
SECURING SENIOR BUY-IN

A TOOLKIT FOR
ENGAGING SENIOR
LEADERS IN LGBT
INCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

Active, knowledgeable and visible senior leaders are key to achieving LGBT-inclusive workplaces. Whether you're an LGBT member of staff, network group chair or Diversity and Inclusion lead, this guide will equip you to make the case for, and effectively support, senior champions for LGBT equality in your organisation.

WHY ARE SENIOR CHAMPIONS IMPORTANT?

CULTURE SETTING – senior champions play a crucial role in setting an example of the behaviours and cultures that should exist in your organisation. Senior champions who are active advocates of LGBT equality demonstrate to all employees that inclusion is central to your organisation's way of working and must be embedded in all practices.

VISIBILITY – whether they're LGBT or not, senior champions have a powerful opportunity to raise the profile of LGBT inclusion. Internally, visible senior support gives LGBT colleagues confidence to be themselves at work and encourages non-LGBT colleagues to take inclusion seriously. Externally, this visible support sends an equally important message to customers, clients, service users, potential employees and wider communities that LGBT people are welcome and valued at your organisation.

DECISION MAKING – senior champions are often best placed to approve important initiatives and influence their senior colleagues' decisions. Whether that's signing off a suitable budget for your LGBT network group or approving gender-neutral facilities in your offices, their support is vital.

RECOGNITION – senior champions can use their platform to celebrate the work of your LGBT network group. Stonewall's 2018 Employee Feedback Survey found that while 82% of LGBT employees knew their organisation had an LGBT network group, only 48% had taken part in a network activity in the last year. Not only will your senior champions' active recognition raise the profile of the network group across all levels of your organisation, but it will ensure that managers allow LGBT employees to fully participate.

RECRUITING A SENIOR CHAMPION

While it's important that all senior leaders are supportive of LGBT inclusion, having a dedicated person in senior management who's formally recognised as a champion for LGBT issues is crucial for achieving meaningful change. Some organisations call these champions 'senior sponsors' or 'executive sponsors', recognising their role as the LGBT employee network group's main channel to senior management.

IDENTIFYING WHO TO APPROACH

When thinking about who to engage as a senior champion it's important to consider:

- Are any senior leaders already engaged in equality and diversity? Is it part of someone's role?
- Which senior leaders have a large sphere of influence internally? How visible are they across the organisation?
- Which senior leaders have external visibility and influence, in the communities you serve, in your sector and across your supply chains?
- Which senior leaders will be willing to listen and learn?
- Do any senior leaders have a personal reason to get involved, or a story to share?

You should also consider whether you need formal support from more than one senior champion. This might be particularly important if you're a large organisation with a dispersed workforce, perhaps requiring visible senior support in different nations and regions.

Senior champions can be LGBT or non-LGBT allies. Visible LGBT senior champions can be powerful role models for more junior LGBT employees, demonstrating that their identity won't be a barrier to progression at your organisation. They might also be able to share their personal experiences to make an authentic case for inclusion to their senior colleagues and employees more widely. On the other hand, non-LGBT senior champions send a clear message that LGBT inclusion is the responsibility of everyone at your organisation, not just LGBT employees. Some organisations choose to have LGBT and non-LGBT senior champions who take on different responsibilities.

PUTTING FORWARD A BUSINESS CASE

A business case is vital for demonstrating to senior leaders that their formal support is needed in your organisation. Business cases should be backed up by evidence and explore the tangible impact their work can have. They should be tailored to your type of organisation, as well as the priorities of the senior leaders you're making the case to. The following examples can be used as templates to help build your own.

THE WELLBEING BUSINESS CASE

Stonewall's **LGBT in Britain – Work Report** (2018) found that almost one in five LGBT employees (18 per cent) have been the target of negative comments or conduct from work colleagues in the last year because they're LGBT. This includes being the target of derogatory remarks, experiencing bullying and abuse, and being outed without consent. This rises to a third of trans people (33 per cent) and one in four LGBT disabled people (26 per cent).

