

Stonewall

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource is produced by Stonewall, a UK-based charity that stands for the freedom, equity and potential of all lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace (LGBTQ+) people.

At Stonewall, we imagine a world where LGBTQ+ people everywhere can live our lives to the full.

Founded in London in 1989, we now work in each nation of the UK and have established partnerships across the globe. Over the last three decades, we have created transformative change in the lives of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, helping win equal rights around marriage, having children and inclusive education.

Our campaigns drive positive change for our communities, and our sustained change and empowerment programmes ensure that LGBTQ+ people can thrive throughout our lives. We make sure that the world hears and learns from our communities, and our work is grounded in evidence and expertise.

To find out more about our work, visit us at www.stonewall.org.uk

Registered Charity No 1101255 (England and Wales) and SC039681 (Scotland)

Stonewall is proud to provide information, support and guidance on LGBTQ+ inclusion; working towards a world where we're all free to be. This does not constitute legal advice, and is not intended to be a substitute for legal counsel on any subject matter.

Stonewall **LGBTQ+**
INCLUSIVE
LINE
MANAGEMENT



Stonewall

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LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE LINE MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Line managers have an important role to play in building LGBTQ+ inclusive workplaces. They are not only responsible for their team's goals and motivation to achieve them, but they also look after wellbeing, progression and creating a positive environment.

In this resource, written for Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Human Resources (HR) teams, we will explore how to best support line managers to embed LGBTQ+ inclusion in their work.

The resource starts with an introduction to inclusive line management that contains some insights from LGBTQ+ people on what makes great management.

We will then share some good practice on four key topics.

1. **Upskilling managers**
2. **Supporting managers to use policies**
3. **Providing ongoing support**
4. **Guidance for managers**

The resource ends with a section created for line managers themselves, which you can adapt, use, and share as needed with your teams.

Stonewall works with hundreds of employers and the guidance we share is a blend of good practice generated by our workplace inclusion experts and what we see working well in the organisations we work with. Every organisation is unique, some of what we share here will translate well into your workplace, other ideas might not. We invite you to take what feels useful from this resource and tailor it to your needs.

PEOPLE MANAGERS AND LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

The way an employee is managed has a significant impact on their workplace experience. We know that employees who feel supported by their line managers are more likely to be engaged and productive at work as well as experience higher levels of workplace satisfaction.

According to CIPD research, management style is one of the top three most common causes of stress at work, with many managers not receiving the proper training they need to support their employees¹.

The role of line managers can often be overlooked when organisations are planning their LGBTQ+ inclusion activities. However, line managers are significant in any LGBTQ+ person's experience at work. They work closely with employees, are the first person that employees will talk to about policies and are often the first place an employee will go for support if they experience workplace harassment and discrimination.

The way a line manager provides support and advocacy can have a huge impact on employee experience. We know that fewer than half of LGBT staff (44 per cent) say that senior managers in their workplace demonstrate visible commitment to lesbian, gay and bi equality². It is not just senior managers who play a role in culture setting. Managers set the expectation of inclusive environments; they demonstrate that discrimination and harassment is unacceptable, and that people are free to be themselves in your workplace.

What LGBTQ+ people tell us about their experiences

LGBTQ+ employees are still facing high levels of discrimination in the workplace. 39% of LGBTQ+ employees feeling the need to hide they are LGBTQ+ at work³, and over a third of employees have heard discriminatory comments about an LGBTQ+ colleague.

We asked LGBTQ+ people to tell us what made a great line management experience, and this is what they said.

“Visible signs of allyship and safe spaces immediately put me at ease in a ... new work environment. This could be as simple as someone using their pronouns when they introduce themselves, ... [or] wearing a lanyard with a progress flag on it. Never underestimate the small stuff!”

¹ <https://www.cipd.org/uk/about/press-releases/rise-stress-poor-management/>

² https://files.stonewall.org.uk/production/files/lgbt_in_britain_work_report.pdf?dm=1724230506

³ <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/news/new-research-shows-almost-40-of-lgbtq-employees-still-hide-their-identity-at-work>

“When my line managers in the past have without prompt from me challenged other colleague’s assumptions or erasure of LGBTQ+ identities this has really put me at ease to come out to them. You never know who’s in the room when you do that. It’s these simple things that indicate that they would have your back and would support you if you needed to use LGBTQ+ specific policies. You can’t just assume that your line reports will come out to you and ask for your support if you don’t create a safe and comfortable environment for them to do so.”

