

Peak Performance

Gay people and productivity



Peak Performance

Gay people and productivity

April Guasp and Jean Balfour

'You'd have to pay me a lot more than I get paid here to go somewhere else. I just feel very comfortable here and I feel very accepted. I feel very loyal to the organisation.'

Contents

Part one:	Being gay in the workplace	4
	'Will it be okay if I come out at work?'	
Part two:	Barriers created by employers	12
	'Fitting in with the gang'	
Part three:	When things go well	16
	'They do go the extra mile'	
Part four:	Remaining challenges	22
	'I'm not really a lesbian at work'	
Recommendations:	How to make lesbian and gay staff more productive	26

Introduction



Ben Summerskill
Chief Executive
Stonewall

Even ten years ago it would have been unthinkable for graduate recruits to ask questions of an employer about their treatment of gay staff. In 2008, through Stonewall's engagement with tens of thousands of lesbian, gay and bisexual students, we know that the picture is transformed.

The employers of almost four million people now work with Stonewall on the development of good practice around sexual orientation. However, there remains too little evidence about the exact benefits of good practice and how employers can most effectively take steps which impact positively on gay staff and potential recruits.

The value of this new research, generously supported by IBM, is that it identifies clearly a number of key drivers which have motivated gay staff. Almost universally participants identified a positive correlation between workplace climate and their own productivity and performance.

The research was conducted with a wide range of employees in the private, public and third sectors, including at partner and director level, and both with people who are out as gay in their workplace and people who are not. It establishes clearly why supporting lesbian and gay staff, and providing role models for them too, can help significantly to enhance their effectiveness.

Our researchers came across one stark reminder of gay employees' continuing concern. Most participants firmly declined to allow their own workplace to be identified. That remains evidence of a lack of relaxedness still felt by all too many lesbian and gay people about their working environment.

The headline results, however, remain clear. Staff who can be open about their sexuality at work are more likely to enjoy going to work, feel able to be themselves, form honest relationships with their colleagues, are more confident, and ultimately more productive. Lesbian and gay equality at work evidently makes good business sense.

The report also includes practical advice from lesbian and gay interviewees themselves about how twenty-first century workplaces can be more welcoming and supportive. One key feature of an increasingly competitive labour market for gay talent is that employers who don't take some of this rich seam of advice risk losing out to those that do.

The study: In Spring 2008, researchers interviewed and conducted focus groups with 107 lesbian, gay and bisexual staff from a range of 21 public and private sector organisations about being gay in the workplace.

The interviews explored how they felt about being open about their sexual orientation at work and how this affected their performance. The interviews also explored steps that their employers had taken which made it easier or more difficult for lesbian and gay staff to be themselves in the workplace.

Part one: Being gay in the workplace

'The person that I am at work is now me rather than a doctored version of me. If you're not 100% yourself how can you be 100% involved and committed and putting 100% in? It's not like I wasn't working hard before but there's no detachment or reservation now where there was before.' *Sally, private sector*

Many lesbian, gay and bisexual staff can find it difficult to fully be themselves in the workplace. Not being out about their sexual orientation can have an impact on their efficiency, their ability to build relationships with colleagues and clients, their confidence and their motivation. However, the decision to come out is not always an easy one.

People work more effectively when they are able to be themselves. The productivity of today's workforce is no longer about the efficiency of an assembly line. Instead, workers need to

be able to communicate, to come up with ideas and solutions, and to build supportive, cooperative relationships with colleagues, clients and service users. In order for organisations to be effective, they need to be able to get the best out of their staff.

Staff are the key to an organisation's performance, success and competitive advantage. The ability of virtually all private and public organisations to produce the best service or product is dependent on the knowledge, skills and capabilities of their workforce.

All the wasted energy I spent thinking
should I say it, shouldn't I say it?
Maggie, private sector

Will it be okay if I come out at work?

The big dilemma

All lesbian, gay and bisexual staff make decisions regarding whether they will be open about their sexual orientation in the workplace. However for some gay people, the risks associated with being open about their sexual orientation at work outweigh any potential benefit. Employers have to decide whether it is worth their while to make their work environment more inclusive for lesbian and gay staff.

Lesbian and gay staff report that they worry what other people will think if they come out.

'I certainly know that before I came out I had a big struggle. I was spending a lot of time worrying about people's perceptions.' Hamish, private sector

Others are concerned that their future job security will be jeopardised if they are open at work.

'Well I'm not out at work here and I don't know why that is – well I do know why; probably because I'm just nervous about the future I guess.' Dean, private sector

'I think that's one of the things that people will struggle with most: will it be okay if I come out at work?'

Nadine, private sector

Participants were right to be afraid. Being out in an unsupportive workplace can have a negative impact on them and hinder their productivity.

'I'm quite consistently excluded from meetings and discussions about policies and things. I think I have to work much harder than my colleagues to keep being included in things.' Shona, public sector

'Obviously 90 per cent of the time I feel that it affects you hugely. I feel completely different to them. I don't know, I find that some of them maybe are not very open-minded.'

Jim, private sector

However, participants overwhelmingly felt that when their employer 'got it right', and created a culture where they could be open about their sexual orientation without discrimination, they enjoyed work and were more productive.

It's so tiring all that pretending with everyone

The impact on efficiency

Lesbian and gay staff reported that not being open about their sexual orientation, or worrying about whether they should or not, had a significant impact on efficiency and productivity.

'It was exhausting, really exhausting.' Emily, public sector

'My productivity would actually decrease when I wasn't out because I wouldn't feel at ease, I wouldn't feel comfortable. I would just feel tense and there's a lot of negative energy that is built up and it's not productive. It can be quite draining.' Frank, private sector

'It's so tiring all that pretending with everyone.'
Maggie, private sector

Participants explained that hiding their sexual orientation impacts on their ability to focus at work, distracting them from concentrating on the task at hand.

'Certainly from my experience, I think without realising it, I spent a lot of my working day with this thing in my head. When you had a social conversation with anybody or if a client rings up and they say what did you do on the weekend? All of these things got in the way for me.'

Roger, private sector

'If I'm not out at work, I spend more time trying to conceal my home life and therefore not concentrating on my job.' Emily, public sector

Participants overwhelmingly reported an improvement in their performance when they were able to focus their energy on work rather than on concealing their sexual orientation or struggling with the decision of whether to come out. Participants explained that being out in the workplace eliminates worry and allows lesbian and gay staff to concentrate fully on work.