Nearly one in five lesbian, gay and bi people (18 per cent) aren't open with anyone at work about their sexual orientation. Almost two in five bi people (38 per cent) aren't out to anyone at work about their sexual orientation. This includes half of bi men (49 per cent), followed by a third of bi women (34 per cent), compared to seven per cent of gay men and four per cent of lesbians. One in four trans people (26 per cent) aren't open with anyone at work about being trans. This number increases to almost two in five non-binary people (37 per cent) who aren't out at work.

More than a third of LGBT people (35 per cent) have hidden or disguised that they are LGBT at work in the last year because they were afraid of discrimination. This rises to half of trans people (51 per cent). It's also higher among younger workers aged 18 to 24 (58 per cent), LGBT disabled people (43 per cent), and black, Asian and minority ethnic LGBT people (42 per cent).

These statistics demonstrate that many LGBT people still feel unable to be themselves at work. Editing their lives with colleagues can be exhausting and leads to values being compromised and relationships being undermined.

Senior leaders play a key role in setting the culture of an organisation. You can role model a zero-tolerance approach to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in the workplace, and actively celebrate LGBT identities. You can demonstrate to all employees that inclusion is central to your way of working and must be embedded in all practices.

This will help ensure that your LGBT employees feel able to be themselves at work. When LGBT people feel able to be themselves, they have increased energy, better performance and better relationships.

As a Diversity Champion, Stonewall can provide you with specific statistics from employees in your sector here. For more information about joining the programme, visit: www.stonewall.org.uk/dc

Specific examples of your LGBT employees' experiences are particularly powerful to include here – LGBT focus groups can be helpful for collecting anonymous testimonies.

THE PRODUCTIVITY AND INNOVATION BUSINESS CASE

People perform better when they can be themselves. In [Stonewall's Employee Feedback Questionnaire 2017](#), LGBT respondents who agreed they could be themselves in the workplace were more than twice as likely to be satisfied with their sense of achievement compared to those who disagreed (84 per cent compared to 38 per cent). [Open for Business](#) (2015) supports this link between LGBT inclusion and individual performance. It found that employees in LGBT-inclusive environments have greater job commitment, higher levels of satisfaction and improved workplace relationships. All of this has an overall impact on the productivity of an organisation.

[Open for Business](#) (2015) also found that LGBT diversity and inclusion leads to greater innovation and collaboration. Employees from different backgrounds bring varying perspectives to business problems and solutions, resulting in greater creativity and better decisions. Collaboration is improved because of greater trust, communication, understanding and awareness.

As a senior leader, you're in a key position to foster LGBT diversity and inclusion across the organisation. Your support will help get teams on board with our initiatives and embed an inclusive culture across the organisation.

THE EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT BUSINESS CASE

LGBT people can be hesitant accessing services, for many different reasons. They may have negative perceptions of particular sectors or may have experienced discrimination when accessing a service previously. For example, Stonewall's LGBT in Britain – Hate Crime and Discrimination (2017) report found that one in seven (14 per cent) LGBT people had experienced discrimination because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity when in a shop or department store in the last year.

Sending a message that we're committed to LGBT equality will help service users/customers feel confident and comfortable accessing our services/buying our products. As a senior leader, you have a powerful platform to reach many LGBT people with this message.

This external visibility could have a significant impact in several ways:

- It could encourage LGBT people to access our services/products without fear of discrimination and reassure them that their needs will be considered.
- It could encourage loyalty to our service and build respect for our brand.
- It could generate growth by reaching service users/customers who don't yet access our service/products.
- It could encourage LGBT people and their allies to consider working for us, helping us to recruit from a more diverse talent pool.

Where possible, use research that's specific to the service or product that your organisation delivers here – [Stonewall's research](#) is a good place to start.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?

