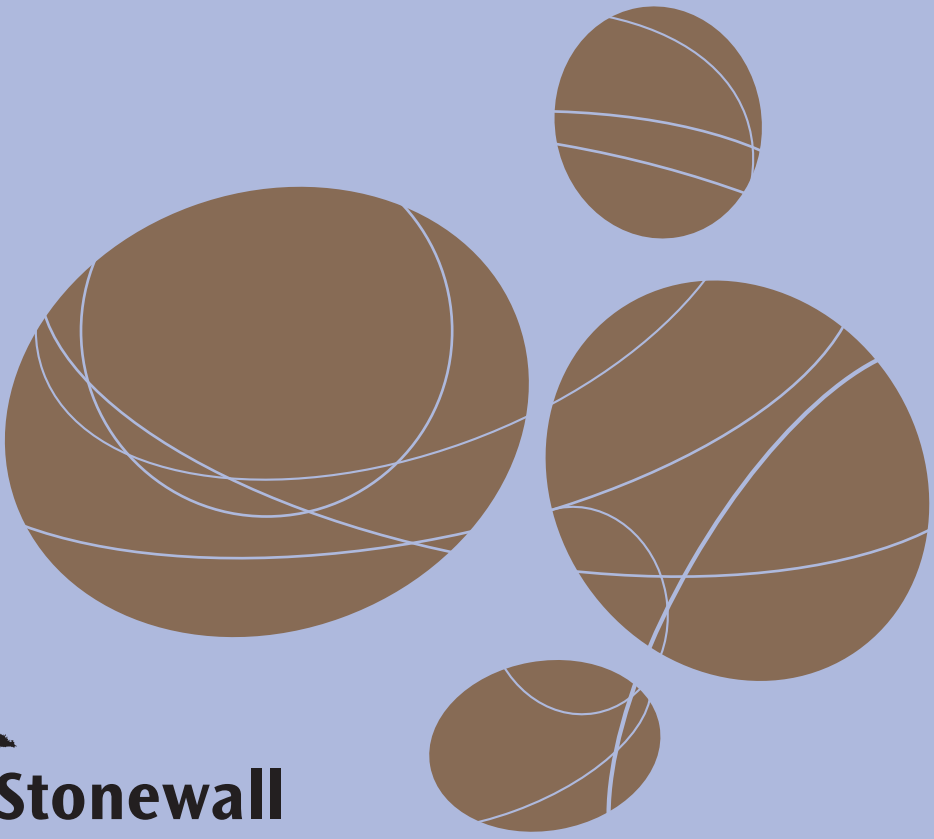
CAREER DEVELOPMENT

How to support your lesbian and gay employees



Stonewall
WORKPLACE GUIDES

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

How to support your lesbian and gay employees

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Stonewall Workplace Guides

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FOREWORD

Employers across Britain are increasingly aware that in an ever more competitive labour market, they have to offer the best possible opportunities to employees. This means understanding the needs and concerns of staff, and delivering opportunities to enable them to develop within an organisation. These employers also acknowledge the significant obstacles facing the career development of many lesbian, gay and bisexual employees. The best organisations are taking different and creative steps to retain and improve the skills and knowledge their lesbian and gay employees have to offer.

Gay staff can find it difficult to be themselves at work; the prospect of coming out to a new team often remains a deterrent to seeking promotion. Others may feel daunted by the arguably necessary task of networking in order to secure promotion or professional development.

There are currently no openly lesbian or gay people running FTSE 100 companies or government departments and there appears to be widespread under-representation of out lesbian and gay people in senior positions across a range of sectors. It's clear that organisations must start to take action now if new lesbian and gay employees are to make the optimum contribution to their place of work in their future careers.

Stonewall recognises that deciding how best to start supporting the career development of lesbian and gay employees can seem difficult. This is why we have produced this guide.

We're grateful to the Stonewall Diversity Champions featured for giving us their invaluable insights into how best to support the career development of their lesbian and gay employees.

Ben Summerskill Chief Executive, Stonewall

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INTRODUCTION

This good practice guide is the fourth in a series of workplace guides from Stonewall, the UK's leading lesbian and gay equality organisation.

This guide is a practical resource for organisations who want to provide opportunities for the effective career development of their lesbian and gay staff.

The guide examines the different ways employers can offer career development opportunities to lesbian and gay employees and why career development is valuable to both employees and employers. It also establishes what lessons can be learnt from career development opportunities that are in place for other groups, such as women and black and ethnic minorities.

The guide is based on in-depth research with organisations that are taking a range of steps to provide career development opportunities to their staff. Researchers interviewed nine different organisations working across a range of sectors. All nine are members of Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme.

CHAPTER 1 THE BUSINESS CASE

What is career development?

Career development is how employees and employers take steps to further an employee's career opportunities. It is known in some organisations as career management, staff development, or personal and professional development.

Career development can include supporting staff to seek opportunities for promotion, but is not necessarily just about furthering an employee's potential to progress vertically through an organisation; the focus can be on broadening their skills and helping staff identify potential ways in which they can develop, both personally and professionally.

Developing career opportunities for staff can range from simply providing employees with information about the opportunities open to them to providing targeted training opportunities to help develop skills.

Why is career development important?

Career development:

- makes employees feel more confident and valued
- helps employees identify all available opportunities and enables them to reach their full potential
- improves staff satisfaction and retention
- makes workforces more productive and skilled
- makes an organisation more attractive to potential recruits
- makes an organisation more reflective of our diverse society

Why do lesbian and gay employees need career development opportunities?

Lesbian and gay people can face a number of barriers that can prevent or restrict their career development in an organisation.

