

LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace

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Throughout this page we refer to resources and our own videos that may help promote an inclusive workplace culture. However, they may not all reflect the recent Supreme Court decision on the legal definition of sex in the Equality Act 2010. We will review this page in the light of further EHRC guidance. In the interim please consider these resources with care.

We use the acronym LGBTQ+ which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning and others (signified by the +). It is intended to include people who are non-binary, asexual and others who identify as part of the wider LGBTQ+ community. We are not seeking to exclude any groups and recognise that each community has different experiences.

We use the terms transgender or trans as an umbrella term for people whose gender identity is not the same as or does not sit comfortably with their sex at birth. We use the term in its broadest sense to include people who prefer to use other ways to describe their gender identity, such as non-binary.

Why do we need to focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion?

Broadly, for LGB and trans groups, the solicitors' profession is representative of the UK population.

In 2023, [our firm diversity data report](https://qltt.sra.org.uk/sra/equality-diversity/diversity-profession/diverse-legal-profession/) shows that, excluding those who preferred not to say:

- 2.8% of lawyers are lesbian or gay, compared to 1.8% of the UK population
- 1.5% of lawyers are bi, compared to 1.5% of the UK population
- 0.4% of lawyers prefer another description compared to 0.6% of the UK population.

Similarly, for the trans population, 0.5% of lawyers confirmed that their gender identity was different to their sex at birth. This is the same as the UK population at the last census in 2021. The approach to monitoring gender identity is evolving, so these data should be treated with caution ([on the advice of the ONS](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/methodologies/sexualorientationandgenderidentityquality)).

Although broadly representative of the UK population, it is important to continue to encourage LGBTQ+ inclusion in the legal sector. There is evidence to suggest there is some way to go before everyone in the LGBTQ+ community feels safe to be 'out' in the workplace.

People who are not out in the workplace are more likely to leave their job. Even those who are may still not be comfortable bringing their whole selves to work. LGBTQ+ people may feel ongoing or additional stress in anticipation of being discriminated against, for example in case they inadvertently reveal their sexual orientation to colleagues.

For those who are out, many LGBTQ+ people experience microaggressions in the workplace that impact on their mental health. [Research by Randstad in 2024](https://www.randstad.co.uk/market-insights/future-work/nearly-half-lgbtqi-workers-face-discrimination/) showed that in the UK, almost half (47%) of LGBTQ+ people had experienced discrimination within their workforce. Read more about the experiences of the LGBTQ+ community within the legal profession from research carried out by [the Law Society](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/research/pride-in-the-law-experiences-of-the-lgbt-community-within-the-legal-profession) and by [InterLaw Diversity Forum](https://5aa06e50-1b3c-4843-b70a-a841ab933579.usfiles.com/ugd/5aa06e_b8150387ca1243418743b2b75f675414.pdf).

What do we mean by LGBTQ+ inclusion?

An individual's sexual orientation or gender identity should not affect their opportunities, treatment or outcomes through the employee lifecycle. Everyone should have equal opportunities in applying for jobs, promotions and development opportunities. People should be able to work in a safe and inclusive environment where they have a valued voice in their organisation. An inclusive environment is one where diversity of experience is celebrated, acknowledged and championed visibly.

There are barriers that exist for LGBTQ+ people, many of them external to the workplace, such as wider societal attitudes or access to healthcare. An inclusive workplace can provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ people that they might not necessarily experience elsewhere.

Taking steps towards LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace

Below are some practical tools and resources that you may find useful when thinking about how you can improve LGBTQ+ inclusion in your workplace.

[Open all](#) [#]

[Understand your workforce data](#)



All law firms are required to [collect, report and publish workforce diversity data](https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/diversity-toolkit/your-data/#:-:text=You%20must%20publish%20a%20summary,minimum%20of%20every%20two%20years.) [https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/diversity-toolkit/your-data/#:-:text=You%20must%20publish%20a%20summary,minimum%20of%20every%20two%20years.], (Standard 1.5 of the [Code of Conduct for Firms](https://qлтt.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/code-conduct-firms/1) [https://qлтt.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/code-conduct-firms/1]), including sexual orientation and gender identity. The data allows us to produce a high-level picture of diversity in law firms across England and Wales. They can be used to benchmark your firm against the wider legal profession using our [law firm diversity data tool](https://qлтt.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/equality-diversity/law-firm-diversity-tool/) [https://qлтt.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/equality-diversity/law-firm-diversity-tool/].