'There was a real noticeable improvement and I can really

see that now. I just didn't have that mental pressure. And it really did make a difference. I felt far more relaxed, far more willing to help out and far more willing to get involved.' *Ray, private sector*

'When I came out it made a huge difference to my sense of productivity because I was no longer worried.'
Rory, private sector

I am more confident because I'm out

The confidence to succeed

Confidence is a crucial factor in an individual's ability to make decisions, to offer contributions and ideas and to improve teamwork. Participants identified a link between being out and having increased confidence at work. Participants felt that not being out at work made them less confident in the workplace.

'Once I did have a client facing role. It was very competitive. I was out but only to a few people and I really lacked confidence and I didn't do well in that role at all and I know it was because being gay was on my mind a lot. My confidence really suffered.'

Joanna, private sector

Participants explained that the confidence that comes from being out at work has made them more effective in their roles.

'I think my confidence levels have soared really. If you look at the way I deliver my work now, I can really go to

people and be open and honest and not cold and private as I was back then. I think I'm more able to deliver. We can talk about anything now, and I think that's helped me be more effective in my role.' *Tim, private sector*

'You're more willing to stick your neck out and take risks if you're happy and confident.' *Richard, public sector*

Participants felt that being open in the workplace meant that they were happier at work and more able to enjoy their work.

'I find through working for my current employer my confidence has definitely increased since I've been out and I've been happier and I've been able to be honest with those around me.' *Jackie, public sector*

'I think being out at work just makes you feel confident and comfortable.' *Nicole, private sector*

I think the critical issue is just having confidence in yourself, if you're very nervous then you're not going to perform in that environment because you've got too much to hide.

Roger, private sector

You just feel like an outsider

The importance of relationships

Teams and organisations work better when they are made up of supportive, cooperative and trustful relationships. Good team relations foster a sense of commitment, belonging, increased communication and collaboration to the benefit of the organisation. Participants described how hiding their sexual orientation is a barrier to building these important relationships and prevents them from fully engaging with their colleagues.

'You feel like an outsider, you feel like you're not quite one of the gang. I was not getting as involved and developing relationships as much as I probably would have done.' *Sally, private sector*

'It's difficult when you're working in a team to be isolated and focus just on work and nothing else. Not interacting with anybody about anything else because they think you're odd or that you don't like them.'

Julian, private sector

Participants explained that being open about their sexual orientation leads to greater inclusion and helps build stronger relationships with their colleagues. Where participants are able

to be out, their relationships with colleagues are characterised by trust, communication and honesty.

'It makes your relationships far more real. You don't have to watch what you're saying.'

Jessica, private sector

'When the reality sets in and actually people think, they're no different, it makes it a lot easier.'

Henry, public sector

Not only can being open about your sexual orientation strengthen relationships with colleagues, but interviewees also testified to the positive effect this has in client relationships making them more able to deliver in those relationships.

'Having that level of trust with clients is also very important. If they feel that you're being open with them then obviously they feel "Well this guy really trusts me" so it actually makes for a better kind of relationship.'

Rory, private sector

A bit more flair

Finding the creativity

Confidence and supportive relationships enable a member of staff to take calculated risks, problem-solve, and offer new solutions, ideas and knowledge. Participants reported that not being out at work stifles creativity and innovation.

'It's a depressing thing to do, to have to shield and hide parts of yourself and not be fully who you are at work. I think that kills your creativity. It's just this whole other thing you have to constantly think about and remember to keep under wraps.' *Paula, public sector*

'I just think when you're in a less cautious mindset, you're just able to exhibit a bit more flair.' *Roger, private sector*

Being out made participants feel more confident and able to take risks, meaning they felt more able to propose new ideas.

'Being out feeds into confidence. If you've got an idea, nobody's going to throw pots of money at it. You have to sell the idea. You've got to be self assured and confident to do it.' *Philip, voluntary sector*

'Bottom line is I'm a consummate professional. I do my job – that's why I'm in this organisation. I deliver the figures they want, all the stuff they want, but I bring it with my own style.' *Harry, private sector*

I hated coming to work

Finding the motivation

Having a motivated workforce is a key concern for employers. Organisations continually seek ways in which they can motivate their staff base. Participants described how being out in a workplace that is supportive improves their motivation at work.

'I just think it makes it an easier place to work if you can be yourself. It must affect my productivity or the quality of my work, because I feel more desire to put into it.'

Wendy, voluntary sector

'You feel much more comfortable if people value you, you therefore feel better working, work harder, and are more motivated. And we all spend a lot of time at work, so your day's usually quite long, and so actually that's why it's very important that they understand the whole of you.'

Helen, private sector

Participants also told of the negative impact on motivation that comes from not being out at work.

'I was very much in the closet, so much so I hated coming to work just from the point of view of not knowing what

to say. When people asked about weekends you'd concoct a story and then get yourself in a real mess because you'd have to remember those stories.'

Robbie, private sector

'I think your performance is affected in the respect that your happiness is affected. Your happiness obviously has a big influence on your mood. Your mood has a big influence on your performance, productivity, motivation. Your mood, if you're not happy, it becomes a detriment to your working day.'

Jim, private sector

However, while being out in a supportive environment increases motivation, participants explained that being out in a non-inclusive environment has devastating consequences for their motivation.

'When I've had the most opposition to being gay – it has happened with two managers I've had – it has demotivated me to work and forced me to even get another job.'

Michael, public sector

I won't work where I can't be out and feel safe

Recruiting the best

Participants explained that they actively seek to work for organisations where they will be able to be themselves, and more productive.

'I've only ever worked for people who I felt comfortable working with as an open lesbian. I wouldn't want to go to work for however many hours a week not being able to be that.'

Wendy, voluntary sector

Participants revealed that clear evidence of an organisation being inclusive, both to staff and service users, is a decisive factor for lesbian and gay people in the decision to apply for a role.

'I'm not going to join an organisation where you can't come out.'

Frank, private sector

Participants said that the perception of an organisation as having a non-inclusive work environment is a powerful deterrent to potential applicants. Many participants declared that they would refuse to join such an organisation.

'I won't work where I can't be out, and feel safe. For instance, I wouldn't go for a job in my local authority. I've been there before, and it's not a safe place to be. I wouldn't dream of looking for a job there.'

Catherine, voluntary sector

'If I considered going to another company, and then found out there's a big culture of homophobia, that's good for me to know. I wouldn't go there.'

Matt, private sector

They were advertising for a particularly interesting role. I looked on their website and they were actively promoting services for gay people. That was the thing that did it. I thought if they're that upfront about actually encouraging people to come forward – I thought if they were going to treat their service users that way then they would have all the other policies in place for their staff.

Robert, voluntary sector

Many participants revealed that they would actively assess a potential employer during the recruitment process on whether they have an inclusive working environment. Some even go so far as to walk away from a job offer if they felt they would be unable to be themselves in the organisation.

