

10

steps to

LGBT*

inclusive

COMMUNICATIONS



Stonewall
SCOTLAND

* lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

1

Use inclusive language in all communications

“Partner”, “parent” and “child” are a good starting point (see our neutral language guide on the back of this leaflet for advice on inclusive language).

2

Use visual cues

If you are a member of a Stonewall Scotland programme make sure you use the logo. Stonewall is the best known LGBT organisation in the UK and this instantly sends a strong message that your organisation is committed to LGBT equality. Other useful visual cues can include using same-sex couples in imagery and using the rainbow flag.

3

Include relevant links on your website

For example, links to LGBT information, support and advocacy organisations such as Stonewall Scotland.

4

Check your “search” function

Make sure that the search function on your website includes links to relevant equality information. If “gay” produces no search results this instantly suggests that your organisation might not have considered LGBT people’s needs in their policies and service delivery. You should also double check that your firewall does not block words such as “bisexual” and “lesbian” which would prevent legitimate communications on sexual orientation issues.

5

Include LGBT news across your everyday communications

Include information about LGBT events or groups in your mainstream communications – for example if you have a stall at Pride include this in your staff magazine, your website and advertise it on social media. This will send a powerful message that LGBT inclusion is not just a tick box exercise but a central part of your organisation’s values.

6

Be consistent

This should not be a one-off exercise – make sure that from now on all of your communications use inclusive language and send positive messages about LGBT people.

7

Make use of your senior buy-in

If a senior figure within your organisation is supportive of your LGBT equality work, try to get a quote or statement from them that you can publicise both internally or externally. Any sceptics will be put off making homophobic remarks if they know that they will not be tolerated by senior management.

8

Celebrate success

Do you have a senior member of staff who is openly LGB or T? Has someone in your network group recently won an award or been successful in a particular project? Profiling these people will send a positive message that your organisation is one which values all staff and service users regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

9

Make sure your public spaces are inclusive environments

Make sure that your equality and diversity policies are visible and that staff are confident implementing them. Make sure you also have LGBT friendly posters, leaflets and information readily available. Stonewall Scotland can provide relevant materials – please email info@stonewallscotland.org.uk

10

Make sure frontline staff are trained!

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

Neutral Language Guide

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

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

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

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

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