“I really wanted to apply to lead our LGBTQ+ network, but I was stressed that I didn’t have time alongside my work. After chatting with the existing co-chair, I decided to speak to my line manager. She reassured me that being a co-chair would be a great opportunity and that she’d be there to help ensure I could do it. She offered lots of practical ideas including blocking time in my calendar and regularly checking on capacity in our 121s.”

“For me, my line manager was my biggest source of support when I was transitioning at work. When I told him he was really supportive and went away to read all the policies and guidance. He centred my needs throughout and made sure to regularly check in that the plan we put in place was still the right thing. He also was always willing to have conversations with other people and to advocate for my needs”

“I read our parental leave policies and was left really confused about my entitlement as a non-binary person. My line manager was great, she listened to my concerns and took the issue straight to HR to get me the answers that I needed quickly.”

The next section explores how best to upskill your managers with the tools and confidence to support LGBTQ+ staff.

SECTION ONE:

UPSKILLING MANAGERS

We know that managers equipped with skills and knowledge are more able to support their teams.

Confidence is a common barrier for managers when looking to support their LGBTQ+ colleagues, with worries around saying the wrong thing or making mistakes being the biggest concerns. This is why it's important in training your managers that you provide learning opportunities around both how to utilise the practical resources available and confidence building around inclusive language, LGBTQ+ identities and experiences. Providing adequate training for managers on LGBTQ+ inclusion also means that the burden doesn't fall on LGBTQ+ colleagues to educate their managers on their identities.

Training for Managers

Upskilling managers on LGBTQ+ inclusion is an opportunity to make a real culture difference in your organisation. Inclusive line managers create environments where LGBTQ+ employees feel free to be themselves, can get involved with network groups and seek support when needed. We hear from workplaces that providing regular development opportunities are more effective than one-off training sessions. Regular moments keep LGBTQ+ inclusion on the agenda and give managers the time to develop their confidence, understanding developments in language, policy and the wider socio-political context surrounding LGBTQ+ inclusion.

What to include?

How you structure your training for managers will vary depending on your organisational context. Tailored case studies reflective of your organisation, your people, systems, and processes can help bring the topics to life for colleagues. Below are some suggestions that can be useful to include.

LGBTQ+ Terminology and Identities including supporting trans employees. Having a foundational knowledge of language and LGBTQ+ identities makes it easier for managers to support their LGBTQ+ staff.

Key Policies – include training on key policies that impact LGBTQ+ staff so managers feel confident in what to do before the need arises and so their staff feel confident in the support they are receiving. This could include anti-bullying and harassment policies, trans inclusion policies or additional employee benefits.

Having templates of 121 agendas for line management meetings with EDI or DEI as a standing item.

Challenging discrimination. Ensuring managers understand how to challenge discrimination when they see it. Training provides frameworks and an ability to recognise discrimination when you see it.

Role of the Network – make sure managers know what the role of all Diversity Networks is in your organisation. When can they signpost staff to the network or when can they go to the network for support.

Understanding their role in culture setting of an organisation – so managers know why they are doing this training. It impacts the whole organisation and is a part of ensuring inclusion work is taken seriously.

Resources addressing specific LGBTQ+ inclusion topics in depth (*more next page*).

Resources addressing specific LGBTQ+ inclusion topics in depth

Providing resources on specific and frequently asked questions can be helpful to support managers.

We aren't going to know every situation that a manager might come across, but by working with the LGBTQ+ network, you may be able to anticipate the needs of staff. Creating resources on these topics supports your managers to effectively support their staff.

E.g. We often hear managers asking for resources around how best to manage line reports who are transitioning at work. By having resources and policies to support staff transitioning at work, a manager can use this resource as soon as they need to. This means the team member will feel supported faster and won't have to do the work of asking all of the questions about transitioning at work. [Stonewall's Trans Hub](#) can be used to inform your own internal resource. Beyond written resources, further development opportunities including specific workshops, e-learning and conferences are helpful for developing manager's confidence on trans inclusion.