These can include:

- Discriminatory attitudes from managers. Some managers may deliberately avoid providing career development opportunities for lesbian and gay staff.
- A reluctance to leave a job where an employee feels secure. Lesbian and gay staff may wish to avoid situations where they have to come out again, and risk working with others who may be homophobic.
- Concern about informal mechanisms for career development. Some lesbian and gay staff may not feel comfortable networking with senior heterosexual colleagues who they worry might hold discriminatory attitudes about gay people.
- Anxiety about homophobia from outside the organisation. In certain sectors, more senior staff receive a higher level of public scrutiny and greater contact with important clients and customers. Lesbian and gay staff may be anxious about aspects of their private life being made public and also the effect this may have on relations with clients. They may well lack confidence in their organisation to provide them with support.

Lesbian and gay staff often have to think about how to come out to other members of staff and sometimes may avoid situations where this is necessary. Coming out can therefore be a significant barrier to career development. Creating a culture where staff are out, and it is not a secret, is key to tackling this concern. Developing and promoting initiatives specifically to support the career development of lesbian and gay employees is important in creating this culture and overcoming the barrier coming out creates.

Staffordshire Police offers targeted career development opportunities to lesbian and gay staff, through the High Potential Development Scheme. This scheme has encouraged staff to come out. Staff recognise that the scheme is a clear indication of the Force's commitment to lesbian and gay staff and that the training responds specifically to their needs as gay staff. Staffordshire Police feel that their staff perform better when they are able to be themselves and the scheme encourages this.

Addressing the career development needs of specific groups of employees is not new. Many organisations have well established programmes to address the career development of female, disabled and black and minority ethnic employees (BME). The career development needs of lesbian and gay employees can be similar to those of other groups. Organisations should not feel afraid of adapting and learning lessons from existing programmes designed for other groups. By consulting lesbian and gay employees, employers can easily identify how best to do this.

Career development opportunities for lesbian and gay people can include:

- tailored training for lesbian and gay staff
- the promotion of generic training proactively to lesbian and gay staff
- the development of lesbian and gay mentoring schemes
- tailored and targeted support to individuals who are lesbian or gay
- the promotion and celebration of openly gay leaders and role models

The benefits for organisations

PROMOTES DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVE By developing the careers of lesbian and gay employees throughout the organisation and providing them with the potential to reach leadership positions, employers encourage a diversity of different perspectives throughout all levels of the organisation. This diversity of perspectives makes organisations more responsive, creative and flexible.

EXPANDS THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE POOL By identifying gaps in the skills and knowledge of lesbian and gay employees, and by providing opportunities for those gaps to be filled, an organisation expands its pool of skills and knowledge. Having a better skilled workforce improves productivity, competitiveness and organisational flexibility.

IMPROVES COMPETITIVENESS IN RECRUITMENT In developing the careers of lesbian and gay employees an organisation is demonstrating a serious commitment to employing and promoting lesbian and gay employees. This makes organisations far more appealing in a competitive employment market.

BOOSTS RETENTION Employees who are offered opportunities which develop and challenge them are more likely to feel motivated and committed to the organisation.

TACKLES DISCRIMINATION By identifying and challenging obstacles to the careers of individual lesbian and gay employees, an organisation is demonstrating its commitment to tackling inequality of opportunity. Tackling this inequality is one of the most cost effective ways to avoid costly and damaging employment tribunals. In turn, by levelling the playing field, an organisation makes it easier to identify continuing patterns of discrimination.

REFLECTS YOUR CUSTOMER BASE When lesbian and gay staff work at all levels of an organisation, lesbian and gay people outside the organisation may be more confident that their needs and concerns will be understood. This increases customer confidence.

Citi believes that it is working in an increasingly sophisticated and competitive employment market where the best potential recruits expect, and view as standard, to be offered development opportunities by potential employers. To improve their chances of attracting and retaining the best employees Citi feel they need to offer the widest possible range of development opportunities. They recognise that lesbian and gay staff, along with other under-represented groups, may have challenges with career development, and therefore have developed training with these concerns in mind.

The **Home Office** believes that a diversity of employees across all levels leads to a diversity of perspectives. This diversity of perspectives leads to better policies and better customer service for the community they serve. In order to achieve this diversity of perspectives, lesbian and gay people need to be employed across the organisation.

The benefits for lesbian and gay employees

IMPROVES THEIR OWNERSHIP OF THEIR CAREER Through the process of identifying their ideal career path, filling gaps in their skills and knowledge and identifying potential opportunities for promotion, employees feel more in control of their career progression. As a result they will be more motivated and confident.

INCREASES RESPONSIBILITY AND INVOLVEMENT Staff who benefit from career development opportunities are likely to feel that their work and efforts are being recognised and are therefore likely to be more flexible, undertaking greater risks and responsibilities.

DEVELOPS THEIR SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE By identifying skills and knowledge gaps of employees, and providing training to fill these gaps, employees are likely to be more productive. This is likely to lead to an increase in job satisfaction.

INCREASES THEIR COMMITMENT TO THEIR ORGANISATION Staff who feel valued and trusted are more likely to feel committed to their place of work. Lesbian and gay staff who are supported to take risks and develop their career will feel happier and prouder of their organisation.

IMPROVES COMMUNICATION WITH THEIR EMPLOYER Lesbian and gay staff who are able to discuss their career development needs with their manager, and feel that their employer responds to those needs, are more likely to feel able to discuss other issues and concerns with their employer.