'It's much better here, but I asked when I was offered the job. I said to my new boss: "Is this going to be a problem

for you? Because if it is that's fine I'll walk away, I don't want to work somewhere where I am uncomfortable." He said absolutely not. But I feel like I have to ask that question every time I go for a job.' Roger, private sector

'I would be brave and frank about who and what I am and what I'm involved with and they'll have to like that. If they don't then I won't take the job.' Nancy, private sector

I feel very loyal to the organisation

Retaining the best

The retention of talented staff is just as essential to organisational performance as recruiting talented staff. Participants reported that being out in a supportive environment increased their loyalty, commitment to and investment in their organisation.

'Well I do feel loyal, and I think a big part of that is the

support that I've had in terms of being out and gay at work.' Rory, private sector

'I've been in organisations before where there hasn't been the same sort of commitment to equality, where you don't have the same sort of loyalties.' John, public sector

For the participants, this increased loyalty and commitment has translated into a dedicated staff base who report that they are less likely to leave their respective organisations.

'You'd have to pay me a lot more than I get paid here to go somewhere else. I think that has to do with a number of reasons including the fact that I just feel very comfortable here and I feel very accepted. I feel very loyal to the organisation.' *Bill, private sector*

'I'm very loyal. It's one of the reasons I don't look elsewhere. The fear of going somewhere that isn't quite as supportive as this organisation would be quite tortuous I think, even if the job was better.' *Tim, private sector*

Participants' loyalty and commitment to an organisation is damaged when they are in unsupportive working environments. Participants told of leaving employers where the environment was unsupportive or where they were unable to be out.

'There have been situations where I'm aware senior management are not keen on it. And that obviously has an effect; you think, well, stuff this place.' *Sam, voluntary sector*

'Part of the reason that I felt that I had to move, was because I felt people thought "how was I meant to work with clients because I couldn't flirt with male bankers".' *Maggie, private sector*

If you have someone who's prepared to sponsor and support you, you will get on

Career progression

Opportunities for personal and career development encourage people to stay with an organisation, but participants were worried that opportunities for career progression and development can rely heavily on contacts and networks within the organisation.

'You have to know people – its like you have an approach for a role. In this organisaiton, it's run on informal networks. That's just how it works and it always has worked like that.' *Helen, private sector*

'I suppose the next thing for me would be up to director level here or something internally. I almost feel dependent on the individual who's involved in that process.' *Beth, public sector*

'I think what is important, some things I've observed over the years, is that if you have someone who's prepared to sponsor and support you, you will get on. If you don't have somebody that's on side for you, then you won't.' *Dave, private sector*

In organisations where social networks determine opportunities for career progression, participants felt that a non-inclusive working environment or not being out means they are unable to fully access those networks.

'I think indirectly it might limit access to certain social networks that could be beneficial for promotion. My ability to tap into that network is somewhat limited because I can only develop those relationships so far. I know that the fact that I'm gay and they come from a more conservative background at some point sort of puts a ceiling on how far I can take the friendship. I just feel like as I become more senior and progress, social networks become more and more important.' *Toby, private sector*

The best organisations have clear, fair and inclusive appointment criteria where being out in the workplace is supported and participants feel confident in their opportunities for career development or progression.

'In terms of promotion, we've got a very clear promotions criteria. What you have to do is you have to have the support of your manager and the senior managers. And I would say I have good relationships with both of those people. They are very supportive of my work with our gay service users. So I think that's all very positive and they're very supportive when I think I'm at the point of asking for promotion.' *Luke, public sector*

'My experience at promotion has been really good and my sexual orientation hasn't come into that at all. It's been about my ability to do my job.' *Liz, public sector*

I don't think being out here is any bar to promotion at all. I think sometimes the fact that you've had the courage to come out is seen as a quality by your manager. Not because they think you're gay, you know 'we'll fill a quota.'
I think it's more to do with the personal qualities of someone who does have the courage to come out. It's seen as a positive attribute. *John, public sector*

Conclusion Part one

Deciding whether to be out at work is a decision that all lesbian and gay staff have to make. The participants in this study felt they performed better when they were able to be out. Being out leads to increased confidence, the ability to build better relationships with clients and colleagues, the confidence to be innovative and higher levels of motivation. On the other hand, the inability to be out at work, and being out at work in an unsupportive environment, had a negative impact on these aspects of an employee's productivity.

Part two: Barriers created by employers

Employers that are not proactive in achieving an inclusive workplace for their employees create an environment where lesbian and gay staff are inhibited from reaching their full potential.

Fitting in with the gang

A culture of exclusion

Many participants said their work environment is generally male dominated and heterosexual, which participants felt resulted in an exclusive culture.

'The amount of dinners and football social evenings I had to go to where the boys passed around pictures of someone's stag night with a stripper. Horrendous, appalling behaviour. Neanderthal.'

Kimberley, private sector

'I knew there were people uncomfortable with me being gay – a lot of the guys I worked with were uncomfortable with it. I think it was an issue, because they would all go to strip bars, and I didn't want to go.' *Matt, private sector*

This impacted upon how readily they felt able to be themselves, and how safe they felt about coming out.

'No, I'm not out at work. A couple of things recently have reminded me why not. It is quite white male. It's very polite, very professional, but it's what I would call the chino and polo shirt brigade.' *Beth, public sector*

This culture resulted in participants feeling they had distanced relationships with their colleagues, both as a result of feeling excluded from their team and from deliberately holding back in order to avoid any potential problems.

If you're working in a very straight male dominated area I think it can be very difficult. Homophobia and discrimination can be very, very subtle and you don't quite fit in with the gang. If your manager is one of the straight male gang, that will affect you. *Edward, private sector*

'I think more or less the whole holistic relationship is affected. We're a mixed team of two men and two women and there's not an awful lot said within the team on personal things. But when it is, they actively exclude me. I suspect that they don't want to ask me questions that will make me feel uncomfortable.' *Beth, public sector*

'I've made it more of a conscious decision – since coming to this organisation – that I'm not going to socialise with people so much and really keep the two separate. I think I take the approach of going along for one drink, then buying a round, then leaving. I make the effort. It's a little bit strategic, but then I leave before having too many drinks and saying things, talking about things – making other people uncomfortable.' *Matt, private sector*

I was going to burn in hell and take my children with me

The impact of discrimination

Some participants reported that homophobic comments are still rife in their workplaces.

'They were making the most appalling comments, "oh he's queer, he's a rent boy" to one of their own crowd and he was laughing and it was all very funny. I was pretty pi—ed off, but actually if I was a client I would have been appalled at this.' *Joe, private sector*

'I've come upon against some jaw dropping, appalling comments from people. I have, once, made a very public statement that I was gay in order to stop some really offensive comments that were being made.'