Case Study: Anglia Ruskin University

ARU's mission of transforming lives depends on ensuring everyone has the opportunity to participate and succeed.

Part of ensuring this involves building the capability of line-managers and colleagues to create workplaces where people feel supported and included.

This is why we have launched our new EDI Training Framework, covering both general and specific training. The suite of specific material provides training, guidance documents, and 'no-assumptions' articles to address specific EDI training needs across the organisation, ensuring an inclusive environment at ARU where everyone can be their most authentic selves and feel like they belong.

This suite is based on staff feedback, including insights collected from staff surveys, speaking with our network leads, such as the LGBTQ+ Staff Network, trade unions and staff members.

We are rolling out 'Supporting LGBTQ+ People at ARU' online training workshops for line managers. This 90-minute workshop is built to give line managers the confidence, understanding and knowledge to ensure ARU is an inclusive and safe space for all LGBTQ+ staff and students.

Key terminology is explained from the start to ensure the training is suitable for all levels of knowledge and understanding before providing a 'deep dive' into practical areas such as key terms, responsibilities of a line-manager in supporting LGBTQ+ staff, having good conversations, inclusive language and behaviour, and more practical guidance in terms of how to change information in HR systems transitioning employees, a map of gender-neutral toilets, case law studies and scenarios.

Each training is facilitated by volunteer staff 'EDI Trainers' of different seniorities from across the organisation to enhance the feeling of community building. Attendees receive a 'Resource Pack' with links to videos, articles, policies and key terminology included to ensure the content is accessible and at hand.

This training was built with the previously mentioned feedback at the forefront and in consultation with our LGBTQ+ Staff Network and Stonewall. We will be rolling out the training, with opportunities to provide bespoke workshops to academic faculty and professional service teams, from February 2025.

SECTION TWO:

SUPPORTING MANAGERS TO USE POLICIES

Having LGBTQ+ inclusive policies is foundational for ensuring staff are protected from discrimination, have avenues for reporting if they do experience it and can access the benefits they are entitled to.

Having strong policies at the start reduces the stress of LGBTQ+ staff and their managers to have to advocate for changes to a policy. However, managers also need to have a level of confidence in what your policies are and how to use them. While it might not feel realistic to require managers to have an in-depth knowledge of every policy, there are steps you can take to make sure they know enough to effectively support their line reports. Below are some suggestions for supporting managers to use policies effectively.

1) Regular training and reminders of policies

Training managers on how to use and implement policies is an important and necessary part of equipping them to support LGBTQ+ staff members. Managers need an awareness of policies before they are needed. A staff member may not know what policy applies to their situation or that a policy exists to support them. Case studies that are tailored to your organisation and policies can be an effective way to equip managers with the confidence to practically apply them. Particularly when launching new policies, running an information session where staff can learn more and ask questions can increase the likelihood of them being used effectively.

We hear from organisations we work with that many managers are concerned about how to support staff who are transitioning at work. Letting them know your transitioning at work policy exists reassures managers that they will be supported to support their team. If your policy is heavily detailed, providing FAQs for managers can be a useful way of empowering them to use the policy effectively.

2) Easily accessible policies

Make sure that all policies are easily accessible, and staff know where to find them. Share them as part of your staff induction, with regular reviews. Post them on your staff intranet and shared workspaces so staff in all roles can read them if they need to. Presenting policies in multiple ways e.g. through written policies, recorded training can make them more accessible and digestible for staff who process information in different ways.

3) Definitions of key terminology

Especially when policies reference LGBTQ+ identities, include a definition of these identities. This may be new language for some members of staff. This enables staff to know which policies apply to them and that their identities are included, as well as providing clarity for managers. It also ensures staff know what your organisation means by LGBTQ+ terminology. For many LGBTQ+ people, terminology is used slightly differently and it's a personal thing; by having definitions you provide clarity on what the terms mean for the purposes of the policy.

Examples of where this may be useful:

Including definitions of LGBTQ+ identities (e.g. Bi, Trans, Non-Binary) particularly where these are understood as umbrella terms that apply to people who would use other language to describe themselves.