Citi has found that by focusing on their mid-career female employees, through targeted leadership training, those employees have developed increased self-confidence and career planning skills and begun to apply for more opportunities. They are therefore more likely to progress in their careers. Citi recognise that the lessons they have learnt with their female staff can be replicated with other groups.

The benefits for clients, customers and potential employees

MAKES ORGANISATIONS MORE RESPONSIVE TO CLIENTS' AND CUSTOMERS' NEEDS By encouraging a diverse workforce, where people can be themselves, organisations can become more creative and flexible. This in turns makes it easier for them to respond to the needs of their customers and clients.

IMPROVES QUALITY OF SERVICE Staff who are given opportunities to challenge and develop themselves and are provided with support by their employer will be more effective in their work. For those who deal directly with customers and clients, this will result in better relations with them and a better quality of service.

Liverpool John Moores University believe that it is important to develop the careers of lesbian and gay staff and make them more visible within the organisation. This enables them to demonstrate to the university's students, who are also potential recruits, that sexual orientation is no bar to career progression. Career development opportunities give the next generation of academics confidence that lesbian and gay people can progress in academia.

Citi feels that their clients and customers are expecting more from the organisation, and by encouraging a diverse and creative workforce they are better equipped to respond to their requirements.

Staffordshire Police's career development initiatives are aimed at not only making the force more reflective of the community they serve but also to make it more productive. Staffordshire Police want the force to perform as effectively as possible and the confidence and commitment of staff is crucial. This, in turn, improves the community's confidence in the police force.

2 CHAPTER

DEVELOPING POLICIES AND TOP LEVEL BUY-IN

Developing or adapting career development policies

Many organisations have policies stating that the career development of all staff is a priority, and often these policies consider the particular barriers staff from under-represented groups such as women, disabled and black and ethnic minority employees, face in the workplace. Altering existing policies which refer to the needs of other under-represented groups to reflect the unique experiences of lesbian and gay employees should not be difficult.

Organisations should review their policies to identify whether they include the career development of lesbian and gay employees, including the particular barriers that lesbian and gay staff may face. To identify these barriers organisations should consult their lesbian and gay staff. Lesbian and gay network groups can perform a very useful consultative role.

Organisations that need to develop new policies on career development of staff should look to include:

- what the organisation defines as career development
- why the organisation views career development as important
- any specific groups the organisation identifies who are not fully accessing career development opportunities
- how the organisation will put the policy into practice

Liverpool John Moores University's Staff Development Policy and Strategy defines staff development as *"…everything that is done by and for staff in order to maintain and extend their work and career-related knowledge, skills, attitudes and capabilities…"* and its aim is *"to encourage the commitment and develop the capabilities of all staff in working towards achieving excellence in the University's core functions…"*

The policy also states clearly that the University regards staff development as essential to both individuals and the wider community and is *"crucial to… the fulfilment of our Mission, Purpose and Core Values."*

Achieving top level buy-in

Career development initiatives for lesbian and gay staff need the full support of senior management. Employers should establish a robust business case for career development initiatives that are targeted at lesbian and gay employees. The business case should clearly detail aims, benefits and outcomes for the organisation.

The actual career development barriers lesbian and gay staff feel they face in the organisation, identified through consultation, should play a central part in this business case.

The collection of data on the number of lesbian and gay employees at every level of the organisation can play an important part in supporting the business case for action. Over time, organisations should begin to monitor the sexual orientation of their staff at all levels and monitor internal promotions. Many organisations that have begun to do this have identified that lesbian and gay employees are under-represented in leadership positions. This allows them to continue to develop schemes to increase the number of lesbian and gay employees in senior positions.

Staffordshire Police began monitoring across all levels of the organisation in 2001. The data collected supported anecdotal evidence from lesbian and gay staff that there were currently no out lesbian and gay people at senior levels of the organisation. This in turn supported the establishment of a number of different career development initiatives. Monitoring at every level of the organisation, over a period of time, has enabled Staffordshire Police to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and assess their impact on lesbian and gay inclusion.

The collection of this data enables an organisation to identify specific issues or problems. This can also be established via anonymous staff satisfaction surveys where staff could be asked about their perceptions of career development opportunities, and what barriers they think might exist. Gathering this evidence can be essential if senior managers are to be persuaded to invest in, and continue to invest in, specific and targeted career development opportunities for lesbian and gay staff.

BT recognises and accepts both the business and ethical case for encouraging diversity and funds the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people's network group (BT Kaleidoscope). In 2004, BT Kaleidoscope consulted members about barriers they encountered to their career development. Some members said that they lacked confidence and would like advice on how to come out in the workplace. The group identified that no relevant training was already on offer and developed the Confidence Plus course as a result. Open to all BT staff, the training course is particularly targeted at lesbian and gay staff. The idea behind this was to equip attendees with various tools to increase their assertiveness and build their confidence in the workplace and outside. Senior management felt this was an important investment.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

CHAPTER 3

This section explores some initiatives that organisations have put in place to support the career development of their lesbian and gay staff. These include training opportunities but also wider cultural changes that can have an impact on lesbian and gay people's confidence to seek out and pursue opportunities for development.

Opportunities created by network groups

Network groups are not only both a valuable consultative body and sounding board on potential career development initiatives, but they can play a crucial role in delivering career development opportunities to lesbian and gay employees.

Many organisations value the skills that individuals develop when they get involved with network groups, and therefore setting up a lesbian and gay network group with elected positions can be a useful step in providing lesbian and gay employees the opportunity to develop their skills. Encouraging employees to run for elected positions and being flexible in allowing them time to undertake their positions successfully, is a simple first step organisations can take in offering career development opportunities to lesbian and gay employees.