You can also use your diversity data to compare your firm against national datasets.

It is important to monitor the diversity of your recruitment processes, but you should also carry out diversity monitoring of your staff throughout the employee lifecycle. This will help you identify any gaps in the retention and progression of any particular group which will allow you to be targeted in your interventions.

Due to the small numbers usually involved, it is often necessary to combine smaller minority groups when reporting on them to avoid the risk of identifying an individual. However, if you can, you should analyse results by individual groups, to see if there are any differences in experience. For example, [research by Stonewall](https://files.stonewall.org.uk/production/files/lgbt_in_britain_bi.pdf?dm=1724230505) [https://files.stonewall.org.uk/production/files/lgbt_in_britain_bi.pdf?dm=1724230505] found that bi people were less likely to be out to their colleagues than lesbian and gay counterparts. And less confident reporting bullying or harassment in the workplace.

Even if your workforce data shows that your firm is representative of LGBTQ+ identities, people may still not be comfortable enough to be out at work. Therefore, collecting and analysing your workforce data is only the first step in providing inclusive workplaces for LGBTQ+ people.

Make sure your policies and workplace facilities are inclusive

Making sure your policies are inclusive of LGBTQ+ identities is a good way to show your commitment to LGBTQ+ equality. It is best practice to use gender neutral language wherever practicable when drafting policies (and job adverts). This can also be an easy way to be inclusive of non-binary identities. InterLaw Diversity Forum has [developed guidance on gender-neutral drafting](https://www.interlawdiversityforum.org/guide-to-gender-neutral-drafting) [https://www.interlawdiversityforum.org/guide-to-gender-neutral-drafting].

It is also important to make sure you expressly include LGBTQ+ identities where appropriate in your HR policies. It is not always possible to set out every possible circumstance covered by your policies. But you can write them in a way that leaves room for inclusive interpretation, for example:

- Maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave policies – make sure you do not assume the sex or gender identity of particular roles within a family. Expressly make it clear that all families, regardless of the sex or gender identity of the partners, are included.
- Bullying and harassment or grievance policies – it is helpful to explicitly reference homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Include people from the LGBTQ+ community in any examples you may give to illustrate the behaviour that you regard as unacceptable. You may also want to consider having a clear process for what your staff should do if they are experiencing bullying or harassment from a client.
- Time-off work policies – make it clear that compassionate leave or time for caring responsibilities is available for non-traditional family units. This will make it more inclusive for LGBTQ+ staff who may be less likely to be in a traditional family.
- Dress code policy – it is good practice to avoid imposing gendered dress requirements which may negatively impact non-binary and other staff.

If you have staff networks or groups, they may be able to help review your policies to make sure they are inclusive.

In light of the Supreme Court ruling on the definition of sex, employers will need to consider the availability of toilet facilities in the workplace. Further guidance on this is expected from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), but its [interim update](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/media-centre/interim-update-practical-implications-uk-supreme-court-judgment) [https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/media-centre/interim-update-practical-implications-uk-supreme-court-judgment] states 'trans people should not be put in a position where there are no facilities for them to use'.

Promote awareness and understanding of the LGBTQ+ community

To encourage a culture where staff can bring their whole selves to work, it is helpful to develop awareness and understanding of the LGBTQ+ community amongst all your staff. This could be led by a network of LGBTQ+ staff and allies who can help mark calendar days which celebrate or recognise the identities of LGBTQ+ people.

Many workplaces recognise that June is Pride month, but there are other identity-specific dates as well throughout the year. Some examples are International Trans Day of Visibility (31 March) or Bi Awareness Week (16-23 September).

It is important to hear LGBTQ+ staff speak from their lived experience. However, it is equally important not to assume they will be willing to promote themselves as a visible role model. Or assume they can speak for the whole community.

