

# 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](http://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.



# DELIVERING LGBT-INCLUSIVE FACE-TO-FACE SERVICES

Customer service, home  
delivery and works,  
hospitality, receptions,  
retail and transport



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 FACE-TO-FACE SERVICES

Customer service, home delivery and works, hospitality, receptions, retail and transport.

Face-to-face service is the central customer touch point for many organisations. Like anyone, when an LGBT person has a bad experience with your business, word can spread, and other members of the LGBT community and their allies may be less likely to choose your services and products.

Demonstrating that you're inclusive of LGBT customers and service users sends a strong message that you value these groups and appreciate the specific needs they might have. It can encourage loyalty to your service, generate growth, and build respect for your brand.

## 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 accessing face-to-face services include:

Direct discrimination, including abuse, deliberate misgendering or refusal of service.

Incorrect assumptions about their gender, sexual orientation, partner's gender or family.

Fear of discrimination and harassment from staff, as well as from other customers and service users. This can prevent them from accessing a service or make them feel the need to change their behaviour when doing so.

Trans customers and service users being unable to access gendered facilities, such as changing rooms and toilets, because they're refused access or fear harassment.

*"Today, as it happens most days, in a shop I was referred to as 'Sir' and when I laughed and said 'it's Madam believe it or not', I got filthy looks and whispering behind my back as I left. I don't think people should be addressed as Sir or Madam these days as it makes too many assumptions about gender."*

Jesse, 59 (South West),  
*LGBT in Britain – Hate Crime and Discrimination*

To fully understand the barriers that LGBT customers and service users face accessing your face-to-face 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. Key findings included:

**One in seven** LGBT people (14 per cent) reported experiencing discrimination because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity when in a shop or department store in the last year. **More than a third** of trans people (35 per cent) faced this discrimination when shopping compared to nine per cent of LGB people who aren't trans.

**Seven per cent** of LGBT people who visited a bank or insurance company in the last year, were discriminated against because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This number increased to **one in four** trans people (26 per cent).

**One in eight** trans employees (12 per cent) had been physically attacked by colleagues or customers in the last year.

*"My partner and I overheard both customers and staff at a supermarket branch mocking and using slurs while talking about us when we held hands. We don't even try to have any kind of public display of affection anymore."*

Arthur, 25 (Wales),  
*LGBT in Britain – Hate Crime and Discrimination*

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

## TRAIN YOUR CUSTOMER-FACING EMPLOYEES

Tailored training should be provided for any employee who comes into contact with customers and service users. This might include receptionists, customer assistants and delivery drivers. This training should be compulsory and include:

An introduction to LGBT identities, terminology and language.

The importance of treating every customer with dignity and respect.

What homophobic, biphobic and transphobic discrimination and abuse might look like in your service.

A take-away top-tips resource for staff, with key processes and messages.

How to challenge and report homophobic, biphobic and transphobic discrimination or abuse – whether it's between customers/service users, from customers/service users towards staff, or from staff towards customers/service users.

How to use gender-neutral language and avoiding gendered greetings such as 'sir' or 'madam'.

The importance of avoiding assumptions about a customer or service user's gender based on their voice, physical characteristics or gender expression. If unsure of someone's pronouns, employees should use 'they' until they have clarification.

The importance of avoiding assumptions about a customer or service user's sexual orientation, their partner's gender or their family.

How to apologise and move on if they make a mistake, such as accidentally misgendering a customer or service user.

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

Specific guidelines for your service, for example around the use of changing rooms in a shop.

For more information on training your frontline staff, see step 3 of the [Service Delivery Toolkit](#).

## TRAINING HOME DELIVERY AND REPAIR STAFF

LGBT customers and service users often have reservations about letting delivery or repair people into their homes for fear of discrimination or harassment in a less public setting. It's therefore crucial to emphasise the importance of respecting customers and service users' homes, not making assumptions about a customer or service user, and not being intrusive when it comes to their personal lives.