The **Home Office** trains the elected committee members of all its network groups with skills that are valuable in their own careers. It is currently training committee members in the legal basis of all equality and diversity work to increase their knowledge of equality and diversity issues across all strands. This in turn will enable them to provide support to other employees and to identify equality and diversity issues within the organisation. The Home Office recognises the unique role that lesbian and gay people can play in championing equality issues across the organisation but understands that gay people need support and training to do this effectively.

All of **Lloyds TSB**'s network groups, including the lesbian, gay and bisexual network group (Spectrum), are required to provide support to their members in their career development. This is a key part of their function. The support Spectrum offers its members includes confidence building opportunities, mentoring, providing role models and sign-posting training opportunities. Lloyds TSB recognises that supporting the career development of lesbian and gay people has advantages across the organisation and therefore continues to develop and promote both specific and generic career development opportunities to lesbian, gay and bisexual employees, in addition to supporting the work of Spectrum.

Organisations should consult their network groups as to whether they feel that they are the best facilitator of certain types of career development initiatives. As the following sections will demonstrate, some network groups have run both formal and informal initiatives from offering careers guidance to running mentoring schemes. It is important, however, that organisations are not seen to be passing on their own responsibility to offer career development opportunities to lesbian and gay staff.

1. Developing specific career development opportunities for lesbian and gay employees

Some organisations have identified that they should offer initiatives deliberately designed for lesbian and gay people. They feel that this is the most effective way to overcome some of the barriers that lesbian and gay people face. Consulting a lesbian and gay network group will help organisations gain some insight into the particular barriers that exist in their organisation.

Many organisations have career development programmes in

place for specific diversity strands, particularly gender, race and disability. Organisations may find it useful, and easier, to establish similar schemes for lesbian and gay employees, adapting them slightly for their specific needs. It is useful for organisations to assess the need for the initiatives amongst their lesbian and gay staff before implementing them. Some schemes may not be appropriate, and different programmes should be considered instead.

The **Home Office**'s existing positive action programme for women, BME and disabled employees has recently been broadened to include lesbian and gay employees for the first time. The positive action programme provides skills development, training on the Home Office's internal assessment procedures, and a coaching facility for employees from one of the four groups who are seeking promotion within the next 12-18 months. This programme is particularly targeted at those seeking promotion to senior civil service grades.

Citi have hugely successful and award winning mentoring programmes for both female and black and ethnic minority employees. Building on that best practice Citi introduced a mentoring scheme for lesbian and gay employees. With the support of their lesbian and gay network group (Pride) the scheme was widely promoted and received a positive response from potential mentors. Unfortunately, the scheme did not attract the number of mentees Citi anticipated and a survey of network group members later revealed that there was no clearly articulated need for such a programme at this stage. It is not clear why this was the case, but Citi have decided to actively promote generic career development opportunities to its lesbian and gay staff to increase awareness of career development opportunities, before reintroducing the mentoring scheme at a later date.

Some organisations initially encounter a low response to specific initiatives. This can be due, in part, to an anxiety amongst lesbian and gay employees about participating in an internal scheme which they fear may lead them to being outed in the workplace. In response to this anxiety, an increasing number of organisations are sending lesbian and gay employees on targeted schemes hosted by external organisations. The Stonewall Leadership Programme was established in 2005 to provide an external environment in which lesbian and gay people can undergo leadership training.

Stonewall's leadership programme has been identified by many organisations, including BT and Citi, as a valuable training course for lesbian and gay employees seeking leadership training. The intensive two day course runs annually with a range of skill building workshops including how to challenge existing behaviors and how to exercise leadership. One of the advantages of the Stonewall leadership programme is that a significant number of lesbian and gay people from around the country come together to develop their skills. This provides them with the opportunity to meet other people in similar situations in a way that may not be possible in their place of work.

Participants' feedback has been very positive.
"The programme enabled me to realise and analyse a number of fundamental things about myself, my skills and abilities, and enabled me to rethink my career opportunities. Before undertaking this programme I always thought I could: now I know I can."
Dr. Annabelle Willox, Cardiff University
"This was a very useful course with a very high degree of business and personal relevance. I came away with some very useful perspectives and techniques on the definition of leadership and authority and the practical application of these in a work environment."
Scott Stockwell, IBM

An important area where organisations can offer specific training is on how to come out at work. Not coming out at work can be one of the main barriers to the career development of lesbian and gay employees. Some organisations therefore provide advice on how to come out, and ensure that this training and advice is delivered in an arena where lesbian and gay employees can discuss with each other their concerns and fears around coming out. In this way, organisations can make a valuable contribution to the career development of their gay and lesbian employees.

As with many courses specifically targeted at lesbian and gay employees, particularly in the case of those that deal with advising employees of how to come out, employees who are not out may feel dissuaded from participating for fear that in doing so they may out themselves. This is especially the case if employees need to apply for training through their line manager or need to seek approval from them to take part.

Organisations should try to ensure that application procedures take this into account. They can, for example, allow employees to apply for such training online without having to seek approval of a line manager. They could also arrange courses to take place during employees' free time, such as lunch breaks, evenings or weekends, to circumvent them having to seek approval to attend.

In 2004, **BT** Kaleidoscope launched its assertiveness training course, Confidence Plus, after it consulted members about barriers they encountered to their career development. Some members said that they lacked confidence and would like advice on how to come out in the workplace. The group identified that no relevant training was already on offer and developed the Confidence Plus course as a result.