Defining terms included in your bullying and harassment policies e.g. homophobia, biphobia etc and give examples so staff are equipped to recognise and intervene when witnessing or experiencing bullying and harassment at work.

4) Regular training and reminders of policies

Policies can sometimes be hard to navigate if managers are new to using them. If managers have question, it's important to provide clear direction about who to ask or find more information. This can be provided in policies themselves.

SECTION THREE:

ONGOING SUPPORT FOR MANAGERS

Sharing resources, including inclusion goals in appraisals or annual performance reviews and creating avenues for open communication can help you provide ongoing support to managers.

1) Diversity and inclusion objectives

Embedding Diversity and Inclusion goals as part of staff objectives:

Demonstrates inclusion work as a valued and core work as part of employees' roles.

Allows boundaries to be set with staff

Validates colleagues taking time to embed inclusion during their work time as opposed to considering it an add-on.

Creates formal channels through appraisals to make space for conversations around how line managers are embedding inclusion in their roles.

Training and guidance on this is important so that Line Managers are not making stereotypes (i.e., assuming a colleague will want to get involved with the LGBTQ+ network), and recognising that some colleagues might not want to talk about specific pieces of work within the network (i.e., they are not 'out' and this could out them).

2) Having open conversations

Providing space for open and honest conversations with managers can help them to feel more confident to support LGBTQ+ colleagues.

Listen to the challenges they are facing and what they need to best support their staff

Providing coaching, mentorship or a sounding board where managers feel like they don't have the confidence and language. This

gives managers the support to navigate conversations that might be new to them – you can role model this with the managers yourself.

Sometimes it can be difficult for colleagues to ask questions about LGBTQ+ identities as people are worried that they might say the wrong thing. Build a space where people can ask questions without fear of judgement if they get something wrong because they don't know it yet.

3) Creating a guide available for all staff

Providing a guide or FAQs for line managers on supporting LGBTQ+ staff can provide a centralised place for staff to go if they have questions. Some of the information in the final section of this resource could be useful for this.

We hear a lot from organisations and people we work with that they would appreciate guidance on what to do when things don't go to plan, or you make a mistake. Some guidance how to navigate different situations can boost staff members' confidence and equip them to go into conversations they were previously nervous about.

SECTION FOUR:

GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

In the final section of this guide, we have shared some guidance for line managers themselves. Please do share what is useful from the below with your managers.

As line managers we all want to create spaces where people can be their best. Thinking specifically about how you support LGBTQ+ people is a key part of doing so. We know that there are many things that influence our experiences of the workplace, and you'll want to tailor and supplement the guidance below to suit the needs of your team.

Creating Inclusive Spaces

The bedrock of inclusive line management is creating the spaces and the culture where your team can share openly with you about any aspect of their life they wish to. This doesn't mean everyone will choose to be out at work, but LGBTQ+ people should feel able to share things about their lives to the same extent as their peers and, feel confident that they can come to you for support should they need it.

CREATING INCLUSIVE SPACES:

Some ways you can create a space where people feel able to share are:

Starting conversations in your team meetings around the inclusion work that the organisation is doing and promoting any initiatives.

Make clear that your line management relationships are spaces where pastoral care is important and agree how you'll manage confidentiality.

Make space in your 121s to talk about inclusion in the team and workplace more widely and enable your team to ask any questions.

Using 121s to gather feedback to continually improve your approach.

CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION:

If you're looking to ensure there is a culture of inclusion in your team you might consider:

Introducing yourself with your pronouns at the start of meetings. In smaller teams when pronouns have been learned this may not be necessary in every meeting, but pronoun rounds are helpful when a new person joins the team, someone new joins the meeting and when someone has started using new pronouns. This demonstrates your awareness and enables other people to share theirs and learn about the importance of pronouns. Remember that sharing your pronouns should never be mandatory to ensure that nobody has to 'out' themselves in a space.

You might also consider adding your pronouns to your email signature.

Include EDI or DEI on individual 121 or team agendas, where appropriate.

Take up any initiatives offered by your organisation that signal inclusion such as rainbow lanyards, pin badges, email signatures, ally pledges etc.

Create a culture of education, when people bring up topics that you know little about you have an opportunity to role model the importance of learning by asking questions or doing your own research.

