DELIVERING LGBT-INCLUSIVE DIGITAL SERVICES

Appointment booking, feedback and complaints, online banking, online shopping, service information and social media

Stonewall
Acceptance without exception

This briefing is part of a series examining the barriers LGBT people face when accessing specific types of services and the actions your organisation can take to remove these barriers. Use this briefing together with the **Service Delivery Toolkit**, Stonewall's step-by-step guide for delivering LGBT-inclusive services.

While using this briefing, you may want to refer to Stonewall's **glossary of terms**.

DELIVERING LGBT-INCLUSIVE DIGITAL SERVICES

Appointment booking, feedback and complaints, online banking, online shopping, service information and social media.

Digital platforms and systems are often the first contact a customer or service user has with an organisation. Whether they're using a website, sign-up form or making a purchase, digital services can make or break an LGBT person's experience of your service. By ensuring they're fully inclusive, you'll help LGBT customers and service users know you value them and encourage their loyalty to your service.

COMMON BARRIERS FOR LGBT CUSTOMERS AND SERVICE USERS

LGBT people can experience a wide range of issues when accessing different kinds of services and products. Common barriers for LGBT people in digital services include:

Non-inclusive options for title, gender and marital status when signing up to a service or buying a product.

Unclear processes for customers and service users who are transitioning and want to change their details on systems.

Gendered greetings such as 'sir/madam' or being misgendered in an email.

Incorrect assumptions about customers and service users, for example about their partner's gender in email and live chat services.

Non-inclusive service information on websites, including gendered language and images where LGBT customers don't see themselves represented.

Service websites and social media not providing reassurance that LGBT customers and service users will be free from discrimination and have their specific needs met.

To fully understand the barriers that your LGBT customers and service users face accessing your digital services, you should carry out in-depth monitoring and consultation exercises. For more information on assessing whether LGBT people are accessing your products or services and how satisfied they are, see step 2 of the **Service Delivery Toolkit**.

STONEWALL RESEARCH

Stonewall's *LGBT in Britain* research found that LGBT people still experience profound levels of discrimination and poor treatment when accessing businesses and services. These experiences extended to shops, cafés, banks, gyms and public services, as well as renting and buying a home. For more information about the findings, read the **LGBT in Britain – Hate Crime and Discrimination Report** (2017) and the **LGBT in Britain – Trans Report** (2018).

KEY ACTIONS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

REVIEW YOUR SYSTEMS FOR COLLECTING DETAILS AND DATA

If service users need to provide their gender when signing up to a service or purchasing a product, you should always provide an open text option so service users who don't identify as male or female can use their own term.

To be fully inclusive of non-binary service users, you should provide gender-neutral title options, such as Mx.

If service users need to provide their marital status when signing up to a service or purchasing a product, one option should be 'married/in a civil partnership'.

Service users should have the ability to easily change their personal details, including their name, title and gender, at any time on your digital systems.

If identification is required to use a service or purchase a product, you should allow several options for verifying identity, including driving licenses and passports. Many trans people don't want to, or can't, change their legal gender, so requiring them to supply a birth certificate may present a barrier to them accessing the service.

Ensure that your systems don't generate assumptions about a customer or service user's gender, or the gender of their spouse, for example through automated letters, contracts, and terms and conditions.

WHEN SHOULD YOU ASK ABOUT GENDER?

Customers and service users should only be required to inform you of their gender when it's necessary for the delivery of a service or product. If you would like to ask for monitoring or marketing purposes, this should always be optional, and you should explain why you're asking as well as what will be done with this data. For more details about how to appropriately monitor the gender identity of service users, see step 2 of the **Service Delivery Toolkit**.

TRAIN ALL STAFF WHO INTERACT WITH CUSTOMERS, SERVICE USERS OR THE WIDER PUBLIC THROUGH DIGITAL SERVICES

This might include live chat, social media and email-based staff. They should be trained to:

Avoid gendered greetings in emails such as 'Dear Sir/ Madam' and use the individual's first name instead. This ensures customers and service users aren't misgendered and is more personal.

Use gender-neutral pronouns when referring to others (unless they know how the person would wish to be referred to) and never make assumptions about the gender of a customer or service user's partner.

Report any inappropriate or abusive language from customers or service users.

Sensitively support customers or service users who disclose that they're transitioning. Ensure the guidance employees provide is driven by the person's needs.

Staff managing social media should also be trained to:

Appropriately respond to LGBT-related complaints on social media.

Effectively manage situations where anti-LGBT comments are expressed by the public on your organisation's social media channels.

KEY ACTIONS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION (cont.)

ENSURE YOUR WEBSITE IS INCLUSIVE

Check that your website contains:

- Clear and accessible equality policies so all customers and service users feel safe and welcome.

- Consistent, gender-neutral language.

- Diverse imagery where LGBT customers and service users can see themselves reflected. Consider how this might relate to your service, for example where you have images of couples, are same-sex couples represented?