2. Promoting generic career development opportunities to lesbian and gay employees

Most organisations offer training schemes to all staff which equip participants with the skills to help them to progress to leadership positions. Some lesbian and gay staff may not feel that such training is relevant for them as they might perceive that they are less likely to be promoted owing to their sexual orientation. Some may also feel uncomfortable about undertaking training that will eventually mean that they should leave their current post. This can be a concern because staff may be anxious about having to come out to a new team and new manager. It is therefore important that organisations target the promotion of such training at lesbian and gay employees and send out a clear message that sexual orientation will not form a barrier to promotion or career development.

Organisations should consider targeting generic confidence and assertiveness training as well as people management training to lesbian and gay staff. This could help them feel more comfortable being themselves at work.

Staffordshire Police runs the Leadership Development Programme with Staffordshire University, and participates in the National Police Improvement Agency-run High Potential Development Programme. Both of these training schemes, which are open to all staff, are actively promoted to suitable lesbian and gay staff identified by the organisation. Lesbian and gay staff are encouraged to participate in the schemes through the network group, through their biannual personal development reviews, and through emails, flyers and posters. This has led to nearly everyone in the lesbian and gay network group either participating in the schemes or being made aware of their suitability to apply.

To help encourage lesbian and gay employees to take up training opportunities, it is vital that organisations ensure that trainers and all participants abide by their equality and diversity policies and trainers understand any specific requirements lesbian and gay participants might need to be met. It is also important to monitor the feedback of training courses.

The **Home Office** monitors all feedback from participants in training courses and career development initiatives and asks respondents to identify their sexual orientation. The Home Office is developing an electronic database which will enable them to spot patterns in the sexual orientation of those who both take up training opportunities, and those who are refused opportunities by their line manager. The Home Office anticipates putting in place measures to alleviate any differences experienced by lesbian and gay staff.

3. Mentoring schemes

There is no individual format for mentoring schemes. Different organisations develop different schemes dependent on their structure and the needs of their employees. Many organisations already run some form of mentoring scheme for their employees, each with different structures and levels of formality. What is important is that mentoring schemes, whatever their form, are promoted to all suitable employees, including lesbian and gay employees, and that they can respond to any specific requests of lesbian and gay employees.

Many organisations receive specific requests from lesbian and gay employees for a lesbian or gay mentor. In most cases organisations find that, much like other employees, potential mentees who are lesbian and gay request a mentor with a career path similar to their own regardless of their sexual orientation. However, it is important that, should organisations receive a request specifically for a lesbian or gay mentor, they deal with these requests sensitively and try to find a suitable lesbian or gay mentor.

A number of organisations encourage members of the lesbian and gay network group to nominate themselves to create a pool of lesbian and gay mentors. Network groups are also a useful way of promoting a mentoring scheme to encourage uptake amongst lesbian and gay employees.

Lloyds TSB recognise the value of the mentoring relationship to the career development of both the mentor and the mentee. This is why it has a well established and successful mentoring scheme open to all staff. Lloyds TSB identified that mentoring would prove useful in supporting the career development of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees. They therefore developed a system which enabled them to match lesbian and gay mentees with mentors who have an awareness of lesbian, gay and bisexual issues. This was highlighted to 23,000 managers across the organisation through an intranet article sent to them. This article also encouraged the managers to nominate themselves as mentors. The mentoring scheme is promoted by the Spectrum network group through special events and emails to all its members.

The **Greater London Authority (GLA)** runs a successful mentoring scheme for all staff. Acknowledging the importance of career development to lesbian and gay staff, the GLA supports the GLA LGBT Employee Network in encouraging lesbian and gay staff to volunteer both as mentors and mentees.

Some organisations' network groups run informal mentoring schemes alongside existing mentoring schemes in place to provide lesbian and gay employees alternative sources of mentors.

The **Home Office** network group has founded its own informal mentoring scheme for its members after a number of lesbian and gay employees expressed an interest in becoming mentors. The Home Office's own mentoring scheme is open to all and is still used by lesbian and gay employees, but the Home Office fully supports lesbian and gay staff who wish to seek mentors through the network group.

4. Encouraging role models

Highly visible openly lesbian and gay staff in senior positions in an organisation provide important role models for lesbian and gay employees at every level in the organisation. Encouraging lesbian and gay people in senior positions to be open in the workplace sends a clear message throughout the organisation that sexual orientation is not a barrier to career development.

Transport for London recognises the importance of lesbian and gay role models and the impact that they can have on staff and their perceptions of the opportunities available to them. Transport for London ensures that lesbian and gay staff in senior positions, including the Board, are visible to more junior lesbian and gay staff. This demonstrates that sexual orientation is not a barrier to progression within the organisation.

Publicising the existence of lesbian and gay employees in leadership positions is a good first step. However, providing the encouragement and support to enable these individuals to become active role models is a further way in which organisations can support the career development of lesbian and gay employees. A valuable way of providing this encouragement and supporting the career development of role models is to recognise and promote the value of the skills and knowledge that being a role model provides.

Being a role model involves lesbian and gay employees in leadership positions undertaking an active role in supporting and guiding the career development of other lesbian and gay employees. The level of advice, support and guidance an individual can give will depend on many different factors, so it is important that organisations, in discussion with the individual, identify what role they can play and what support the organisation can give to them. One important task of role models is to provide a valuable opportunity for lesbian and gay employees to network with senior employees.

An openly gay Managing Director at **Morgan Stanley** is actively encouraged and supported in providing informal advice and support to lesbian and gay employees on a whole range of issues, including career development. Not only does Morgan Stanley cover any expenses he incurs in offering this support, but the senior leadership is very responsive to the demands and importance of this role. Morgan Stanley recognises that having openly gay Managing Directors demonstrates to all staff that sexual orientation is not a barrier to career progression.

