

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.

STANDING UP FOR LGBT PEOPLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

A guide for local government

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) people in Wales have made considerable progress in many areas, including legal protection from discrimination, the abolition of Section 28, same-sex marriage and advancements in legal recognition for trans people. Social attitudes towards LGBT people have become more positive and young people are more likely to see visible LGBT role models who they can look up to.

But a lot still needs to change. The current legal framework for trans people is outdated and needs to be reformed. Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying is still prevalent in our schools. Hate crime, violence and discrimination are still common experiences for LGBT people. And many fear they won't be respected for who they are if they require care as they grow older. That's why we must keep working, until everyone, everywhere can be accepted without exception.

SO, WHAT CAN I DO?

Many of the things that still need to change for LGBT people are within the power of councils and councillors all over the country. Councillors make decisions about how public services are delivered, what happens in our schools, and how we can make our communities safer – issues that affect LGBT people's lives every day. Councillors are also influential figures in their communities, with the opportunity to speak up for LGBT people, and change attitudes and opinions.

Whether you're standing for council for the first time, a longstanding part of a council administration, or an independent councillor on the backbenches - one person can make a huge difference for their community.

STAND WITH LGBT PEOPLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY – USE YOUR VOICE TO SUPPORT EQUALITY

GET INVOLVED!

Speak up about the issues that affect LGBT people's lives, and find out what you can do to change them.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Local authorities are responsible for providing children with an education, including making sure teachers are trained and supported and deciding what money is spent on. But too many LGBT young people are let down by their schools.

Bullying can stop LGBT young people achieving their best, and have a severe impact on their mental health. However, four in five secondary school staff and nine in ten primary school staff in Wales have not received any specific training on how to tackle homophobic bullying. (*The Teachers' Report, 2014*).

55 PER CENT OF LESBIAN, GAY AND BI PUPILS HAVE EXPERIENCED BULLYING BECAUSE OF THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION.

(THE SCHOOL REPORT, 2012).

WHAT CAN I DO?

If you're a candidate or a councillor, you can:

- ensure that teachers in all schools in your local authority have received training on bullying and supporting LGBT pupils
- back initiatives to ensure that all schools have the guidance, training and facilities they need to support trans young people
- support and maintain LGBT youth groups and services in your local authority

83 PER CENT OF TRANS YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE EXPERIENCED VERBAL ABUSE AND 35 PER CENT HAVE EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL ASSAULT.

(METRO YOUTH CHANCES, 2014)

"I got bullied a lot around the time I came out. The teachers didn't do anything even when they did overhear the snide comments and gossip that was going round about me."

MELERI, 14

HATE CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Local councillors have a key role to play in making sure that communities are safe and free from prejudice.

By working closely with your community, you can raise awareness of the role we all play in tackling hate crime, build community cohesion and encourage reporting.

We still live in a society where many LGBT people are insulted, intimidated, harassed or attacked because of their sexual orientation or trans identity. Trans people and Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) LGBT people are especially at risk of being a victim of hate crime.

WHAT CAN I DO?

If you're a candidate or a councillor, you can:

- work with schools, community groups, third-party reporting organisations and the local police force to raise awareness of hate crime and encourage hate crime reporting
- work with community members and the local police force through Partnerships and Communities Together (PACT) meetings and other forums to identify and respond to the needs of LGBT people and their concerns about community safety

“I am sick of feeling bullied and intimidated on my own street when I have worked very hard to be able to buy my own house. How is it fair for me to be made to feel like a lesser individual?”

TOM, 33

ONE IN FIVE LESBIAN, GAY AND BI PEOPLE IN WALES HAVE BEEN THE VICTIM OF A HOMOPHOBIC HATE CRIME OR INCIDENT IN THE LAST THREE YEARS.

(HATE CRIME, 2013)

TWO IN FIVE TRANS PEOPLE HAVE EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL INTIMIDATION AND THREATS FOR BEING TRANS.

