stonewall knows that people perform better when they can be themselves and it is with this aim that we have been working with the 500 members of Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme. It is clear however, that despite many great strides that have been made to achieve sexual orientation equality in workplaces across Britain, many bisexual men and women still feel unable to be themselves at work.

This guide, the first of its kind to capture the experiences of bisexual employees, shows that the discrimination they often face can prevent them achieving their full

potential at work. These experiences are often quite distinct from those of their lesbian and gay colleagues. Too often stereotypical assumptions and beliefs about bisexual people and their lives, from both straight and gay people, mean that they feel unable to access the very initiatives that are meant to support them.

In their efforts to make their workplaces safer and more equal for their employees, some employers have assumed that the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual people are identical. The most advanced employers Stonewall works with however recognise that to get the most out of every one of their staff they need to take account of the many different backgrounds and experiences they may have.

Contained in this guide are key recommendations and suggestions, many offered by bisexual employees themselves, on how to make work environments better for bisexual people. Stonewall is grateful to the many bisexual men and women, and Diversity Champion members whose insights on how to improve workplaces across Britain were shared with us.

Ben Summerskill Chief Executive, Stonewall

Contents

| | | |
|----------|---|----|
| | Introduction | 1 |
| 1 | Key issues for bisexual staff | 2 |
| 2 | Developing effective policy and procedures | 10 |
| 3 | Engaging bisexual employees | 14 |
| 4 | Evaluating success and continuing progress | 18 |
| | Ten steps to support bisexual workplace inclusion | 20 |

This good practice guide is the sixth in a series from Stonewall, Britain's lesbian, gay and bisexual charity.

It provides a practical resource for organisations that want to know more about the issues bisexual people face in the workplace and want to include bisexual employees in their diversity initiatives. The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 define bisexuality as a sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex and of the opposite sex. The guide is based on research and interviews commissioned by Stonewall into the experience of bisexual men and women from a range of sectors who are employed by over 500 major employers that are part of Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme – Britain's employers' forum on sexual orientation.

The guide includes a summary of the findings. It details the experiences and main issues faced by bisexual employees in large organisations and offers suggestions about what bisexual employees would like to see from their employers. It also offers advice on how to develop good practice in this area.

This section explores key issues experienced by bisexual staff. Participants discussed their experiences, perceptions and expectations about the impact that their sexual orientation might have on them at work. They suggested that these issues should be taken into consideration when an organisation is developing policies around bisexual inclusion.

A lack of awareness

Over the past 10 years, workplaces across the country have made significant progress implementing robust policies and initiatives to make lesbian and gay members of staff feel included and supported. This has led to an increased awareness by heterosexual colleagues of gay and lesbian issues at work and what it means to be gay at work.

A lack of understanding and knowledge of bisexuality, however, has often resulted in bisexual people remaining largely invisible. Participants thought that most of their colleagues assumed that if someone is not heterosexual they must be gay and that if someone is not gay they must be heterosexual.

I think the lesbian and gay community has made tremendous strides of progress over the last several years. Of course there's a long way to go, but I would say that the bisexual community is many years behind where the lesbian and gay community is.

Nathan, private sector

Bisexuality is something that you can still poke fun at, partly because people don't think it's as serious as homosexuality.

Sian, public sector

I think there is a lot of ignorance around being bisexual and when you talk about it, people think you're talking about your sexual practice rather than your orientation.

Morgan, public sector

Participants felt that low levels of awareness about bisexuality put bisexual people under pressure from their colleagues. Bisexual staff are, they felt, subjected to assumptions that they may find demeaning or inappropriate.

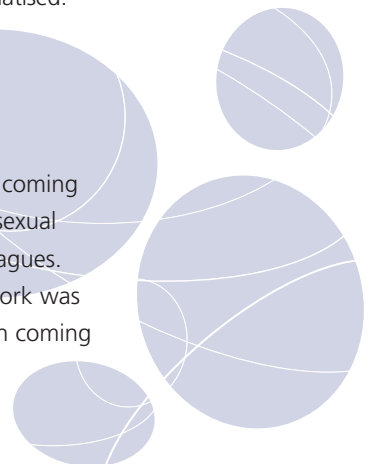
There tend to be questions about every aspect of bisexuality, so you just get bored with the constant questions, because people now know what gay is, but questions, questions, questions. *Marcos, public sector*

I attended a recent social event and one of the men came up and said, 'what's it like to be a lesbian?' I said 'I don't know, go and ask one'. *Keira, public sector*

Participants felt therefore that the lack of awareness in the workplace around bisexuality made them feel marginalised and stigmatised.