It is important, however, that organisations do not assume that lesbian and gay employees in leadership positions should either be capable or want to be promoted as a role model in the organisation. Organisations have an equal responsibility to respond to the needs of

their senior lesbian and gay employees as any other employees.

In the absence of role models, or in support of role models already in place, many organisations invite high-profile inspirational speakers to speak on lesbian and gay issues to employees. This demonstrates to staff that lesbian and gay people can succeed in society, and can succeed in their organisation.

Organisations should consider sourcing and funding inspirational speakers to speak to their lesbian and gay staff, particularly about how to overcome obstacles and reach their full potential.

5. Providing tailored career guidance and support

Some organisations feel that offering free advice and support services is the best way for them to support the career development of their lesbian and gay employees. A number of organisations offer career advice services where employees can access guidance on how to plan their career and the training opportunities available to them. This is particularly valuable for new recruits.

To help employees chart their professional and personal growth, **Citi** gathered together all the best practice guidance for employees of how to take charge of their own career development. All the accumulated guidance, which includes how to network, how to identify individual strengths and weaknesses and how to request feedback, is accessible to all employees through Citi's intranet.

All staff at **Transport for London** take part in at least one, if not more, personal development discussions a year with their line manager which includes a discussion of all the relevant career development opportunities open to them.

Morgan Stanley supports its Managing Director mentoring programme to provide support and advice to lesbian and gay employees as required. This advice and support covers both personal and professional issues, including coming out and how to develop their career. An openly gay Managing Director is in an ideal position to offer their perspective on how to progress through Morgan Stanley

Most organisations follow the best practice example of making regular supervisions, reviews or assessments between employees and their line manager obligatory. Many also make discussions about career development an essential part of these meetings. These meetings, when effective, are a very useful way of informing all employees of the opportunities available to them. Organisations should therefore ensure that all line managers have access to information about the different opportunities open to their employees, including initiatives specifically targeted at lesbian and gay staff.

When career discussions are effective, employees:

- gain a clearer sense of the direction of their career
- develop a more realistic view of their skills and potential
- develop a broader understanding of the opportunities open to them
- feel more confident and motivated
- feel more open to the idea of moving within the organisation

It is important, however, that organisations ensure that these meetings, and line managers themselves, are not the only channel through which information on the career development opportunities open to employees can be accessed. In some cases, managers may form negative perceptions of a lesbian and gay employee's potential. To overcome this, organisations should allow all employees access to information about career development opportunities, and where suitable, enable employees to make an application without first seeking their line manager's approval.

All line managers and staff in the **Home Office** have access to a Central Learning and Development Database, on which all development opportunities are listed. The Home Office is currently developing the capability where staff can apply for training courses online and the application is automatically sent to their line manager for approval. This will enable lesbian and gay employees to identify training they feel they need and will mean line managers' reasons for denying such requests will be recorded.

Many organisations offer more general advice and support services that can also extend to counselling services. As part of this service, some organisations train their counselling staff on how to offer career guidance or where to refer employees to seek career guidance.

The **GLA** operates a free and confidential telephone support service, the Employee Assistance Programme, which is open to all staff. This programme offers employees help to resolve personal and professional concerns and problems. The service has trained counsellors and specialists on lesbian and gay issues available to lesbian and gay callers should they request them.

Liverpool John Moores University has a student and staff counselling service which supports the needs of lesbian and gay staff and a Centre for Staff Development which offers career development coaching and mentoring support for lesbian and gay staff if they express concerns about their career development.

6. Providing leadership

Demonstrating leadership on issues relevant to lesbian and gay employees can play an important part in aiding their career development. This includes influencing internal policies, but also includes the development and promotion of policies that affect those outside the organisation.

Internally, key senior staff can visibly lend their support, sponsor or champion equality for lesbian and gay employees within the organisation. This clear and demonstrable leadership, which many organisations have already developed, encourages a culture where

lesbian and gay employees feel valued. This can also include developing policies that fully consider the impact that they may have on lesbian and gay people.

An organisation can also demonstrate clear leadership externally through its involvement with the wider lesbian and gay community. For public bodies, this can include initiatives to tackle issues relevant to the local lesbian and gay community, for example, homophobic hate crime or targeted health services. For other organisations this leadership can be demonstrated through their participation in different events and initiatives important to the lesbian and gay community, such as supporting schools to prevent homophobic bullying.

Morgan Stanley's funding of the Mayor of London's Pride Reception in 2007, at which an openly gay Managing Director spoke, was promoted on the front page of Morgan Stanley's intranet. This not only deliberately made the Managing Director in question highly visible to lesbian and gay employees in the organisation, but also promoted his role in offering advice and support to them on their career development. It also demonstrated to staff Morgan Stanley's commitment to supporting the wider lesbian and gay community.

COMMUNICATING WITH EMPLOYEES

CHAPTER 4

Communicating career development opportunities to lesbian and gay employees

It is important that organisations take a proactive and targeted approach to communicating both generic and tailored career development opportunities to their lesbian and gay staff. All staff should be advised of the training opportunities available to them and told where they can get more specific support, guidance or advice.

Communicating training opportunities during induction and informing all new recruits that the organisation will try to address any specific requirements, including those to do with their sexual orientation, is an easy first step in opening up career development opportunities to lesbian and gay employees. This can send a clear, initial message to lesbian and gay employees that an organisation understands some of their particular concerns, and has put in place measures to address them.