(TRANS MENTAL HEALTH STUDY, 2012)

SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

Councils are responsible for delivering social services and services relating to wellbeing. This includes social care, such as personal care for older people and support for disabled people, fostering services and support for substance abuse and addiction.

Although it's illegal for health and social care services to discriminate against LGBT people, many still experience poor treatment and discrimination. This can mean that some LGBT people don't have much confidence in their social care services, and expect they will not be inclusive for LGBT people.

WHAT CAN I DO?

If you're a candidate or a councillor, you can:

- engage with LGBT people in your community – making sure to reach out to older people and disabled people who are LGBT – to understand and tackle the barriers to accessing social care services
- ensure that all care staff in local social care services receive training on best practice for providing care for LGBT people
- ensure that all staff working in fostering services have received training on providing an LGBT-inclusive fostering service

“I would, by virtue of the need to have carers in my home, be at a particularly vulnerable stage of life. The thought of being in my own home requiring help from someone who brings in with them the prejudices and judgements of the world I experience ‘out there’ fills me with dread.”

JAMES, 55

THREE IN TEN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE STAFF IN WALES HAVE HEARD COLLEAGUES MAKE NEGATIVE REMARKS OR USE DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE ABOUT LESBIAN, GAY AND BI PEOPLE IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS. ONE IN FIVE HAVE HEARD COLLEAGUES MAKE NEGATIVE REMARKS OR USE DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE ABOUT TRANS PEOPLE. (UNHEALTHY ATTITUDES, 2015)

THREE IN FIVE LESBIAN, GAY AND BI OLDER PEOPLE ARE NOT CONFIDENT THAT SOCIAL CARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES WOULD BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND AND MEET THEIR NEEDS. (LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL PEOPLE IN LATER LIFE, 2013)

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Councils are responsible for providing housing for those who need it locally, including social housing and temporary and emergency accommodation for people at risk of homelessness.

However, LGBT people often have poor experiences of housing services, including staff making assumptions about their sexual orientation or gender identity, and not having sufficient information about the housing issues LGBT people might face.

This can lead to LGBT people having low confidence in housing services, and expecting to have poor experiences. LGBT people are also disproportionately affected by homelessness compared to the general population, often because of family rejection, abuse and violence.

WHAT CAN I DO?

If you're a candidate or a councillor, you can:

- push for local housing services to provide training and awareness raising on issues such as LGBT hate crime and community safety.
- raise awareness of factors that can lead to homelessness in LGBT young people, and work with schools and community groups to ensure that all aspects of a young person's identity and family life are considered in keeping young people safe from harm.

ALMOST ONE IN TEN LGBTQ YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE HAD TO LEAVE HOME FOR REASONS RELATING TO THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY.

(METRO YOUTH CHANCES, 2014)

“I was laughed at by a local authority employee after enquiring about council housing”.

JIM, 26

SPORT AND LEISURE

Our councils run local sport centres, as well being responsible for parks and green spaces. However, LGBT people often have negative experiences of sporting environments - half of sports fans in Wales have witnessed language or behaviour which was offensive to LGBT people in a sport setting and over one third of lesbian, gay and bi people have experienced abuse in a sporting context because of their sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation (*Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in Sport, 2013*).

Trans people can face specific barriers to accessing sport and leisure facilities. More than half of trans people avoid going to gyms and other leisure facilities (*Trans Mental Health Study, 2012*). Fear of harassment, lack of privacy in changing spaces and concerns about the difficulties they may face in accessing gendered spaces can prevent trans people from taking advantage of sports and leisure opportunities in their local area.

WHAT CAN I DO?

If you're a candidate or a councillor, you can:

- support local sports clubs and community groups to engage with national campaigns to end LGBT discrimination in sport, such as supporting the Rainbow Laces campaign and signing up to the LGBT Sport Cymru Charter.
- ensure that local leisure facilities consider and meet the needs of LGBT service users: in particular, that they follow a zero-tolerance approach to the use of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language in sport and leisure spaces, and ensure that trans people feel confident and able to use leisure facilities.