Coming out and being out

Participants had a range of experiences when it came to coming out. First, many felt that inaccurate stereotypes about bisexual people discouraged them from coming out to their colleagues. Second, others felt that their ability to perform well at work was affected by negative reactions from their colleagues upon coming out as bisexual.



It's so hard for bisexual people to either not be out and try to hide our lives from the world, or instead to be out and constantly be questioned and asked to justify and to tell our stories and be told that we're wrong and we can't be the way we are. It's stressful no matter what you do. You're stuck between a rock and a hard place. *Niamh, private sector*

I'm not sure if I'm out to my line manager. I've tried to be out to her, and I don't think she understands. I don't think she's quite got it, but she doesn't want to ask because she doesn't want to step over any personal boundaries. She knows I'm involved in the LGB network, and from that she can probably deduce that I'm LGB. She knows I have a husband, so that kind of rules out the L, my gender kind of rules out G, so what's left? *Niamh, private sector*

There are people on my team who, whilst they haven't expressed any homophobic views, they've expressed some views that I would consider slightly narrow-minded. So I don't feel comfortable dropping it in. But it is difficult because it's part of my life and part of the relationships I have and part of the things I choose to do. So by choosing to conceal it I do find that when someone says 'oh how was your weekend?' there are whole chunks that I can't share with them. Which is my choice but it does make it feel like I'm sort of putting a barrier between getting to know my colleagues a bit better. *Sian, public sector*

As a bi woman in a same-sex relationship, I have the same issues with homophobia as I did when I identified as a lesbian – possibly more than I did as a single lesbian – and now I have to deal with these kind of attitudes to bisexuality as well. It's not helpful, it's not progressive, and it certainly contributes to my closetedness at work. *Natalie, private sector*

Participants agreed that upon coming out, personal questions, disbelief and arguments were commonplace.

From lesbian and gay colleagues I've been told 'you're indecisive' or 'you are really gay and you just aren't brave enough to be gay' or 'you're really straight and you're just a little bit curious'. I find that quite offensive because I know who I find attractive in the same way that anybody else does and I don't want to be told that's not correct.

Morgan, public sector

When I felt comfortable identifying as a lesbian I felt very much that was my stance and I could just go in and say that and be really confident about it. But now that I've changed the way I see myself, I've no longer got that confidence. I don't know if that's because it's a relatively new identity or if it's because it wouldn't be as well received. I mean people do tend to be a lot more flippant about bisexuality. More throwaway comments like 'oh you're greedy', 'you can't choose', 'oh it's just a phase' which you don't seem to get as much if you're gay. *Sian, public sector*

There was an agreement that in certain situations it was simply easier to either tell people or let them assume you are either gay or straight.

When I explain myself to people I say I'm gay, because it's easier. It's not so much that people seem to be more biased against bisexual people, it's just to avoid all the ignorant questions that you get. People get very confused... you're greedy or, aren't you really gay and you're just afraid to tell us? Which is ridiculous since I'm quite happy to be openly gay if that was the case. *Antoine, public sector*

It's probably easier to come out with the comment of being gay because bisexual gets too many questions.

Marcos, public sector

There was also the perception that bisexual men and women in senior positions are more likely to hide their sexual orientation because of the damage it may do to their careers.

Some of our executive management are openly out and are lesbian or gay. No bisexuals at the top yet... Lots of people do hide behind the lesbian and the gay label, some even straight as well, with very, very private lives. *James, public sector*

The participants revealed many reasons why bisexual men and women may face difficulties when coming out to their colleagues. Importantly, the research highlighted that faced with these challenges, some participants chose to hide their sexual orientation at work instead while others let their colleagues assume they were gay, lesbian or straight.