The lesbian and gay network group at **Staffordshire Police** promotes the force to potential recruits at community events. Prospective lesbian and gay employees are given information about the High Potential Development Scheme and are invited to apply at the same time as they apply to join the force. The network group can help potential recruits complete the form. This sends a clear signal to potential recruits that career development is integral to lesbian and gay employees recruitment.

London Underground has an apprenticeship programme. During the first three weeks, all new recruits are given extensive diversity training. This training not only covers the rights of others at work, but also informs different groups, including lesbian and gay recruits, about the rights and opportunities accessible during their careers at the London Underground.

Many organisations promote career development opportunities through their lesbian and gay network group, with many network groups helping facilitate training and careers guidance.

It is important, however, that career development programmes are promoted well beyond the membership of network groups to reach the widest range of employees. It is also important that organisations consider whether all staff have access to the same forms of communication, such as emails, and to what extent lesbian and gay employees who are not out at work are able to receive information about and partake in these programmes.

Many of the staff who work for **London Underground** do not have access to the internet or email system at work. London Underground have therefore developed other mechanisms for communicating with staff. For example, training opportunities are promoted via posters across 500 sites. This is to ensure that all staff, across different operations, have access to information on the training opportunities available.

Whilst **Staffordshire Police** has had a very high take up rate of its career development initiatives by the members of its lesbian and gay network group and other lesbian and gay support networks, they identified through monitoring that the majority of its lesbian and gay employees were not members of the network group. They therefore use a wide variety of targeted means to communicate career development opportunities to all their lesbian and gay employees including posters, information emails, flyers and notes attached to their pay slips.

At **BT**, all employees receive an annual Personal Development Review. This provides an opportunity to establish what training is available to employees. BT Kaleidoscope communicates with its members around this time to ensure that employees consider Confidence Plus and other offerings in the development review. The training is also promoted through the company's electronic staff communications website. It's also promoted on btkaleidoscope.co.uk, accessible by all employees whether they are members of the group or not. Information about the Confidence Plus programme is also distributed in the form of a mail shot to all Kaleidoscope members.

Some organisations can target information about career development opportunities to their lesbian and gay staff. They can attach, with strict limits on confidentiality, equality and diversity information to an employee's personnel file.

As part of the development of its electronic human resources database, the **Home Office** is developing the capability for senior human resources managers to identify individual lesbian and gay employees who might benefit from career development initiatives.

Managing expectations

Some participants who feel empowered by the career development opportunities offered to them may feel disappointed and become demotivated if their career does not progress in the way they hoped. Lesbian and gay employees are no different in this respect. It is important that all organisations manage the expectations of lesbian and gay staff who take part in career development initiatives.

As many organisations will already know from career development programmes for other groups, a central part of any career development initiative is training staff to identify their potential career paths based on their skills and potential. Offering advice and support about the realistic career opportunities open to them is a good way of managing expectations from the beginning of their career development. It is also important to continue to manage the expectations of lesbian and gay staff after they have completed training.

An integral part of **Citi**'s ethos of employees taking charge of their own career development is helping them to identify their own potential. All employees have access to comprehensive and interactive guidance on the intranet on how to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. Learning and development opportunities are widely available through either traditional classroom training or e-learning modules.

Part of the **Home Office**'s positive action programme involves supplying participants with a coach who helps them create a development plan which sets out what they need to do to follow their chosen career path and the timescale in which they can reasonably expect to do it.

Many organisations already manage the expectations of internal applicants for positions in an informal manner. However, organisations should also explicitly caution as part of the initiatives that the career progression of participants will be reliant on merit. A vital part of managing the expectations of lesbian and gay employees is to offer feedback in response to any internal applications they may make.

Staffordshire Police have been very successful in their promotion of career development opportunities to lesbian and gay staff. As a result of this success, Staffordshire Police had a backlog of individuals with leadership training, but no leadership positions available. Staffordshire Police recognised that it was crucial to ensure that such staff did not feel demotivated. The force therefore reiterated to those employees that they were highly valued members of the team, and reassured them that more opportunities would become available in the future. Lesbian and gay staff also felt that the skills and experience gained from the training were a valuable form of career development in itself.

Citi manages the expectations of the participants of the 'Coaching for Success' programme from the outset. It is made clear to participants that the purpose of the programme is to help them develop their skills and put their career plans into perspective, and that participation in the programme is no guarantee of promotion.

The legal framework for lesbian and gay specific career development initiatives

There may be concerns about the legality under the Equality Act 2010 of running specific programmes for lesbian and gay staff. It is not unlawful to target, or promote, existing schemes and courses which are already open to all, to lesbian and gay employees. Nor is it unlawful to run specific schemes or initiatives for lesbian and gay people for the purpose of helping them develop their skills and potential.

The Act contains an exemption that applies to activity designed to redress any disadvantages lesbian and gay employees face in work because of their sexual orientation. Employers need only to demonstrate that they 'reasonably think' that lesbian and gay employees suffer a disadvantage at work, have different needs to their straight colleagues or participate less in a particular activity, and that any scheme or initiative they target at lesbian and gay employees is a proportionate means of addressing these issues. Organisations would be well advised to consult their lesbian and gay employees as to what disadvantages they feel they face in their career development, and how they feel the organisation should tackle them.

Some employees may feel that this exception for positive action is unfair. It is therefore good practice to explain to all staff the

necessity for such career development initiatives and to provide similar initiatives for heterosexual staff. It is also vital to send out a clear message to all staff that all appointments are made on merit.

BT Kaleidoscope had some queries from people who wondered whether its Confidence Plus programme, targeted at lesbian and gay staff, actually discriminated against heterosexual staff, in offering advantages to lesbian and gay staff. The BT network countered this firstly by informing them that the course was open to all its members regardless of their sexual orientation and secondly explaining about the unique experiences some lesbian and gay employees have, particularly with difficulties in coming out at work.