Jenny, public sector

As a result of this behaviour, some people choose not to come out for fear of what might happen:

'I have heard the odd anti-gay comment in this office and I think oh thank god, thank god I didn't say anything about being gay.' *Alice, public sector*

'It wasn't all that long after I started and heard a male staff member was gay and I didn't like the comments that I heard. I thought well, if they talk about him like that then no way. I am staying in the closet.' *Teresa, public sector*

'I think if you're hearing homophobic comments, then it really doesn't encourage you to open up and be yourself at work. I think that does have an effect on your performance – once you're through that then that takes a whole layer of stuff off your shoulders. You know you don't have to worry about it.' *Edward, private sector*

Participants told of how an atmosphere of homophobic comments impacts negatively on their productivity.

'I would hear comments from other colleagues and stuff that I would find quite offensive, which I didn't feel confident enough to challenge at the time. And it did have quite a big impact on happiness and happiness has an effect on productivity. I do think it had an effect on me at the time.' *Gavin, private sector*

In some cases where participants have come out, they've been subjected to homophobic harassment and discrimination.

'When they found out my new partner was a woman I had a revolt and I was told very publicly, in front of lots of the clients, that I was going to burn in hell and take my children with me. About three of the members of staff refused to even speak to me.' *Emily, public sector*

'I have people saying, "I wish you hadn't have told me." It's their religious beliefs. They have to deal with it. But I did have one member of staff that went and put her hand on the Bible and prayed because I told her.'

Elaine, voluntary sector

This discrimination has a direct impact on their productivity at work.

'I mean I have that experience now, with my current manager, where I feel very unsupported around some of the homophobic things. I am very conscious of the impact of that on my work.' *Paula, public sector*

Putting your money where your mouth is

Failure to show real commitment

Some participants felt there was very little happening in their organisation, if anything at all, and that their employer was often just paying 'lip service' to sexual orientation equality, rather than taking serious steps to make them feel included.

'It's not committed to sexual orientation. It's kind of more that horrible tolerance word. There's a statement that it is an equal opportunities employer and that applies to race, sexual orientation and all that sort of stuff. But in terms of what it puts into practice, not very much.'

Eve, private sector

'It's a really bad analogy, but it's like they've got the icing on the cake. They've forgotten all the eggs and the flour in the cake itself. It's more the image, rather than because they see it as a benefit.'

Keith, public sector

'I don't think it's very committed at all actually. It's very difficult to get a hearing and when you do get a hearing it's "oh yes, it is important." But when you actually try to make concrete changes it's "oh we don't have budget for this", so it's just proved very dispiriting I think.'

Justine, private sector

Establishing employee network groups for lesbian and gay staff was seen by participants as evidence of their employer's commitment to creating an inclusive environment and that it is safe for them to be themselves at work.

'I'm hoping a network group might be set up. I think that would be a really strong signal actually.'

Justine, private sector

'For me a lesbian and gay network group would be

invaluable really. I probably would have come out on day one had that been in existence – It would have quite easily welcomed you in on day one and you know it's already in place and that these people have been there for years and been gay and coped and managed – just for you to see that you will be happy and well looked after here.'

Eve, private sector

Participants see the failure of their organisation to monitor the number of lesbian and gay employees and their performance, job satisfaction, career progression and levels of retention, as a lack of a real commitment to equality. The reasons given for not monitoring sexual orientation also send a clear message to participants that their organisation does not understand lesbian and gay equality.

'They don't monitor lesbian, gay and bisexual staff, so how can they monitor the reasons why staff are leaving this organisation?'

Elaine, voluntary sector

'It's not just about the outcomes, it's not just about the data you collect, it's the statement it makes. When you make a commitment to monitoring across race, gender, disability, religion, age, and sexual orientation – that in itself is a public statement. They would say: "It's private life, it's nothing to do with us, we will not monitor our staff." The board members, the chair just said "No, we're not doing that. It's none of our business; it's private lives and we're not touching it." And refused point blank.'

Tina, public sector

'I've had two managers who don't really understand why you'd want to record someone's sexuality.'

Sophia, voluntary sector

*There's nothing that says it's an okay place for me if I'm gay. That's a huge thing we're not addressing.
Catherine, voluntary sector*

Training is a key way of enabling all staff and managers to gain an understanding of the needs of lesbian and gay employees. However, where inclusive training is absent, this led participants to lack confidence that they would be supported in the workplace, particularly when they had made recommendations about training that had not been taken up.

'I think the organisation needs to back up what it's saying,

and needs to follow through with training. It needs to look at giving training to managers so that they know how to respond. Our current equality and diversity workshop hasn't been changed. We've still got the same one that we had last year, and we criticised it last year because it focused solely upon race. It didn't cover anything about disability, had nothing about gender, had nothing about sexual orientation, nothing about age.' *Keith, public sector*

Some managers won't change

The importance of line managers

Participants reported that their experience of being open about their sexual orientation in the workplace, both positive and negative, is critically dependent on their manager.

'I decided to tell the manager, and the manager at that time was fantastic. The only problem I have now is the management's changed and I'm not sure about this lot. I'm feeling a bit unsafe at present. That's the thing about being out. It's okay if you're safe with that manager, but if that manager goes and somebody else starts they're like, oh where is she coming from? It's sad, and subtle, but you're treated differently. So that's not a nice place to be. That's been my experience here so far'

Charlotte, voluntary sector

Often, negative responses from managers can be a result of a lack of basic understanding about equality.

'And it's like well would you be having that same reaction

if it was a straight person asking for some time off or some support? I don't think they would have done that. I think they would have said no problem. It was like "ooh, I'm not quite sure on this situation. I need to ask for advice." I think its lack of training, lack of understanding.'

Jonathan, private sector

Participants reported that it is often managers who are a barrier to employers' initiatives and efforts to create an inclusive environment for lesbian and gay staff.

'There are still directors who really don't see why we really should have a lesbian, gay and bisexual staff group. I'd have to include my boss in that.'

Michael, public sector

'Some managers won't change. Some managers don't feel confident in dealing with those issues.'

Liz, public sector

Very homophobic and pretty elegantly so

Suppliers, partner organisations and clients

For employees in client facing roles the relationships and experiences they have with clients are critical to their day-to-day experience at work. Many participants told of experiencing homophobia from clients or from staff at partner organisations.

'I'm managing a contract with a provider that's very homophobic and pretty elegantly so. Sitting in meetings with this provider, taking them to task step by step

working through the standards that we hold them to and saying "you can't do that, you can't say that, you have to do this." And just kind of sitting there and working through it step by step with these people. If they knew that I was a lesbian they would think that I should be cured or something like that.' *Liz, public sector*

'I've had problems with other agencies we work for,

especially as I go in and out of other organisations. The men think I'm going to be the biggest challenge ever.'