Experiences of discrimination

Bisexual men and women, like any other minority group, may be subject to discrimination. Overall, participants said that prejudice and stereotypes of bisexuality extended into the workplace and colleagues often portrayed them as untrustworthy, indecisive or troublemakers at work.

People are thinking you're tricky and complicated and hard to pin down – that you will always be trying to evade getting things set in an organised way; that you will always be a little bit off to one side or another. *Ewan, public sector*

I think there is an assumption that you are not sure what you are or want and that you need help. I was told to consider counselling and therapy and was told by my supervisor that I 'obviously had issues with my mother'. I did not see this happening to my colleagues who identified as lesbian, gay or heterosexual. *Irina, public sector*

Other participants argued that these attitudes stem from the fact that bisexual people cannot be pigeon-holed or put into a category – which makes people unsure of them.

It's very threatening for people – this undecidability. There's that hole we don't fit into – one box or another.

Chloe, public sector

The stereotypes that surround bisexuality result in bisexual employees being labelled by colleagues as being uncertain, indecisive and even unstable by colleagues.

Despite the perception of shared experiences between minority groups, participants felt that some gay men and lesbians, and some staff from faith backgrounds, were still likely to discriminate against bisexual employees.

Some people of faith who accept gay and lesbian colleagues, disapprove of bisexuals, perceiving them to have a choice to express 'their straight side' and suppress 'their gay side'.

Lucia, public sector

If I was to take a guy to a straight function I think it would be perfectly acceptable but if I took a girlfriend to a gay function I'd get laughed out of the room. *Marcos, public sector*

Whereas many staff can turn to their staff networks for advice on how to counteract discrimination, many participants felt that lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) staff groups could do more to support bisexual staff.

Even in this forum people are making assumptions and as you are a woman they assume you're a lesbian. So support is very thin on the ground and even gay men and lesbians discriminate – with some force on occasion in my experience.

Irina, public sector

Prejudicial attitudes and discrimination strongly affect the experiences of bisexual men and women at work. Many – fearing discrimination – do not come out at work. For those who do, many feel that being bisexual damages their relationships with colleagues and their career.

Lack of employer support

Some participants said they felt invisible in the workplace and want employers to develop policies and strategies to combat anti-bisexual attitudes and behaviour and better support bisexual employees. For example, whereas many organisations endeavour to start and maintain LGB network groups for LGB staff, participants told us that more work is needed by employers on bisexual forums.

There doesn't seem to be a forum where people can feel safe to talk about their lives or self. I find the bisexual people I do know never talk about their lives at home or relationships as openly as a gay or straight person would. *Mark, public sector*

There's basically no support for bisexuals at all. The gays and the lesbians socialise separately in the support network as far as I know. That's something that they are trying to address at the moment but I've not heard any mention of bisexuality at all. *Rhys, public sector*

One of the biggest challenges is finding if there are other bisexuals out there. I think that's probably one of the challenges within our organisation... it seems to me that the gays and lesbians relate with each other really well. I don't have a lot of practical experience in meeting other professionals who are bisexuals and understanding how well we can relate to one another... it would be nice to have a specific bisexual party or bisexual night or social gathering or something like that – something that would encourage people who identify as bisexual to come out. *Nathan, private sector*

There was also an agreement that equality and diversity initiatives aimed at sexual orientation could do more to support bisexual employees.

The Equality and Diversity Department feel their work is all about employees with same-sex partners, and can't understand that sexuality can be fluid, even when your

identity seems fixed. They can assume life is simple if you have an opposite-sex partner, and that bisexuality is only a transient identity. *Thomas, public sector*

Bisexuality is almost invisible in any training or discussions, all the time. It always has been. There's not much information unless a staff support network has a bi rep. There's generally nothing. Nothing in the newsletter that's relevant, on events or anything else. *Antoine, public sector*

The participants also expressed disappointment about the lack of visible bisexual role models.

If I were able to see someone in management and they were out as bisexual, I'd think that was amazing and that would make me more comfortable when someone made some remark about my sexuality. I could be like well actually this is what the situation is. *Sian, public sector*

Last, participants told us that not being aware of other bisexual employees in the workplace caused them to worry that they may be particularly singled out when disclosing their sexual orientation in monitoring exercises.