Attending events on LGBTQ+ inclusion helps to demonstrate to your team how important inclusion work is and gives them permission to make time in their work days to do the same.

Join the LGBTQ+ network. If you are not a member of the community, make sure that it's a space for allies before you join. Joining

the network will help you learn more about inclusion, get more involved in this work and send a powerful message to your team about the importance of network groups.

Challenge discrimination when you see or hear it. If you don't challenge discrimination, it can create the impression that this behaviour is acceptable in your organisation. By constructively challenging it, you are helping to educate people and create a more inclusive culture.

TOP TIP: If you're not sure how to structure a conversation to challenge someone's language or behaviour, the Understand However Therefore (UHT) formula might help.

AS AN EXAMPLE: "I **understand** that you didn't mean to cause offense by using that term. **However**, that's an outdated way to refer to the community and many people find it offensive. **Therefore**, perhaps you could use this word instead."

There are often power dynamics at play when we try to challenge discrimination. If it feels difficult you can always get support from, or even delegate to, your manager and HR team if needed. The key is making sure that some action is taken.

Providing support to LGBTQ+ team members

If you're line managing someone who has shared that they are a member of the LGBTQ+ community, you might be wondering how to provide specific support to ensure they are able to thrive at work. As always, you'll want to be led by the individual but some approaches we have seen work include:

SUPPORTING NETWORK GROUP INVOLVEMENT

LGBTQ+ network groups can be an incredible source of peer support and learning for staff – they are also a vital part of creating an inclusive organisation. However, many people tell us that they don't have the time to engage alongside their day-to-day work. To enable those you manage to engage with the network group you could:

Help them to protect time in their calendar to attend network meetings and events.

Join a network group event yourself to learn more about how the group runs and the kind of work they do.

Talk about opportunities for development through the network group as part of your appraisal conversations, leading a network

group or joining a committee can be a valuable way for people to develop new skills.

If your staff member has a role within the network, e.g. an identity rep or a co-chair, ensure that one of their objectives relates to this role so that it is formally recognised as part of their work.

OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT

There are many ways to ensure your line management is effectively supporting your LGBTQ+ staff. This could include:

Offering LGBTQ+ leadership development. Many LGBTQ+ people do not see themselves represented in leadership roles which can create hesitancy around leadership development. As a line manager you can proactively offer development opportunities and discuss any hesitations. You might also want to share LGBTQ+ specific development opportunities such as the [Stonewall LGBTQ+ Leadership Programme](#).

Finding mentors. Often LGBTQ+ people benefit from being mentored by people who might share some of their experiences. As a line manager you might want to consider how you could facilitate this and support them to get the most out of mentoring.

Consider the impact. We often see negative or challenging stories about LGBTQ+ lives in the

news, which can impact on people's wellbeing. Recognising this and creating space to talk as well as enabling people to set their own boundaries around these challenging topics is a wonderful way to support your team.

Celebrating success is as important as acknowledging the more challenging topics. Highlighting the amazing work being done in LGBTQ+ networks is an example of this.

Understanding policies. We often need to lean on organisational policies when big things are happening in our lives. For LGBTQ+ people trans inclusion policies, family formation policies and bullying and harassment policies might be particularly important. As a line manager you could familiarise yourself with the contents of these policies to best support your team to use them.

LGBTQ+ people tell us that line managers who are open to listening and learning, especially when they do not get things right, can have a huge impact on their experience at work. We encourage you to think about how you continue to develop your knowledge of LGBTQ+ experiences and issues.

CONCLUSION

Our line managers are often the largest influence on our experiences at work. They can make the difference between us feeling valued and included or feeling like this is not somewhere we can thrive.

For LGBTQ+ people, line managers who are committed to understanding and supporting inclusion are an important part of creating an inclusive workplace.

We hope that this guidance has offered you some ideas to put into place in your organisation.

If you would like to discuss how Stonewall can support you through further training and advice, please get in touch diversity.champions@stonewall.org.uk.

This guide forms part of a three-part series, kindly supported by the Standard and Poor Foundation. The other guides are:

- [Building a supportive network group](#)
- [Using your influence as a network group](#)

There are many other resources on workplace inclusion available on the [Stonewall website](#).