Emily, public sector

However, many participants were unclear about what level of support was available from their organisation.

'I should be able to say "I don't want to look after that client because they're being homophobic"; and that's where I think the organisation wouldn't be supportive, or my line manager wouldn't know how to be supportive.'

Alistair, private sector

In some instances, participants have been instructed to

deliberately conceal their sexual orientation to services users or clients, sometimes even when being out would actually make them more productive in their role.

'I was told very clearly by my manager at the time that I couldn't be out to my service users. But two thirds of my group are lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans. I knew what their underlying issue was around what their support needs were but I couldn't be out to them. We'd get regular feedback and somebody once said it was really nice to talk to somebody that understood their issues. My manager responded by asking how did they know. They just do and you can't pretend to be something that you're not.' *Amelia, public sector*

Conclusion Part two

Participants were clear that employers who do not take active steps to create supportive environments for their lesbian and gay staff cultivate environments where they and their colleagues are discouraged from being themselves at work. Cultures that allow homophobic banter or discrimination, lack managerial support or lack real demonstrations of commitment to equality for lesbian and gay staff fail to send the message that it is safe to be out at work. As a result, lesbian and gay staff in those organisations are less likely to be out at work. If they are out they are less likely to feel supported.

Part three: When things go well

Participants cited a number of ways in which organisations create a climate in which lesbian and gay staff can be themselves and increase their productivity. These organisations are places where lesbian and gay employees are able to be out at work without fear and work in a climate of trust and good relationships.

'The company looks after me so I look after them.' *Alison, public sector*

Being out in this organisation is so much easier. You're like everyone else. You just come into work and you can talk to your boss about anything.

Dale, private sector

They have the right policies in place

The importance of inclusive policies and diversity strategies

Those participants working in the most inclusive organisations spoke of the value of dedicated diversity staff who focus on lesbian and gay issues as well as other equality issues. These dedicated individuals and teams demonstrate an organisation's commitment to taking issues about sexual orientation seriously.

'I think the equalities unit itself does an extremely good job in trying to promote lesbian and gay issues, they certainly speak for the organisation. They are flying the rainbow flag outside our headquarters.' *Daniel, public sector*

'The fact that there is a diversity programme did make me look at this firm during the application process in a very different light.' *Frank, private sector*

Policies and procedures can protect lesbian and gay employees. Participants felt that the policies give them confidence that if anything negative were to happen they would be supported.

'It would be difficult for somebody to actively discriminate against me and get away with it. I feel safer here than I have in many organisations.' *Robert, voluntary sector*

At their best, these policies extend to all aspects of the organisation, not just a general diversity statement.

'But just the attitude that they had towards gay and lesbians, you know, partnership rights and extending benefits to those people. And I thought, yep, this is the company I wanted to join. So for me it was a real enabler.' *Rory, private sector*

They do go the extra mile

The importance of visible leadership

Participants explained that the visibility of senior leaders and the content of their messages about lesbian and gay equality demonstrate commitment to creating a safe and productive environment for lesbian and gay employees.

'When you see on the front of the gay press the general manager of the UK office standing there, I think that says an awful lot. He's not going to hide, he's saying this is where the company is, this is where the corporation believes its future is. And that's one hell of a statement to make, both politically and commercially and personally.' *Craig, private sector*

'I think that makes a huge difference because if the top of the organisation is sending out that message then there's not a sane senior manager that's going to go against it.' *Richard, public sector*

Participants felt that public statements of commitment to lesbian and gay equality, both internally and externally, increase loyalty and improve retention.

'Externally we advertise in the gay press and things so people – our gay friends in the community do know that we're here and that we're not sitting on our laurels. We're more proactive than that.' *Henry, public sector*

'Last year I went in our float in the London Pride, it was fantastic. It was great. I told all my friends about it, so I think when you're loyal to the organisation, you promote them to your friends and family.' *Joanna, private sector*

A genuine commitment to diversity inspires stronger ties to that organisation from participants.

'I think they're doing their best to approach equality all across the board not just in matters of sexuality but other matters as well. They do go the extra mile to make it a duty rather than an obligation.' *Alice, public sector*

'When you hear about the organisation making a positive stand in the area of diversity, no matter which specific area, it does make you feel proud. I know this is a great company.' *Ewan, private sector*

It's just really great management

The value of two-way loyalty

In the organisations where participants experienced the most support there were many stories of positive experiences, specifically with line managers. Participants were clear that being able to be themselves enabled their line managers to offer them support when and if they needed it.

'It's just really great management. I feel at the moment I've got absolutely no desire to look elsewhere for work because I feel like the team that we've got in place is second-to-none.' *Sheila, public sector*

'I do feel that the level of support I have there has made me value my employment more than I would have done otherwise.' *Andrew, voluntary sector*

This support helps to create a two-way loyalty. Participants explained that they consider staying longer in the organisation and are confident to share difficult personal circumstances in the knowledge they would be respected.

'I've got two managers and I told them around Christmas time and the fact that they now know makes me feel much closer to them, a closer bond. So, I'm sure that must help my loyalty and my connection to them and the firm.' *Sally, private sector*

'I broke up with my partner last year and it was good that I was already out because I went to my manager and said "I am having difficulties." It was easier because she already knew my situation.' *Melissa, public sector*

There are a lot more senior gay people in the company

The importance of role models

The existence of visible lesbian and gay leaders within the organisation gives participants more confidence in being out at work themselves and in being able to do their work.

'The head of communications is gay, and the sales manager is gay, so we know we're not going to be discriminated against.' *Matthew, public sector*

'I have seen individuals in management teams that have made a really great career within my organisation. They have come out and it hasn't had a negative impact on them at all. That led me believe that no it shouldn't, it

wouldn't, have a negative impact on me.' *Cheryl, private sector*

'I think it's important knowing and having people around in the company in senior positions – that helps you to be more competent.' *Craig, private sector*

'One thing that is a motivational factor in being gay at work is having role models as well. That's changed over the last ten years – there are a lot more senior gay people in the company. I think that is a really positive thing.' *Gareth, private sector*

Having senior people who are out around the place gives me a lot more confidence. *Julian, private sector*

It's about giving people a voice

The potential of mentoring

Mentors were identified by participants as being particularly valuable in helping lesbian and gay employees gain confidence to come out in the organisation.