The distrust is not just of the system... it's the history of those types of monitoring forms, it's about what people who've really been marginalised maybe have come to feel over the years. Like in what ways, who's counting and why? I'm happy to send this information off into some place where I can be relatively assured that it's anonymous. But who really knows and do I want to take the chance? Given my experiences in this organisation would I feel secure? *Chloe, public sector*

There was agreement from the participants that organisations need to do more to engage and support bisexual employees. Events which raise awareness around bisexuality and allow bisexual employees to network with each other and promote visibility were cited as examples of what organisations could do better.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

- In this chapter:**
- Developing an inclusive sexual orientation strategy
 - Effective bullying and harassment policies and procedures
 - Updating benefits and staff policies
 - Consulting bisexual staff

2 CHAPTER

Developing an inclusive sexual orientation strategy

Employment law, passed in 2003, protected all employees against discrimination based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation. Stonewall encourages organisations to update their policies and develop single equality schemes or specific sexual orientation strategies to ensure LGB employees are protected in the workplace. However, in some cases bisexual staff have told us they feel policies which nominally claim to be lesbian, gay and bisexual inclusive, in practice do not cover bisexual workplace issues. Some tips for ensuring sexual orientation strategies and policies are inclusive are:

- Sexual orientation schemes or single equality schemes should include references to bisexual inclusion with mention of the unique issues bisexual people face in the workplace
- While recognising the value of using 'gay' as shorthand to help simplify communications, when writing policy and strategies the full 'lesbian, gay and bisexual' (LGB) should be used. Using 'gay' as shorthand for LGB in a sexual orientation strategy can give bisexual staff the impression that the policy or procedure does not apply to them
- Sexual orientation strategies should make reference to any bisexual-specific initiatives or programmes that workplaces develop

- Staff benefit policies should highlight that they are available to employees in both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships
- When possible, bisexual staff should be consulted when relevant policy is reviewed

Manchester City Council's Equal Opportunities in Employment policy contains a paragraph on why bisexual men and women may face unique issues in the workplace. It states, *'The Council recognises that bisexual people may be the target of specific discrimination and that their experiences often differ from those of lesbians and gay men. The Council recognises that fear of discrimination is the major factor which forces bisexual people to conceal their sexuality and to present themselves as heterosexual, lesbian or gay depending on the situation'*.

Effective bullying and harassment policies and procedures

Most organisations already have a policy or procedure for addressing homophobia and homophobic comments. However, since participants felt that their colleagues were unaware that their behaviour was perceived as discriminatory, it is advisable for organisations to develop specific policies around tackling anti-bisexual behaviour. They should use inclusive examples around what discrimination against bisexual people may look like.

Examples of anti-bisexual bullying and harassment include:

- Making derogatory or insulting comments about bisexuality
- Using religious belief to justify negative treatment of bisexual staff
- Asking a bisexual colleague intrusive questions about their private life
- Making assumptions that because someone is bisexual they will be less able to perform well in their role
- Ignoring or excluding a colleague from activities, including lesbian and gay events, because they are bisexual



To encourage reporting of bullying and harassment among bisexual men and women, many of whom told us that they are not out with colleagues, confidential reporting mechanisms are advisable. This is particularly true as some may not feel comfortable identifying themselves as bisexual to either their line managers or bullying and harassment advisors.

Updating benefits and staff policies

Benefits and staff policies should apply uniformly to both opposite-sex and same-sex partners. They should not assume that someone who was married or in a same-sex relationship before cannot now be in the other type of arrangement and it is important to audit policies and benefits to ensure this. When promoting these policies, all staff regardless of sexual orientation should be made aware of them. If same-sex specific elements are only promoted to gay and lesbian staff, many bisexual staff may remain unaware of how the organisation's policies and benefits apply to them.