When making your case, consider the personal opportunities for the senior leader alongside the benefits for your organisation as a whole. Personal benefits for them might include:

- Professional development, for example through leading on inclusion strategies and speaking externally
- Increasing their profile in your organisation and the sector
- Demonstrating that they're an inclusive leader and are committed to the core values of your organisation
- Making a meaningful difference to workplace culture and wider communities

TESTIMONIES FROM SENIOR CHAMPIONS

"I believe that supportive organisations which encourage people to be themselves will get the best results. For an industrial technology company like Rolls-Royce this is essential because diversity of thinking brings innovation. As an ally I actively encourage diversity in all its forms."

- WARRICK MATTHEWS, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT – CONTROL SYSTEMS, ROLLS-ROYCE

"I think it is really important for me to be visible, to show that it is possible to be a chief executive and gay. By being the senior sponsor, I am sending a clear message that our Trust is an environment in which LGBT people can thrive at work rather than one in which they will be marginalised and side-lined in their career. We know that LGBT people will leave a job because the environment is not inclusive, and we know that they will stay in a job specifically because the environment is inclusive. At University Hospitals Birmingham we want a diverse workforce and to retain our talent."

- DAME JULIE MOORE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS BIRMINGHAM NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

"To my mind it is a duty to use any influence you have to galvanise institutional change. If you have a voice and you care deeply about fighting discrimination and furthering LGBT confidence in the workplace, you should shout as loud as you can and throw caution to the wind. The main challenge at first was nervousness around what others within the firm would think about my involvement in the work we do in this area. It turns out this was a personal misconception – I have the full support of the people whose opinions matter to me and I've realised negative perceptions are irrelevant."

- NARIND SINGH, PARTNER, CLIFFORD CHANCE

"I see the impact of our initiatives in our recruitment process. I speak to all our new entrants about our commitment to LGBT equality and many have come forward and stated that they were encouraged to join our organisation because of our public commitment to inclusion. I have also seen an increase in the number of staff who have come out in the last few years, and who have been willing to take on a visible role as an LGBT ambassador or as a member of one of our sheriffdom equality networks."

- RUTH MCQUAID, PROCURATOR FISCAL, LOCAL COURT, WEST SCOTLAND, CROWN OFFICE AND PROCURATOR FISCAL SERVICE

"My role has helped me develop, strengthening my influencing, presentation and inter-personal skills. I am a natural introvert and don't actively seek the limelight, but being visible as an out LGBT leader has helped me address this by giving me confidence to take on additional responsibilities and actively seek out opportunities to represent Barclays internally and externally."

- BARRIE CAIRNS, VICE PRESIDENT, CHIEF CONTROLS OFFICE, BARCLAYS

RESPONDING TO COMMON CONCERNS

While many senior leaders will be receptive to your business case, some may have concerns relating to time, cost and visibility. Below are some common concerns you might encounter and good ways to approach responding to them.

“We have a limited budget, this will cost too much”

- Return to your business case – what are the long-term benefits for your organisation in terms of employee productivity, innovation and wellbeing?
- Propose an action plan for first year and draft a budget for it – can your senior champion prioritise free and low-cost actions at first?

“I don’t have time to focus on LGBT inclusion.”

- Keep your initial asks small and simple.
- Propose an action plan for the first year, calculating the amount of time you’re asking them to commit to.
- If they’re still concerned, suggest recruiting another senior champion so responsibilities can be shared.

“We have strong equality policies – isn’t everything fine for our LGBT employees?”

- Query how they know LGBT equality has been achieved – does the organisation monitor the retention, progression and satisfaction of LGBT employees?
- Hold a focus group for current LGBT employees – anonymously present accounts of their experiences to the senior leader.
- Utilise research to demonstrate that LGBT inclusion requires much more than good policies – Stonewall’s [**LGBT in Britain – Work Report**](#) (2018) is a great place to start.

“I don’t know enough to step up as a champion.”

- Reassure them that they’re not expected to know everything and that you’re approaching them because of their inclusive approach and willingness to learn.
- Sign-post them to accessible, introductory reading on LGBT issues.
- Develop a basic plan for how you will support their learning in the first year, including a reading list and possible events for them to attend.

SUPPORTING YOUR SENIOR CHAMPION

Once your senior champion is on board, the next step is to effectively support them to advance LGBT equality in your organisation.