Building resources to equip and encourage allies can be helpful. This could ease the burden on LGBTQ+ staff and raise wider awareness of LGBTQ+ issues and knowledge. Resources could include:

- a list of terminology used by the LGBTQ+ community such as this comprehensive [list by Stonewall](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/list-lgbtq-terms) [<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/list-lgbtq-terms>], or alternatively this [glossary by the Gender Identity Research and Education Society](https://www.gires.org.uk/resources/terminology/) [<https://www.gires.org.uk/resources/terminology/>]
- information about the different groups making up the LGBTQ+ community that goes beyond just definitions. For example, explaining that non-binary people often use gender neutral-pronouns such as they/them
- examples of comments to avoid can be helpful. For instance, suggesting that being bi is 'just a phase' or asking trans colleagues about any surgery they may or may not have had.

Employers who are successful in creating a positive workplace culture can see improvements in teamwork, raised morale, increased productivity and efficiency, and enhanced retention of the workforce. However, creating an inclusive culture requires proactive steps to implement; it's not enough to 'just say' that your workplace is supportive of LGBTQ+ identities.

Staff networks can be a good place to start when considering how to improve and/or measure your efforts to improve culture and inclusion in the workplace. These provide a safe space where members can share challenges, support each other, and speak as a group where there is shared experience. Networks are usually managed and coordinated by staff members themselves, with minimal input from traditional governance structures. This enables the network to speak independently and constructively offer feedback on areas for improvement.

Practical examples

Be empowered to deliver change

EMG Solicitors were mentored by Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner through a scheme we supported, alongside The Law Society.

The firm set up an 'Empowerment, Diversity and Inclusion Team' and redrafted its client documents to make sure they were inclusive. The firm also supported LGBTQ+ inclusivity on its social media. It carried out a firm-wide questionnaire on equality, diversity and inclusion and delivered a presentation to all staff on inclusivity, helping to embed this as a core value.

It has also made a commitment that supporting diversity and inclusion is no longer an 'initiative' or 'scheme'. This is fundamental to how it engages with colleagues, clients and the community as a whole.

Lead from the top

Through the same scheme, MSB Solicitors was mentored by DWF LLP.

The firm made sure there was an LGBTQ+ representative on its diversity and inclusion group and marched at Manchester Pride along with DWF LLP. It adapted its approach to recruitment to make sure it was attracting diverse applicants. The firm collaborated on community engagement with the Navajo Merseyside & Cheshire LGBT Charter Mark.

It also set up an Environmental, Social and Governance committee to champion all areas of EDI. The firm invited experts to deliver LGBTQ+ inclusion training, including inviting clients to this.

Actively encourage trans and non-binary inclusion

It is important to acknowledge the particular challenges that trans, non-binary and genderfluid people may face in the workplace. Non-binary is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity does not sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'. Genderfluid is a term included under the trans umbrella and refers to people whose gender identity can change over time.

According to [research by Trades Union Congress](https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/bullying-harassment-and-discrimination-lgbt-people-workplace) [<https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/bullying-harassment-and-discrimination-lgbt-people-workplace>], 79% of trans respondents had experienced bullying at work, compared to 48% of all LGBTQ+ people. Only 26% of trans people were open about their trans status at work with everyone, compared to 38% of LGB people. And 35% of trans respondents reported deliberate use of a former name (deadnaming) or of the wrong pronouns (misgendering) in the workplace in the previous five years. On every measure that was researched on bullying and harassment at work, trans respondents experienced higher levels compared to non-trans respondents.

Lui Asquith, a non-binary solicitor, explains why it is important for law firms to encourage trans and non-binary inclusion:

'Law firms that are hesitant to discuss transgender inclusion in the workplace risk missing out on talent. Embracing diversity not only strengthens the profession, but also enhances well-being, mental health, and productivity.'

Trans and gender-diverse individuals face higher rates of anxiety and depression, and firms can make a meaningful difference by fostering inclusive environments. Simple steps like offering trans awareness training

and allowing for the inclusion of pronouns at the foot of signatures can help drive positive change. I look forward to seeing more solicitors and lawyers proudly stand as allies for trans equality, regardless of their own identity.'

To support law firms in this area we have provided a [good practice guide to creating a trans and non-binary inclusive workplace](https://glt.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/equality-diversity/trans-inclusive-workplace/) (<https://glt.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/equality-diversity/trans-inclusive-workplace/>).