'I think what I personally am missing, is almost like a figure of a mentor. It doesn't have to be a formalised thing but someone who I could talk to about your team, outside or inside. That you can see first of all they've done so well, because they're more senior and it can help to talk about anything really.' *Joe, private sector*

'One of my first managers in the company was gay. He is still one of my mentors today.' *Ewan, private sector*

'Certainly there are quite a few strong mentors in the

organisation'. *Nicole, private sector*

In the best examples given by participants, organisations have formalised their mentoring schemes, some establishing specific schemes for lesbian and gay staff.

'The scheme is for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff to be mentored by lesbian, gay and bisexual staff. So it's about empowering people. It's about giving people a voice. It's about giving people the opportunity to explore workplace issues with somebody that may understand those issues slightly more than a white male, straight, senior manager. We matched eight people up in the last eight months. It's been fairly successful in that we've had promotions.' *Liz, public sector*

It just felt so empowering

The role of employee network groups

Participants strongly felt that where networks are in place they are a source of support and confidence. They are also seen by participants as a demonstration that their organisation values them, which increases their loyalty to the organisation.

'I do feel very loyal to this organisation because it has created a network. It was one of the first to do so. I'll never forget that first meeting when there were 70 people all in one room, all from this organisation. It just felt so empowering to actually meet all these other gay people. This group that was created made it so much easier to be out.' *Hugo, public sector*

'I think even without being out, to know that my organisation does support the lesbian and gay network makes me feel more comfortable about them as an employer than if I went somewhere in a large corporate

who had no policy or not much on lesbian and gay issues.' *Louis, private sector*

It was also clear from participants that network groups can have direct business benefits to the organisation, such as offering formal and informal career development opportunities and providing valuable networking opportunities across the organisation.

'It's given a chance for everyone to interact much more around the company, which I think is great, both in social environments and other networking opportunities.' *Gavin, private sector*

'They have away days, they have regular meetings, they have targets, they raise awareness among other managers.' *Gary, public sector*

Leaders on diversity issues

Working with suppliers, partner organisations and clients

Participants felt that even though internal policies may be strong, organisations should be using their influence with others in their supply chain to improve sexual orientation equality in other organisations.

'I think probably the biggest area of change, is our kind of community leadership role. We keep hearing about the external organisations, the ones where things aren't quite as good where we could actually be leading the way. We should be doing that.' *Richard, public sector*

A few leading organisations have recognised their opportunity to be role models to both suppliers and clients within their sector.

'Our role within our industry as leaders on diversity issues is important especially with our suppliers.' *Phoebe, private sector*

Participants felt that organisations should make it clear they support their lesbian and gay staff when dealing with clients or

suppliers. Participants noted that the best organisations to work for are those that provide a clear commitment to providing this support. One manager interviewed described the organisation's approach to this.

'I think that they would 100 per cent support the employee and I think they should. Some of our customers are obnoxious. But I think we would try and work the solution with them. I mean we are an organisation that publicises the diversity approach that we take. I don't think the customers that we work with should be shocked by that. And we do work with obviously large international global corporations.' *Samantha, private sector*

Some organisations have actively demonstrated a clear supportive position when faced with potential or actual homophobia.

'And in the end basically my employer, as an organisation, said if you're not comfortable being a customer with us, then I suggest you move your custom.' *Helen, private sector*

They supported me in my choice

Supporting globally mobile employees

Many organisations are operating in a global employment market and in order for people to have successful careers they may need to be globally mobile. Participants explained that this can present particular challenges.

'I guess probably if you're on a graduate or a management training program you are expected to be global. Now if I was a straight, with a wife then most countries you can go to, but as a gay couple there are a lot of countries I certainly wouldn't want to go to. Does that mean your career is curtailed as a result of that? If I was asked to go to somewhere like Saudi Arabia I'd run for the hills.' *Robbie, private sector*

Other participants said that their employer had taken proactive steps to ensure that they would be supported.

'So far I've been with my partner for 10 years and he lives outside Europe and I just actually recently transferred here, did a country to country transfer with my partner. And I have to say all in all it's been extremely positive. When I did the country to country transfer it was no issue at all. I just said 'is it possible?' I was actually more concerned that the British government wasn't going to let him in. But once I investigated the whole civil partnership thing and everything, it worked out fine and no issues at all.' *Jeremy, private sector*

There were also examples given by participants of being able to move their location when they were experiencing immigration problems. The organisations essentially enabled the employee to live in a country where they could live with their partner and they could have equal rights.

'They supported me in my choice of location based on where my partner was able to live. Due to visa restrictions we would be unable to live in the USA.'

Rhys, private sector

'I know of people who've transferred through my organisation because of their sexual orientation, to other places in the world. We've got someone working on our floor that has come from New York, because in New York the policies and the laws are not there to support gay and lesbian employees. Their partner was from Europe and they wanted to get them into America and it wasn't

allowed, the visa and immigration controls don't permit it if you're gay, they don't sign it off. So he actually transferred to London. Not only did they support him, my organisation supported him from New York to London, they supported his partner coming across from Europe down to London.' *Frank, private sector*

'I do know of stories within my organisation where they've accommodated it, so even if they can't bend their rules to get you into a specific area for example into the US, they'll accommodate you in another area for you and support you on that.' *Shaun, private sector*

My straight colleagues were very supportive

The importance of engaging heterosexual colleagues

Participants overwhelmingly expressed the positive impact of straight managers and colleagues actively supporting their lesbian and gay colleagues. This support can come in the form of supporting the network, attending events, or providing day-to-day support in the office.

'We had an internal launch party in October that was attended by about 100 members of staff. From senior

management to the support staff. That was straight and gay people.' *Jason, private sector*

'The network group have a conference every couple of years. The team managers attend that. They ask the team if they want to go along to it, some of them do certainly.' *Ian, voluntary sector*

I think it's good because we get senior people involved as well who aren't necessarily gay. Whether they be senior HR people or just senior bodies from around the business. I think that speaks volumes that they feel it's not being exclusively just for gay employees. And they honestly do feel it has a value.

Clive, private sector

Other powerful support may come from straight colleagues challenging homophobic comments or difficult situations.

'It will be one of my straight colleagues who'll probably jump in and say something on my behalf,

which is very nice.' *Hamish, private sector*

'What's positive is that my straight colleagues were very outraged and very supportive so I didn't feel isolated.'

Dermot, voluntary sector

They would be asked to leave

A true culture of inclusion

In the organisations where lesbian and gay employees felt most able to be out they could clearly see that both the strategy and policies were embedded throughout the organisation.

'It's always been fairly visible. If you attend any of the divisional meetings where you've got senior executives there, diversity and equality is always one of the topics that they're talking about. And so they're actually trying to make people aware of the fact that diversity and equality doesn't actually just cover sexual

orientation, it covers every aspect of the organisation.'