“Being trans means physical activities such as swimming are hard to access for fear of being ridiculed and stared at. A trans-only swimming session meant we were free to wear what we wanted, and have fun without the worry of other people possibly questioning us... I personally love swimming, and having the opportunity to do it again after so many years of being too scared to has been a liberating experience for me.”

PARTICIPANT OF THE TRANS SWIMMING PROJECT SET UP THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP OF SWIM WALES, LLANTRISANT LEISURE CENTRE, ACTIVE VALLEYS, YOUTH CYMRU AND LGBT SPORT CYMRU.

ME? A ROLE MODEL?

BEING A VISIBLE LGBT COUNCILLOR

We often don't consider the impact that we can have on others. But councillors are visible figures within their community, and often end up having a lot of influence on other people.

For the many LGBT people who worry about what people will think of them, or who find it difficult to be themselves, role models can be really important. Openly LGBT councillors have an opportunity to be the visible role models that LGBT people in their community need, showing them that there are ways to be yourself, be happy and be accepted. And when they're able to be themselves, they can often change people's opinions about what LGBT people are like, creating a more inclusive and accepting community.

CAN I BE A ROLE MODEL?

Anyone can be a positive role model. You don't have to be perfect, you just need to want to use your experiences to create positive change. You might be a role model to somebody already, and not even know it. **Check out our role model guide for inspiration.**

If you'd like support and ideas about how you can be a role model, check out our one-day LGBT Role Models programme!

ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN THEIR COMMUNITY.

WHAT ABOUT ME? I WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, BUT I'M NOT LGBT!

LGBT people need allies, too. It can be much easier for LGBT people to make their voices heard and to speak up about the issues that affect them when they have allies who are prepared to join them. For LGBT people, knowing that they have someone who will stick up for them – whether it's a colleague, a councillor, or a neighbour – can make a big difference

Being an ally is about listening to the LGBT people in your community, and helping them be heard.

If you'd like support and ideas about how you can be an ally to LGBT people in your community, check out our one-day Allies programme!

ENGAGING WITH LGBT COMMUNITIES

If you really want to stand up for LGBT people in your local community, it's crucial that you listen to their experiences.

There's lots of information available about LGBT people's experiences of education, housing, and social care, but if you want to really understand, the best thing is to meet LGBT people locally and listen to their concerns.

- VISIT LOCAL LGBT ORGANISATIONS, INCLUDING YOUTH GROUPS, TO FIND OUT WHAT MATTERS TO THEM.

- IF THERE IS A LOCAL PRIDE CELEBRATION, ATTEND AND SHOW YOUR SUPPORT! IF NOT, COULD YOU HELP ORGANISE ONE?

- TALK ABOUT YOUR COMMITMENT TO LGBT EQUALITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

"Off to meet with @HighSchool's #LGBT youth group to hear about what matters to them! #ByYourSide"

"Off to discuss hate crime initiatives with @PoliceOfficer – let's make sure everyone feels safe and included here #ByYourSide"

Whether you're a councillor, a candidate or a local campaigner, you don't need to wait until the local elections to get involved with LGBT communities – you can start now!

LGBT communities are broad and diverse. Bi and trans people often have very different experiences, as do women, older people and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities who are LGBT. Try and hear from as many different voices as possible.

If you engaged with LGBT communities as part of your election campaign, make sure you follow up with the organisations and individuals you met once you're elected! People will be interested to hear what you've achieved for LGBT people in local government, so keep them up to date with the work you're doing to create inclusive communities.

When you're actively engaging with LGBT communities, it's more likely that LGBT people will want to get involved in your party or your campaign. Who knows, maybe they'll want to stand as candidates themselves one day!

RESOURCES

Download and order hard copies of our resources from our website at www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/our-work/publications-cymru

ABOUT STONEWALL CYMRU

Stonewall Cymru is Wales's leading lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) equality charity. We were founded in 2003, and we work with businesses, public bodies, schools, the Welsh Government, the National Assembly for Wales and a wide range of partners in communities across Wales to work towards our vision of a world where lesbian, gay, bi and trans people are accepted without exception.

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