Practical examples

Introduce trans inclusive practices

Pinsent Masons developed a suite of trans inclusion documentation. This included a trans equality policy, a manager guide for supporting trans colleagues, trans and gender expression at work guidance, and transitioning at work FAQs. It changed client registration to include 'Mx' as an option. It ran training for staff on topics such as active allyship specific to trans inclusion.

Additionally, all colleagues globally can edit their email signatures to display their own pronouns, with options such as He/Him/His, She/Her/Hers, They/Them/Theirs, and Ze/Zir/Zirs. This initiative specifically includes gender-neutral terms to recognise non-binary colleagues.

Inclusivity means everyone can be themselves at work

Gowling WLG worked with trans colleagues to create its first trans policy for anyone considering transitioning - letting them know the firm is with them every step of the way. It reviewed its diversity and inclusion statement and policies so they were explicit in the inclusion of gender identity and gender reassignment. The internal systems were changed to include non-binary as a gender option.

Watch our videos about trans inclusion:

The importance of proactively building trans-inclusive practices at your firm

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Rachel Reese, Director, Global Butterflies and Daniel Winterfeldt, Chair of InterLaw Diversity Forum

Inclusive workplaces for trans and non-binary people (Webinar)

Watch our webinar to hear from non-binary barrister, Mx Oscar Davies and our former Executive Director, Robert Loughlin about inclusive workplaces for non-binary and trans people. This was broadcast on

International Non-Binary People's Day 2022.

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Also see our other resources information below for links to useful advice and guidance from the Law Society, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Acas and others.

[Use senior allies and role models](#)

Sometimes, a lack of role models can make it difficult for individuals to see a successful career path for themselves in the workplace. [Research by The Law Society](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/research/pride-in-the-law-experiences-of-the-lgbt-community-within-the-legal-profession) [https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/research/pride-in-the-law-experiences-of-the-lgbt-community-within-the-legal-profession] identified a lack of LGBTQ+ role models at work as the most pressing issue for gay men (42%), lesbian/gay women (55%) and bisexual individuals (78%).

This can be a particularly challenging problem for smaller workplaces, who may struggle to find role models within their workforce. You could consider advertising networks within the legal profession such as [The Law Society's LGBTQ+ network](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/lgbt-lawyers) [https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/lgbt-lawyers], that may help your staff see themselves in senior positions. Making a public commitment to LGBTQ+ equality in your workplace can help individuals feel supported, as well as advertising yourself to prospective staff.

You could also encourage senior leaders in your workforce to support LGBTQ+ network events, to develop a culture which is inclusive and promotes understanding. For example, by championing a staff network or inclusion initiative, or by chairing events.

Further resources

Guidance on the law

- [Equality Act codes of practice from the EHRC](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/codes-practice) [https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/codes-practice]
- [Gender reassignment discrimination guidance from the EHRC](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/your-rights-under-equality-act-2010/gender-reassignment-discrimination) [https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/your-rights-under-equality-act-2010/gender-reassignment-discrimination]
- [Supporting trans employees in the workplace from Acas](https://www.acas.org.uk/supporting-trans-employees-in-the-workplace) [https://www.acas.org.uk/supporting-trans-employees-in-the-workplace]

Good practice guides

- [Transition and change to gender expression template from The Law Society](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/topics/lgbt-lawyers/transition-and-change-to-gender-expression-template) [https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/topics/lgbt-lawyers/transition-and-change-to-gender-expression-template]
- [The Law Society's guide to using pronouns in the workplace](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/topics/hr-and-people-management/using-pronouns-in-the-workplace) [https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/topics/hr-and-people-management/using-pronouns-in-the-workplace]
- [A guide to trans and non-binary inclusion written by Global Butterflies for Lloyds of London](https://assets.lloyds.com/media/d14252a4-33f4-494a-8da4-e27267a68d3b/Lloyds_trans-and-non-binary_guide_Final_101219.pdf) [https://assets.lloyds.com/media/d14252a4-33f4-494a-8da4-e27267a68d3b/Lloyds_trans-and-non-binary_guide_Final_101219.pdf]