

LGBT+ Allies

Their importance in creating an LGBT+ friendly workplace and patient environment



What do we mean by Ally?

Straight allies play a critical role in creating an inclusive workplace. Their involvement, often precisely because they are not LGBT+ can have a transformative effect on the workplace experience of LGBT+ staff and the services we offer to patients.

An ally is a term used to describe heterosexual people who believe that lesbian, gay and bisexual people should experience full equality in the workplace. Allies recognise that people perform better if they can be themselves and use their role within the Trust to create a culture where this can happen. Whilst we have a number of senior allies within the Trust colleagues can be just as valuable. Allies recognise that it's not just the responsibility of LGBT+ people to create a workplace culture that is inclusive of everyone. Actions taken can range from being a leader who puts 'we are inclusive' at the heart of their role to being a member of staff who challenges homophobic 'banter' amongst colleagues.

Why are allies important?

Every LGBT+ person has to make a conscious decision about whether they will be open about their sexual orientation whether at work or when they receive treatment within our Healthcare settings. However, it's not simply a case of coming out once, if you think about it LGBT+ people have to decide to come out every time they meet new colleagues, clients, supplier, stakeholders, and our patients when they are talking about their health needs, providing their next of kin details, introducing visitors to our doctors, nurses and health care professionals .



LGBT+ people who do not feel able to be out at work or when they are receiving treatment often expend significant amounts of energy on avoiding being outed. Many feel they need to avoid anything that may reveal aspects of their personal life at work. This can have an obvious effect on performance, confidence and motivation, it can also affect their health and wellbeing.

Not being able to engage with others honestly about who they are can have an effect those relationships. A persons decision to come out is a personal one but where this is their preference its made easier if LGBT+ people believe their managers, colleagues and clients, healthcare professionals will support them.

Andy Pike - Deputy Directorate Manager

“I became an LGBT ally because I’m proud to work for a Trust which celebrates diversity and difference. I appreciate that many people will face completely different challenges to me in their lives, particularly in terms of prejudice and discrimination, so I wanted to play a proactive part in tackling this and showing that this should be inexcusable to everyone in our society. I’m hoping that I can be a visible and accessible source of support



What we know 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual'

- We know that many lesbian, gay and bisexual people still have negative experiences because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and feel unable to be out at work. National research shows;
 - A quarter (24 per cent) of patient-facing staff have heard colleagues make negative remarks about lesbian, gay or bi people and one in five (20 per cent) of patient-facing staff have heard similar disparaging remarks about trans people
 - A quarter (26 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bi staff say they have personally experienced bullying or poor treatment from colleagues in the last five years as a result of their sexual orientation
 - One in eight (13 per cent) lesbian, gay and bi employees would not feel confident reporting homophobic bullying in their workplace
 - A quarter (26 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bi workers are not at all open to colleagues about their sexual orientation



What we know 'Trans'

We know that many trans people still have negative experiences because of their sexual orientation/gender identity and expression and feel unable to be out at work. National research shows;

- Nearly half (48 per cent) of trans people under 26 said they had attempted suicide, and 30 per cent said they had done so in the past year, while 59 per cent said they had at least considered doing so
- Almost one in 10 (nine per cent) health and social care staff are aware of colleagues experiencing discrimination or poor treatment because they are trans
- Nearly half (42 per cent) of trans people are not living permanently in their preferred gender role stated they are prevented from doing so because they fear it might threaten their employment status
- Over 10 per cent of trans people experienced being verbally abused and six per cent were physically assaulted at work. As a consequence of harassment and bullying, a quarter of trans people will feel obliged to change their jobs

Helga Charters – Associate Director of Nursing

"I am very proud to have become an LGBT Ally within an organisation that embraces Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. I'm very keen to work more closely with young people of the LGBT+ community, gaining knowledge and understanding of the very real challenges they face.

Increased understanding will enable health care professionals to build trusting relations and develop and implement better ways of working together to overcome those challenges".



But what about patients...

A report by Stonewall LGBT in Britain Health Report (2018), uncovered the challenges many LGBT+ people face when accessing wider healthcare services.

- One in seven LGBT people (14 per cent) have avoided treatment for fear of discrimination because they're LGBT.
- One in five LGBT people (19 per cent) aren't out to any healthcare professional about their sexual orientation when seeking general medical care. This number rises to 40 per cent of bi men and 29 per cent of bi women
- Half of trans people (48 per cent) and more than a third of non-binary people (36 per cent) have experienced inappropriate curiosity from Healthcare professionals;
- One in ten LGBT people (10 per cent) have been outed without their consent by healthcare staff in front of other staff or patients.
- One in eight LGBT people (13 per cent) have experienced some form of unequal treatment from healthcare staff because they're LGBT.
- Almost one in four LGBT people (23 per cent) have witnessed discriminatory or negative remarks against LGBT people by healthcare staff, including 20 per cent of trans people.



Stepping up as an Ally?

Allies are people who actively stand up for LGBT equality even if they're not LGBT themselves, they have the power to transform workplace culture for the better.

As a Trust we actively recognise the value of allies for staff and patients, with over 5000 staff signed up to the rainbow badge initiative. It's important to recognise that allies can also be from the LGBT community. It's a community that is hugely diverse in experiences and identities. Stonewall's recent LGBT in Britain research found that discrimination based on ethnicity, faith, disability, bi identity and trans identity is still particularly common. Everyone has a responsibility to step up for each other.

By 'stepping up' we will continue to create a more inclusive, understanding environment for all in the LGBT community.

Claire Pinder – Directorate Manager

"I feel passionate about creating an inclusive, diverse community; I worked closely with the LGBT community in previous roles and became acutely aware how LGBT people can find NHS services difficult to access. I have seen how someone, afraid to disclose their sexuality to numerous healthcare professionals has significantly (and irreversibly) impacted on their own health.

I hope to lead by example and model positive behaviours as well as challenge negative attitudes. I also hope to be an ally to LGBT colleagues who feel they need support or support straight colleagues who have questions about different identities".

Senior LGBT+ Allies @ Newcastle Hospitals

Sir John Burn	Chairman
Dr Andy Welch	Medical Director /Deputy Chief Executive
Martin Wilson	Chief Operating Officer
Caroline Docking	Assistant Chief Executive
Helga Charters	Associate Director of Nursing
Dr Lucia Pareja-Celbrian	Director of Infection Prevention and Control
Claire Pinder	Directorate Manager
Ewan Dick	Directorate Manager
Andrew Pike	Directorate Manager
Odeth Richardson	Head Occupational Therapist