Making your communications inclusive:

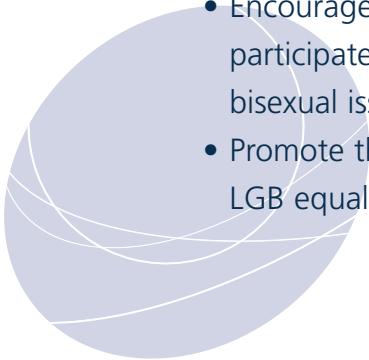
- Promote policies and benefits that apply to 'opposite-sex and same-sex partners'
- Ensure that staff with responsibilities for staff benefits and policies are aware that:
 - *All organisational policies and benefits extend to both same-sex and opposite-sex partners*
 - *Assumptions should not be made about the inquirer's sexual orientation based on their current relationship*
 - *Understand the need for confidentiality in relation to nominated beneficiaries of policies*

Consulting bisexual staff

Participants in the research suggested that they felt organisations that claim to have consulted with LGB staff on sexual orientation issues in the workplace have rarely consulted bisexual staff. When reviewing sexual orientation policies, organisations should consult with bisexual employees, as there may be issues which affect them that they wish to raise. This can be accomplished either through focus groups or via a network group with bisexual representation.

How can bisexual staff contribute to the diversity agenda?

- Assist with policy development
- Review the organisation's policies and benefits for appropriateness of language
- Assess the organisation's marketing literature for appropriate bisexual visibility
- Encourage the organisation to sponsor and participate in LGB events that include bisexual issues
- Promote the organisation as a leader in LGB equality



3 CHAPTER

- In this chapter:**
- Creating inclusive employee networks
 - Widening bisexual awareness
 - Supporting bisexual staff

Creating inclusive employee networks

Network groups are a key way for employers to engage lesbian, gay and bisexual staff and promote equality in the workplace. Many participants felt that the majority of organisations who have LGBT networks do very little to encourage bisexual staff members to participate in the group. Many participants told us that they felt LGBT networks primarily catered for lesbians and gay men and that bisexual issues were not on the group's agenda.

Bisexual staff can be encouraged to participate in networks by:

- Nominating a bisexual officer responsible for advising the network on current issues and responsible for bisexual inclusion
- Holding an awareness raising event with a guest speaker from the bisexual community
- Planning an event around bisexual workplace issues open to all staff and publicising it throughout the organisation
- Developing an electronic network and idea sharing system to encourage participation from bisexual staff who feel uncomfortable attending meetings
- Ensuring bisexual members are represented on steering groups and committees, therefore encouraging bisexual colleagues to become role models and advocates

- Ensuring the network has a well-publicised confidentiality policy
- Holding both 'open' and 'closed' meetings allowing bisexual staff to come to open events without having to disclose their sexual orientation
- Offering to meet potential members of the network for coffee half an hour before meetings to introduce them to the network and make them feel comfortable

The Home Office LGBT Network, Spectrum, includes several strand-specific representatives. This includes a bisexual rep who is responsible for promoting bisexual inclusion within the network. Spectrum also produces posters with contact details of the bisexual rep encouraging bisexual employees and other interested parties to get in contact. Several other public bodies including the Environment Agency and the umbrella group Civil Service Rainbow Alliance (CSRA) follow a similar model.

Widening bisexual awareness

Making LGB employee networks inclusive is only one way to engage with bisexual employees. Participants indicated that they would like their employers to promote bisexuality in the workplace beyond networks particularly because some individuals did not feel comfortable joining network groups for LGB staff. To do this, employers should endeavour to raise awareness of all staff on issues that affect bisexuals. Using already established means of promoting diversity and communicating inclusive workplaces, employers can encourage bisexual engagement.

Organisations that have an appointed diversity or lead champion for sexual orientation should ensure that bisexual issues are being appropriately raised within the diversity group, the executive board and throughout the entire organisation.

As part of their work to strengthen ties with the bisexual community, **Sussex Police's** champion for LGB issues attended a bisexual community event in Brighton. This served to ensure that any concerns the bisexual community had could be answered by a senior police officer and to raise awareness of bisexual issues within the organisation, particularly at senior levels.

Effective bisexual engagement may include:

- Inviting a guest speaker on bisexual awareness to an event as part of your diversity week
- Examining your training package to ensure bisexual inclusion. In more advanced training packages consider including a scenario exercise dispelling myths around bisexuality
- Making use of posters and notice boards. This may include encouraging underrepresented groups like lesbians and bisexual men and women to attend network group meetings
- Including information on bisexuality and promoting your bi-inclusive policies during induction events
- Putting information on the company intranet or internet pages within existing diversity pages. Information can include definitions, fact sheets, useful external links and FAQs
- Ensuring that internal and external communications on sexual orientation use inclusive language

The Rainbow Network supports the **Ministry of Justice** to develop good practice on sexual orientation and gender identity within the organisation. As part of this work it runs a catalogue of events, available for all staff, including a workshop on bisexual awareness. It includes discussion on the accuracy of stereotypes that surround bisexuality and the impact of biphobia.