UPSKILLING YOUR SENIOR CHAMPION

Your senior leader will act as a voice of the LGBT employees at the most senior levels of your organisation and may advocate for LGBT equality externally. It's important that they feel confident to speak accurately and authentically about LGBT issues. There are many simple ways you can educate and upskill your senior leader:

- Provide them with relevant articles and publications – [Stonewall's research](#) is a good place to start.
- Invite them to your LGBT network group events to hear about the lived experiences of your employees.
- Share the positive and negative experiences of your LGBT employees, collected anonymously through your network group or employee surveys.
- Invite them to sector-specific events on LGBT inclusion, such as seminars run by your sector's network.
- Approach other senior champions in your sector or region to ask if they'd be willing to informally mentor your senior champion and share some of their learning.

Remember that at first your senior champion's knowledge of LGBT issues may be limited and they may make mistakes. It's important to acknowledge this and facilitate open conversations where they're able to ask questions and learn.

STONEWALL'S LGBT LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

Stonewall's two-day LGBT leadership programme empowers senior LGBT professionals to become more visible and inclusive leaders, creating positive environments that harness the potential of diversity. The programme explores how participants' LGBT identity has impacted their leadership journey and their ability to drive positive change. It expands their professional network of senior LGBT leaders, enabling future collaboration, learning and support.

For more information about offering this opportunity to your LGBT senior champions, visit www.stonewall.org.uk/leadership-programme or contact: empowerment@stonewall.org.uk

WHAT CAN YOUR SENIOR CHAMPION DO?

There's a wide range of things your senior champion can do internally and externally to support LGBT equality. It's important to clearly set out the activities you'd like your senior champion to undertake, as well as their potential time and resource implications. Carefully consider what you'd like your senior champion to achieve when deciding on their tasks – perhaps your priority is a change in formal policies, an organisation-wide campaign to increase awareness of LGBT issues, or to create a more inclusive service for your LGBT customers.

Alongside this toolkit, Stonewall has produced a guide for senior leaders themselves: **Standing up for LGBT inclusion: a guide for senior champions**. The guide contains lots of ideas for senior champions to take away and bring to life in your organisation. Share this with your senior champion to introduce them to this area of work and some of the key actions they can take. The best organisations formalise this planning process and create an action plan for the year.



TEMPLATE JOB DESCRIPTION

Job descriptions are a helpful way to formalise the role of your senior champions and to communicate their responsibilities to the wider organisation. They should clearly set out a senior leader's level of responsibility, as well as the time they're expected to commit to the role. Use the template below to help structure a job description for your organisation.

LGBT SENIOR CHAMPION – JOB DESCRIPTION

- An overview of senior champions at your organisation, particularly how they relate to your organisational values and equality and diversity strategy
- An overview of how senior champions are expected to work with your LGBT network group and equality and diversity team
- An overview of the behaviours senior champions are expected to role model as inclusive leaders

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ROLE:

- A list of their key internal responsibilities, for example:
 - How are they expected to work with your LGBT network group?
 - What role are they expected to take at LGBT-related events?
 - How are they expected to work with senior management and the board on LGBT issues?
 - Do they have responsibility for approving LGBT inclusion strategies and budgets?
- A list of their external responsibilities, for example:
 - Are they expected to speak externally on LGBT issues?
 - Are they expected to attend LGBT events and conferences in your region or sector?
- An estimated amount of time they're expected to commit to this work each month

UNDERSTANDING AND REPRESENTING ALL LGBT COMMUNITIES

The experiences of people within the LGBT community vary significantly. Often, trans and bi communities are particularly underrepresented in workplace initiatives, despite very different experiences of discrimination.

LGBT people, like everyone else, also have many parts to their identity – for example they may be of faith, disabled or a person of colour. The experiences of LGBT people can vary significantly because of these multiple identities. For example, Stonewall's **LGBT in Britain Work Report** (2018) found that 10 per cent of black, Asian and minority ethnic LGBT staff had been physically attacked by colleagues or customers in the last year because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, compared to three per cent of white LGBT staff.