Ray, private sector

'Currently really being gay doesn't make any difference to anybody at all in my organisation. If other members of staff did have a problem with it, that would have been brought up and they would be questioned about it. If it continued they would probably be asked to leave, as they would be for racism, or you know, other kinds of stuff.'

Ian, voluntary sector

Conclusion Part three

Participants overwhelmingly agreed that seeing a visible commitment to lesbian and gay equality by their organisation creates an environment where staff are able to be out at work and therefore be as productive as possible. Tangible initiatives from employers that participants felt most valuable include the promotion of inclusive policies and diversity strategies, the establishment and support of employee network groups and visible senior-level and organisational support for lesbian and gay equality. Organisations where staff feel adequately supported when dealing with external clients and suppliers, receive support from their line managers and can see out gay employees at all levels throughout the organisation, including at the most senior levels, encourage lesbian and gay staff loyalty, retention and their desire to be out at work.

Part four: 'It's not in the DNA': remaining challenges

While many organisations are making great strides to create inclusive environments for their lesbian and gay staff, participants spoke of the challenges that still exist, even for those employers that are leading the way.

'The aspiration is there, but it's not in the DNA.' *Helen, private sector*

Even in those organisations where great advances have been made, participants still acknowledged a problem with consistency across the organisation. They expressed concern that being able to work in an inclusive department is a departmental or managerial lottery.

'I think it's important that even in an organisation that is doing really well there are still pockets of problems.'

Richard, public sector

'But what you have to understand about this organisation, what happens in one region doesn't happen in another.'

'We're not consistent.' *Elaine, voluntary sector*

'There are still pockets within the organisation where you've got managers who don't know anything. You've got staff members who are experiencing discrimination, whether it's direct or indirect, from their colleagues.'

Keith, public sector

'Even if you're in a safe place within your department, if the organisation structure is not safe then it's down to individuals. And that's really not good enough.'

Charlotte, voluntary sector

I'm not really a lesbian at work

Understanding sexual orientation and productivity

Some participants were not immediately aware of the connection between their sexual orientation and their productivity or engagement in the workplace. They did not make a connection to being open about sexual orientation and their performance at work.

'I'm not really a lesbian at work. I don't think it makes that much difference to my performance.' *Eve, private sector*

'You come to work to be lawyers or nurses or whatever, not to be gay.' *Maggie, private sector*

'My performance isn't affected. It doesn't make any difference whether I am gay or not.' *Melissa, public sector*

However, when participants began to think carefully, many of those who claimed no connection between being out and their performance at work began to rethink.

'In fact it probably does affect my performance. Because I'm probably at that level where I should be going out marketing the firm now. Going to drinks and all that sort of stuff, those things where your relationships and life is discussed. I don't really want to go and have those kinds of conversations to be honest. I rarely go out to marketing events, or try not to. So I guess that is limiting my career to a certain extent. It comes up in my appraisal every year.' *Eve, private sector*

Lesbian and gay people sometimes find it difficult to identify the barriers that prevent them from being productive because of their sexual orientation. If organisations want to get the best from their lesbian and gay employees, organisations need to consider how to communicate this to all their staff, including their lesbian and gay staff. Only by doing this will measures to achieve inclusion for lesbian and gay staff be effective.

I don't trust the security

The challenge of engaging staff in monitoring exercises

Where organisations are monitoring, participants revealed a reluctance to fully engage with the exercise. Participants often expressed mistrust of the monitoring process itself, voicing concern over the security of the data and fears of being identified. Some participants admitted that they've refused to

identify their sexual orientation during monitoring exercises for these reasons.

'I don't know how you guys feel about that, but I didn't put that I was gay on that survey, because I'm the only

gay person at this level on my team and it was in the such and such a region, and I thought it's so obvious that they can pinpoint who that is'. *Hamish, private sector*

'I'm very much in favour of the idea, but I now feel that I don't trust the security of our HR database. I don't trust them to hold the data securely.' *Shona, public sector*

Participants made it clear that in order for them to engage with

monitoring exercises, it is necessary that they can trust, understand and have confidence in the employer's reasons for monitoring and the monitoring processes.

'I think monitoring is important, very important. But I think that there are some steps to take first to show a real commitment to equality before you have the right to say we're monitoring for the right reasons.'

Shona, public sector

Willing to show a bit of leadership

Failing to recognise contributions

Some participants discussed how they often give a lot of their time – both work and personal – to ensuring the success of sexual orientation equality in the workplace. Participants felt that the time adds value both to the internal policies of the organisation and the external reputation of the organisation. However, while some participants said their employer recognised their contributions via an annual performance process, many participants said that their employer did not.

'Our very comprehensive and well thought out and well structured appraisal process ought to take note of the fact that people are on the diversity committee or who are willing to show a bit of leadership in a particular area.' *Owen, private sector*

'I've had that in the past as part of my personal development plan. So I am measured on the fact that

I do sexual orientation stuff.' *Helen, private sector*

Participants from many organisations reported the difficulties they've had in securing support from their managers to participate in the network group or awareness raising activities. The best employers however recognise the contribution to the organisation and are supportive in allotting staff time to contribute to such a valuable initiative.

'I've been given the opportunities that I've wanted, not necessarily in terms of promotion but in terms of the organisation being behind me. For example as the chair of the network, I've had three posts while doing that role and every single post has given me the time to do the work that I need and has supported me with that.'

Henry, public sector

There's just no budget for it

Inadequate resources

Resources and senior support for network groups are seen by participants as crucial to the success of the group. The best organisations are doing this.

'I think there is senior support. If you go direct to them you will get the support. You get the buy-in and you can get money for things.' *Helen, private sector*

'And I think the fact they give us money. At the end of the day that's a good test of the organisation and the partner organisations as to whether they think it's worth it. Because you'd assume if they didn't value it for whatever reason then they wouldn't part with the money.' *Edward, private sector*

However, participants reported that some organisations are struggling to provide network groups with these resources.

'I resigned because as a leader of the network group I received zilch support. Every time I'd ask them for something, it would be blocked. If I came up with an idea it was always being blocked, and I just thought enough's enough.' *Jonathan, private sector*

'I've sat down with the corporate equality team and said "Wouldn't it be really good to have a speaker?" They just shrug their shoulders and say that would be fantastic but there's just no budget for it.' *Henry, public sector*

Get more regionality

The challenge of location

Participants felt that there were sometimes problems extending initiatives to the whole organisation, across different regions and offices. Location was viewed by participants as a common barrier to accessing network groups. Those based in locations away from their headquarters often feel excluded from taking part in the group.

'You've got major centres in the north east, up in Scotland, around Liverpool, that get nothing at all. I think certainly

it would send out a more positive message, being a large organisation, to get more regionality into it.'