National Offender Management Service (NOMS) network for LGBT staff members, GALIPS, aims to promote awareness and good practice in sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace. In their newsletter, *Respect*, they profiled their chair who used this opportunity to promote bisexual awareness and dispel myths. NOMS' training package on sexual orientation also includes awareness information on bisexuality.

Supporting bisexual staff

Some bisexual staff perceive that both lesbian and gay and straight staff are allocated more resources and support in the workplace. They also feel that because many bisexual people are not out at work they are unable to access training and development initiatives. Employers should ensure that generic career development opportunities are promoted to bisexual staff through the staff network and internal

communications. At the same time bespoke work should be done on increasing support to marginalised bisexual staff.

These might include:

Mentoring

Many organisations make facilities available that allow lesbian and gay employees to request a lesbian or gay mentor within the central mentoring scheme. Organisations should consider expanding this to allow bisexual mentors and mentees to be identified. If no bisexual mentors come forward, organisations should consider forming inter-organisational mentoring programmes. Inclusive LGB network groups are a good way to promote the LGB elements of mentoring schemes and can be a useful way of encouraging uptake among bisexual employees.

Career development

Some participants felt that being bisexual limited their career development opportunities and made it more difficult to form meaningful relationships with their colleagues. Organisations should proactively encourage bisexual staff to apply to personal and professional development courses and monitoring take-up of these activities to confirm that bisexual staff are securing places.

Tailored career advice and support is another proactive way to combat this perception and encourage bisexual employees to take up career development opportunities. Career advisors and anyone else in a position to offer career advice and support such as line managers and counsellors should be aware of the issues bisexual people face in the workplace.

Role models

The lack of visible bisexual role models was one of the major issues that participants felt was important to change in the workplace. Having openly bisexual staff at senior levels of an organisation sends a clear message throughout the organisation that being bisexual is not a barrier to career development. For various reasons including fear of discrimination, there are very few openly bisexual senior men and women who can be considered as potential role models. Therefore, organisations should continue to tailor career development initiatives to bisexual staff and encourage bisexual staff to become role models.

EVALUATING SUCCESS AND CONTINUING PROGRESS

4 CHAPTER

- In this chapter:**
- Monitor career development
 - Promote confidentiality
 - Break down monitoring data by sexual orientation
 - Feed back results to management and staff
 - Consult with bisexual staff on workplace issues

To ensure the continued success of bisexual inclusion, and to develop innovative good practice, organisations should develop robust feedback mechanisms by monitoring sexual orientation and regularly consulting bisexual staff on workplace issues.

MONITOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT:

Organisations should break down monitoring data to see if bisexual staff members are taking up career and personal development courses. If fewer bisexual staff members are taking up these opportunities than lesbians and gay men or heterosexual employees, organisations should promote them specifically to bisexual staff and consider different communication strategies.

PROMOTE CONFIDENTIALITY:

Some participants told us that they were reluctant to fill in sexual orientation monitoring forms because they thought if they indicated they were bisexual, this would be identified by their colleagues. All monitoring processes should be kept strictly confidential. Organisations should promote this and also stress that monitoring sexual orientation can help to identify particular issues that affect bisexual staff and help organisations address these issues. Over time this will increase the amount of people who declare their sexual orientation on monitoring forms.

BREAK DOWN MONITORING DATA BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

Participants indicated that bisexual staff members may have different perceptions of workplace satisfaction. Stonewall encourages organisations to break down sexual orientation data by lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual responses to identify trends. Some organisations that have done so have found that bisexual staff members report lower rates of staff satisfaction across numerous areas of their working lives.

FEED BACK RESULTS TO MANAGEMENT AND STAFF:

Alongside promoting confidentiality it's important to disseminate information gathered by monitoring exercises. Specific trends and issues affecting bisexual staff should be highlighted to the executive board, line managers and to all staff. This will not only raise awareness of bisexual workplace issues but also demonstrate the organisation's commitment to bisexual equality.