It's important for your senior champions to learn about the nuances of LGBT experiences and explicitly represent diverse groups when advocating for LGBT inclusion at your organisation.

MAXIMISING IMPACT

Once your senior champion has taken their first steps, you can begin to formalise structures that ensure senior buy-in is systematic, sustainable and has the maximum possible impact.

RECRUITING MULTIPLE SENIOR CHAMPIONS

Over time, it shouldn't be the responsibility of just one senior leader to champion LGBT inclusion at your organisation. Having multiple senior champions increases the diversity of support across different areas and regions, ensuring change is systematic. It also helps ensure change is sustainable – experience and knowledge is retained even when a senior champion leaves your organisation.

You should carefully consider your senior champion model, ensuring that the people in post are best placed and equipped to support the changes you want to see. Common models include:

- Regional senior champions – particularly effective if your employees are geographically dispersed.
- Rotating senior champions – allowing each person to bring insights from their work with other diversity strands.
- Formal mentoring between senior champions – more experienced champions sharing their knowledge with newer champions.

REVERSE MENTORING

Reverse mentoring schemes allow senior leaders to hear directly from LGBT employees about their lived experiences of the workplace in one-to-one meetings. They're most effective when formalised and reaching leaders other than your senior champion. This can be a great way to encourage them to step up more formally as champions for LGBT inclusion.

It should never solely be LGBT employees' responsibility to educate senior leaders, so this should be planned with your network group, communicated carefully and accompanied by broader training.

SENIOR CHAMPION APPRAISALS

Formal and periodic appraisals are an effective way to review the work of your senior champion, in partnership with them. Appraisals provide an opportunity to revisit the action plan created at the start of the year and review the impact of that work. They're also an opportunity to celebrate successes and identify ways your senior champion can build on their support.

UTILISING EXTERNAL SUPPORT

There are many external opportunities to further upskill your senior champion and extend their impact. Encourage them to join regional networks, attend seminars in your sector and take part in national conferences. This will help them to build a network of senior champions and learn from others about best practice. It will also help them to understand the collective challenges in your sector or region and collaborate with other leaders to create change.

MORE FROM STONEWALL

DIVERSITY CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME

Diversity Champions is Britain's leading programme for ensuring all LGBT people are accepted without exception in the workplace. Join today and receive expert guidance on how to create an equal environment for LGBT staff and service users. We'll review your policies, give you access to networking with over 700 organisations, and support you every step of the way.

For more information about joining the programme, visit: www.stonewall.org.uk/dc

LGBT LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMES

Stonewall's flagship empowerment programme builds an understanding of how participants' LGBT identity has impacted their leadership journey and their ability to drive positive change. In a uniquely supportive environment, participants explore what it means to be an authentic and inclusive leader and how harnessing this potential benefits individuals, workplaces and communities.

For more information about offering this opportunity to your LGBT senior champions, visit www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace-conferences or contact: empowerment@stonewall.org.uk

FURTHER RESOURCES

Stonewall produces a range of best-practice guides and research to help you create inclusive and accepting environments for your staff and service users. For the full range of resources, visit: www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace-resources

ALLIES PROGRAMMES

Stonewall's allies programme empowers non-LGBT individuals from all levels of an organisation to be active LGBT allies. It equips them with the confidence, knowledge and skills to create inclusive cultures and positively impact the lives of LGBT people.

We also deliver trans-specific allies programmes, empowering LGB and non-LGBT individuals to bring about positive change in their workplaces and communities for trans and non-binary people.

For more information about our in-house and open programmes, contact: www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace-conferences

WORKPLACE CONFERENCES

Held annually in Cardiff, Edinburgh, Manchester and London, Stonewall workplace conferences are Britain's leading events on LGBT workplace inclusion. Experts bring our guides to life and help you adapt them for your organisation. Sessions cover a range of topics including service delivery, working with limited resources and supporting trans staff and service users.

For more information, visit: www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace-conferences