Hamish, private sector

'Not a lot of people are engaged in the local offices or not engaged because they might not be able to or they might not have the privacy because they don't have access to personal email there etc.'

Tessa, private sector

Two or three women

Working to include everyone

While participants acknowledged that some organisations have taken steps to create an inclusive environment for lesbian and gay staff, sometimes activities do not include all staff. Participants expressed the view that network groups were male dominated and there are very few lesbian role models.

'One thing that I would say that I find a little bit

disappointing is generally at those events you will find two or three women and you will find 18 to 20 men and I found that always disappointing.' *Cheryl, private sector*

'I would like the network to do something to pull in more women and I know how hard it is, so I don't really have high expectations there.' *Carmen, private sector*

Conclusion Part four

It is clear that even for leading organisations, challenges still remain. Evening out the differences in the experiences of lesbian and gay staff as a result of working in different locations, departments or for different managers is still a major challenge for employers. Many organisations still struggle to fully include lesbian and bisexual women in employee network groups and other equality initiatives. Another significant challenge is persuading lesbian and gay employees of the confidentiality of monitoring sexual orientation in the workplace, as is persuading them the positive impact being out at work can have on their work performance.

How to make lesbian and gay staff more productive

Bullying and harassment

'I have heard the odd anti-gay comment in this office and I think oh thank god, thank god I didn't say anything about being gay.'

Anti-gay banter, bullying and harassment are unlawful, yet still prevalent in UK workplaces. Employers should:

- have robust policies in place that explicitly ban anti-gay bullying and harassment, clarify what constitutes this behaviour, and communicate zero-tolerance
- have and promote confidential reporting structures for employees to facilitate reporting, ensure staff who handle complaints are trained to deal with sexual orientation-specific issues and monitor anti-gay incidents

Line managers

'Some managers don't feel confident in dealing with those issues.'

The level of support that line managers offer their lesbian and gay staff varies widely within organisations. Employers should:

- ensure all line managers are trained and up-to-date with employment legislation and benefits as they apply to lesbian and gay staff
- promote continuous engagement of managers on sexual orientation issues by having managers undergo periodic refresher diversity training, incorporating sexual orientation inclusive equality and diversity targets in annual performance reviews and including managers in network group or awareness raising activities

Policies

'I feel they have the right policies in place. So in terms of being gay, I feel safer here than I have in many organisations.'

Inclusive policies signal an employer's commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment for lesbian and gay staff. Employers should:

- audit all new and existing policies to ensure they are inclusive of lesbian and gay employees
- use language that explicitly communicates equality, diversity and benefit policies as inclusive of lesbian and gay staff and promote these

Monitoring

'They don't monitor lesbian, gay and bisexual staff, so how can they monitor the reasons why staff are leaving this organisation?'

Monitoring staff on the basis of sexual orientation provides valuable data on the experience of lesbian and gay employees and demonstrates an organisation's commitment to equality for their lesbian and gay staff.

Employers should:

- monitor sexual orientation on staff attitude surveys and at all stages of the employment cycle from recruitment through to exit
- ensure the security and confidentiality of monitoring systems, promote the rationale for monitoring and communicate anonymised results and actions to be taken in response

Employee network groups

'This group that was created made it so much easier to be out.'

Employee network groups provide support and career development for lesbian and gay staff and are a valuable resource to the organisation if well supported and integrated. Employers should:

- establish employee network groups for lesbian and gay staff that are financially resourced, supported by senior leaders, and are proactively promoted to women
- formally recognise the contribution of staff involved in the network groups through the performance appraisal process

Public commitment

'I want to work for an organisation like you'

Public engagement with the lesbian and gay community demonstrates a commitment to lesbian and gay equality to current and potential staff, clients, customers and service users. Employers should:

- work strategically and visibly with lesbian and gay customers and service users and advertise using lesbian and gay images
- sponsor or support lesbian and gay community groups or events

Suppliers, customers and service users

'I've had problems with other agencies'

Participants reported difficulties with clients, service users and partner agencies and expressed doubt as to whether they would be supported by their organisation if difficulties arose. Employers should:

- ensure suppliers and partner organisations have sexual orientation inclusive policies and practices and this should be included in the criteria for awarding contracts
- promote to all staff a firm commitment to providing support when or should they experience homophobia or difficulties with clients, customers or service users

Senior leadership

'That's one hell of a statement to make'

Visible expressions of commitment to lesbian and gay equality from senior leaders indicate to the rest of the organisation that sexual orientation equality is important, and should be implemented by everyone.

Employers should:

- ensure senior figures visibly communicate strong leadership messages to all staff on lesbian and gay equality
- have senior figures engage with managers to promote the importance of achieving outcomes on sexual orientation equality issues

Senior role models

'Having senior people who are out around the place gives me a lot more confidence.'

Seeing out lesbian and gay leaders in the organisation reassures lesbian and gay employees that they won't be discriminated against and encourages them to be out at work. Employers should:

- support and enable lesbian and gay senior staff to be out and visibly involved in lesbian and gay awareness raising initiatives
- encourage the career development and progression of lesbian and gay staff to be future leaders

Embedding equality and diversity

'It covers every aspect of the organisation'

Work on lesbian and gay equality should be embedded throughout the organisation. Employers should:

- have a diversity team whose remit includes lesbian and gay equality, however also ensure board level, senior and line management and all other staff are involved in the work of the diversity team
- have an organisation-wide equality and diversity strategy that links lesbian and gay equality and diversity to wider organisational aims, objectives and outputs.

Design: lucyward.co.uk

Thank you to: Paul Chaplin, Laura Fredericks and Liz Grant at IBM

This report provides, for the first time, valuable data which supports what Stonewall Diversity Champions members have long believed – that people perform better when they can be themselves. Through the Diversity Champions programme over 400 employers are ensuring that by working with Stonewall, and each other, they strive to create workplaces where lesbian, gay and bisexual colleagues can be themselves and feel fully included.

Diversity Champions members benefit from access to Stonewall's benchmarking services and a dedicated client account manager. Members enjoy networking opportunities and our good practice seminar series which delivers key learning on relevant topics, such as sexual orientation monitoring. Diversity Champions members also gain access to the latest knowledge, research and advice on specific organisational initiatives. We showcase members of the programme through our Starting Out Lesbian & Gay Recruitment Guide and ensure they attract a diverse workforce by advertising vacancies on our Proud Employers job board.

The programme is now Britain's largest and fastest growing diversity forum. To find out more and to speak to a member of the Workplace team, phone us on 020 7593 1868.

Peak Performance

Gay people and productivity



Stonewall

www.stonewall.org.uk