CONSULT WITH BISEXUAL STAFF ON WORKPLACE ISSUES:

Organisations who monitor sexual orientation and have found that bisexual staff members report low staff satisfaction should explore these trends in more detail. It might be helpful to hold focus groups or other consultative meetings with bisexual staff to find out what issues are affecting them. Consultative exercises such as focus groups should also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of career development initiatives intended to boost bisexual inclusion.

In 2008 Lloyds TSB conducted a Group-wide diversity survey which focussed on sexual orientation issues. It revealed that their bisexual staff were amongst the least satisfied groups in the organisation. Focus groups were then held with bisexual staff to probe the complex issues facing this staff group and a number of initiatives were put in place, including the introduction of an email consultation list of bi staff. Following the merger with HBOS, **Lloyds Banking Group** is now using the research findings to build a more inclusive strategy for the whole Group. For example, the LGB network now has a bisexual representative on the steering group, the website reflects bisexual issues and support, and the all-staff survey can now be analysed by different sexual orientations, rather than by reporting on the LGB population as one homogenous group.

TEN STEPS TO SUPPORT BISEXUAL WORKPLACE INCLUSION

- 1** **Promote** awareness of bisexuality in the workplace. For example, when holding a diversity awareness event, consider incorporating a theme around bisexual issues. It's also helpful to include information about bisexuality and bisexual support groups on the organisation's internet or intranet pages.
- 2** **Acknowledge** that lack of inclusion of bisexual staff may be an issue. Bisexual staff may be hesitant to come forward with grievances or concerns. Some organisations which have examined their monitoring data in more detail have found that bisexual staff have lower than average satisfaction rates and they therefore develop policies to ensure bisexual employees are targeted by diversity initiatives.
- 3** **Ensure** policies are stated clearly. Make reference to the issues bisexual people face in the workplace and your organisation's commitment to tackling these issues in your sexual orientation scheme or action plan if you have one.
- 4** **Amend** bullying and harassment policies to include examples of what anti-bisexual comments and behaviour look like.
- 5** **Nominate** a bisexual representative or liaison officer for your LGB employee network if you haven't already. If no one comes forward then arrange for a speaker on bisexual workplace issues to speak to the group. Promote anonymous mailing lists and support mechanisms for those who do not feel comfortable joining an LGB group.



6 **Highlight** bisexuality during induction and general diversity training. This could involve using a case study where someone assumes that because someone is in a same-sex relationship they are either a gay man or a lesbian.

7 **Understand** the issues that affect bisexual employees in the workplace. Make sure staff who deal with complaints and counselling are well informed on particular issues that affect bisexual people.

8 **Monitor** bisexuality. When analysing data, look at responses from bisexual employees and see if they differ from both heterosexual and gay and lesbian employees. Promote confidential reporting systems to ensure you gather reliable data on the representation of bisexual people across the organisation.

9 **Sponsor** bisexual staff to attend external events and provide funding. This could include community events or the Stonewall Leadership Programme.

10 **Encourage** bisexual men and women to come out in your workplace. Visible role models promote awareness and can provide support and guidance.

Also in this series of Workplace Guides:

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

Monitoring: How to monitor sexual orientation in the workplace

Bullying: Preventing the bullying and harassment of gay employees

Career Development: How to support your lesbian and gay employees

Religion and Sexual Orientation: How to manage relations in the workplace

Stonewall Diversity Champions programme

Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme is Britain's good practice forum on sexual orientation through which employers can work with Stonewall, and each other, to promote diversity in the workplace. www.stonewall.org.uk/dcs

For further information on Stonewall's workplace programmes, including the Workplace Equality Index of the Top 100 Employers in Britain for gay people, the *Starting Out* Recruitment Guide and the Stonewall Leadership Programme, go to www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace

Stonewall

workplace@stonewall.org.uk

www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace

Charity No 1101255

Stonewall Workplace Guides

© Stonewall: 2009

Designed by Lucy Ward





Supported by


Home Office

BISEXUAL PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE



Stonewall

www.stonewall.org.uk