## TRAINING DISPERSED WORKFORCES

Many organisations delivering face-to-face customer services, such as in retail, have dispersed workforces throughout the UK. You should consider how training can be cascaded to all employees in each branch, for example, through effective e-learning platforms or a 'train the trainer' model.

## REACH OUTSOURCED AND AGENCY EMPLOYEES

Many businesses outsource customer-facing services to external providers, for example maintenance and security staff.

These contracted staff still reflect your organisation and can make or break your reputation. For some customers and service users, they may be the only representatives of your organisation that they ever meet.

You should ensure that suppliers' employees uphold the same standards of LGBT inclusion by:

Scrutinising potential suppliers' policies to ensure they explicitly ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Scrutinising potential suppliers' training to ensure they cover the needs of LGBT customers and service users.

Working closely with existing suppliers to develop joint training or supply them with your own.

# KEY ACTIONS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION (cont.)

## IMPLEMENT PROCEDURES FOR TACKLING HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

These should include:

A public policy of zero tolerance for homophobic, biphobic and transphobic harassment and abuse. This should apply equally to permanent, temporary and contracted staff, volunteers, and customers/service users.

In any policy, you should provide specific examples of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic harassment and abuse to recognise that these are different and that none will be tolerated.

Procedures for reporting harassment and abuse between customers/service users, from customers/service users towards staff and from staff towards customers/service users. This should include clear sanctions for staff and customers/service users.

Guidance for staff on how to challenge homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in the service confidently and safely.

## VISIBLY SIGNAL THAT YOUR SERVICE IS LGBT INCLUSIVE

The best organisations find ways to show visible support for LGBT people in their physical spaces. This could include:

Providing frontline staff with rainbow pin badges or lanyards.

Including your Stonewall Diversity Champion logo on customer-facing literature.

Displaying 'Come Out For LGBT' posters on your noticeboards.

## REVIEW YOUR FACILITIES, INCLUDING TOILETS AND CHANGING ROOMS

Customers and service users should be able to access facilities that align with their gender identity or that they feel most comfortable using. This should be stated in publicly available policies.

Customer-facing employees should be reminded to never challenge a customer's choice of facilities.

Gender-neutral facilities should be made available. Where this is not possible, you should ensure that private spaces are incorporated into gendered facilities.



# SPOTLIGHT ON: GENTOO

Alongside their all-staff training on delivering LGBT-inclusive services, Gentoo has developed bespoke training for groups of frontline staff relevant to their specific areas of work. Most recently, they delivered training for neighbourhood coordinators, who complete face-to-face customer surveys with all tenants in their homes. For monitoring purposes, these include questions about tenants' sexual orientation and gender.

Gentoo identified that to effectively carry out these surveys and be ambassadors for their LGBT-inclusive services, coordinators needed information about appropriate LGBT terminology, including the gender neutral 'Mx' title which had just been introduced to their systems. They also wanted to ensure that coordinators understood what discriminatory behaviour looks like, the importance of not making assumptions, and how to answer questions from tenants. The face-to-face training sessions allowed time for questions, discussion and practice exercises.

As well as neighbourhood coordinators, the training was delivered to line managers so they were equipped to support their teams, as well as office-based staff who might receive customer enquiries. The sessions have been continuously evaluated, with any issues being picked up in subsequent refresher training. Gentoo is now monitoring sexual orientation and gender declaration rates to assess the impact of the training.

## ADDITIONAL STONEWALL RESOURCES



More briefings in this series - [DOWNLOAD](#)

Service Delivery Toolkit - [DOWNLOAD](#)



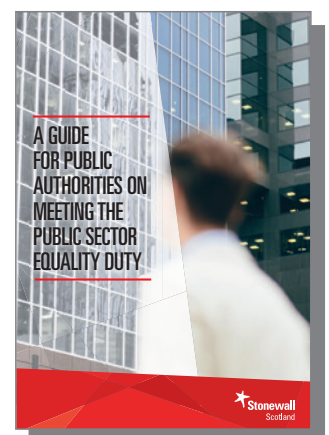
LGBT in Britain – Hate Crime and Discrimination - [DOWNLOAD](#)



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](#)