- Clear information about any LGBT-specific services you provide.

- Visible evidence of your support for LGBT inclusion. You can do this by displaying your Stonewall Diversity Champions logo and updating content or branding to reflect key dates in the LGBT calendar.

DEMONSTRATE YOUR COMMITMENT ACROSS DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Actively communicating your commitment to inclusion will encourage LGBT people to access your service without fear of discrimination, and reassure them that their needs will be appropriately considered. Use your social media and other digital platforms to reach all customers and service users, as well as LGBT people who don't yet access your service. Messages could include:

- Clear statements about your values and an explicit commitment to LGBT equality.

- Information about the work you've done to improve LGBT inclusivity in your service and the work of your LGBT employee network.

- Your expectations of customers' and service users' behaviour towards your staff and each other.

- Details of your support for LGBT organisations and events, such as local Pride festivals and the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT).

- Praise and recognition for supply chain partners or others who have meaningfully championed LGBT inclusion.

- Features on LGBT role models and allies at all levels and in diverse roles across your organisation.

You should also develop a consistent policy and process for challenging, hiding or removing homophobic, biphobic and transphobic comments from the public across your digital platforms, including social media. In particular, consider hiding or removing comments that might be triggering for other customers and service users.

SPOTLIGHT ON: NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

When redesigning their website, Nottinghamshire County Council took the opportunity to make it more inclusive of LGBT service users.

All of their recruitment and equality pages now display the Stonewall Top 100 logo, demonstrating their commitment to LGBT inclusion. They've also made information about their LGBT employee network publicly available.

When promoting their services, they've taken great care to reflect the diverse community they serve. For example, photos of same-sex couples are displayed on their fostering, adoption and registration webpages.

As well as this, online forms for leaving a comment or complaint have been revised to monitor service users' sexual orientation and gender identity, including options for service users to self-describe.

SPOTLIGHT ON: HSBC UK

HSBC UK worked with trans communities to design a simpler and more inclusive process that would meet their customers' needs when changing name, gender and title on their accounts. This included the introduction of 10 gender-neutral title options, as well as new procedures for changing gender on customer accounts. Training was delivered to frontline employees to equip them to deliver these customer services appropriately.

To accompany these changes, HSBC UK reviewed and updated information about the processes on their website. An easy-to-find webpage gives information about how to change gender on HSBC UK systems, including the documents the customer needs to take into a branch. It also contains clear information about the gender-neutral title options HSBC UK offers, and how customers can update theirs.

ADDITIONAL STONEWALL RESOURCES

DELIVERING LGBT-INCLUSIVE FACE-TO-FACE SERVICES
Customer service, home delivery and works, hospitality, receptions, retail and transport.

DELIVERING LGBT-INCLUSIVE DIGITAL SERVICES
Appointment booking, feedback and complaints, online banking, online shopping, service information and social media.

DELIVERING LGBT-INCLUSIVE PHONE SERVICES
Appointment booking, complaints lines, customer services, helplines, information services, telephone banking, telemarketing, and telesales.

STEP 1
BEGINNING THE JOURNEY
Service Delivery Toolkit
How to build an LGBT-inclusive service

More briefings in this series - **DOWNLOAD**

Service Delivery Toolkit - **DOWNLOAD**

LGBT IN BRITAIN
HATE CRIME AND DISCRIMINATION

LGBT IN BRITAIN
TRANS REPORT

GETTING IT RIGHT WITH YOUR TRANS SERVICE USERS AND CUSTOMERS
How to ensure your service delivery or customer service is trans inclusive

SUPPORTING TRANS STAFF IN THE WORKPLACE

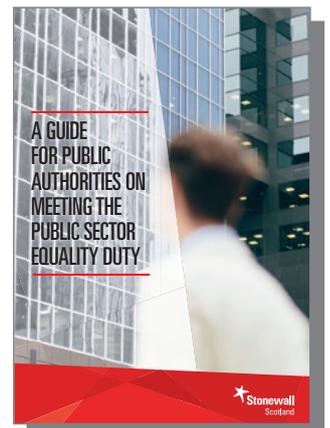**A GUIDE FOR PUBLIC AUTHORITIES ON MEETING THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY**

LGBT in Britain – Hate Crime and Discrimination - **DOWNLOAD**

LGBT in Britain – Trans Report - **DOWNLOAD**
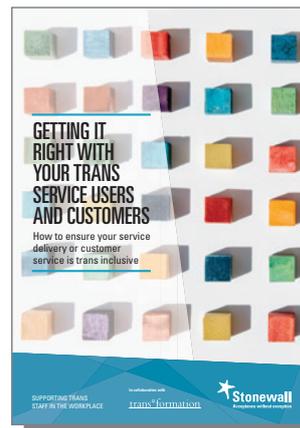
Trans workplace series: getting it right with trans service users and customers - **DOWNLOAD**

Stonewall Scotland: a guide for public authorities on meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty - **DOWNLOAD**