Citi rarely encounters resistance to its female only 'Coaching for Success' programme. When it occasionally does, its response is threefold: 1) the programme is a legitimate tool towards improving the number of female leaders in the organisation; 2) that it is the only single-gender development programme and there are extensive learning and development opportunities available for all staff; 3) Citi's Equal Opportunities and Recruitment policy states that all positions in the organisation will be awarded on merit, and that participation in the programme is no guarantee whatsoever of promotion.

The **Home Office** manages any resistance to its positive action programmes by reminding all employees that it is not only the policy of the Home Office to be proportionally reflective across all levels of the organisation, but it is an expectation of the community they serve. The Home Office also funds and supports all the network groups to communicate the necessity for such schemes by the communities they represent. These messages are communicated through numerous media including the intranet, statements from the Board, the employee newsletter and through conferences and events.

Making the case to staff

Organisations should take a proactive approach in communicating any lesbian and gay specific initiatives to staff. Some organisations may face resistance from heterosexual staff to initiatives targeted at lesbian and gay employees. For the success of the lesbian and gay specific career development initiatives and to ensure that all staff feel motivated, organisations should take steps to manage any resistance they encounter. Organisations may also find that lesbian and gay people are reticent about specific opportunities targeted at them. This is because they may not necessarily identify the barriers that exist to their career development. Making the case to lesbian and gay staff

can be crucial for schemes to be successful.

Some organisations open up their lesbian and gay targeted initiatives to all staff. This enables any member of staff to attend, without necessarily indicating to their manager that they are lesbian or gay. It also minimises the likelihood that a specific scheme will be criticised for providing "special" opportunities to certain groups. Organisations ensure that whilst the content and purpose of their initiatives may be to tackle issues specific to lesbian and gay staff, such as how to come out at work, all staff can participate in them. These organisations find that their specific initiatives for lesbian and gay staff are also useful for heterosexual staff in both helping them to understand the needs of lesbian and gay staff and for developing their own skills, particularly their confidence and assertiveness.

In order to manage scepticism about targeted career development opportunities, organisations should consider reiterating to all staff that:

- all appointments are made on merit
- lesbian and gay employees are under-represented in leadership positions and this needs to be addressed
- many lesbian and gay employees have different requirements that need to be addressed
- all staff have access to similar training schemes, where relevant, or that specific schemes for lesbian and gay employees are open to all
- all staff must abide by the organisation's equality and diversity policy

EVALUATING SUCCESS

5 CHAPTER

To ensure the continued success of career development initiatives, and in order to provide participants with the best tools to help them develop their careers, organisations should have comprehensive feedback, evaluation and monitoring systems in place.

Collecting feedback and consulting lesbian and gay employees

Most organisations have well established participant feedback mechanisms for their training courses and other initiatives, which then help tailor those courses in the future. These same mechanisms could be used for any training courses targeted specifically at lesbian and gay employees. For generic initiatives, organisations should ensure that they monitor the sexual orientation of participants in their feedback. This will help them to identify any issues surrounding the experiences of lesbian and gay participants.

It is important that organisations continue to consult their lesbian and gay staff for specific recommendations about initiatives and to identify any further issues they may encounter during their career development.

BT Kaleidoscope annually consults the previous year's participants of their Confidence Plus programme to help the evolution of the following year's course.

Monitoring and tracking career progression

In the long term, organisations should implement monitoring strategies to allow them to assess whether initiatives to support the career development of lesbian and gay employees have led to improved retention, progression and motivation of their lesbian and gay staff. Organisations should aim to implement monitoring of all internal promotions and of all employees leaving the organisation. They should also aim to annually monitor the sexual orientation of all staff across all levels to highlight any changes in the proportion of lesbian and gay employees at different levels, departments or teams.

Some organisations can monitor the career progression of their staff over time to help identify potential obstacles specific groups may be encountering in their career development. This level of monitoring requires both technological sophistication and well developed confidentiality policies that have been open to consultation.

The **Home Office** is developing an entirely electronic Human Resources database, completed by employees. This database will not only hold basic data on employees, but will also hold their self-updating diversity and equality data. Through their individual employee number, only accessible by a core number of senior Human Resources staff, the system will eventually be able to track the career progression of lesbian and gay employees throughout the organisation.

Continuing to develop career development opportunities

As monitoring systems develop and become more sophisticated, organisations will be able to identify individuals of high potential, or more easily identify teams, levels and even line managers that may be a barrier to the career development of particular groups of people. Only a few organisations have begun to implement the complex technological systems and policies to make this possible.

The **Home Office** intends to develop a system where all employees will be asked to assess their own skills and potential and identify whether they feel they are employed at the correct level given their capabilities. This assessment will be discussed with the employee and the line manager and high performing lesbian and gay employees will be identified by senior human resources personnel. These employees can then receive targeted career development opportunities to help them fulfill their potential.

TEN STEPS TO SUPPORT CAREER DEVELOPMENT

1 **Consult** the lesbian and gay employee network and other lesbian and gay employees on what issues they have identified with regards to their career development.

2 **Learn** lessons from other groups such as female, disabled and black and minority ethnic employees. Consult these network groups as to what lessons they have learnt from the establishment of existing schemes and identify how they could be adapted to address the needs of lesbian and gay employees.

3 **Assess** all career development opportunities the organisation has on offer to identify whether they fully meet the needs of lesbian and gay employees, as identified through consultation. If they do not, alter them and promote that you have done so to lesbian and gay employees, or consider establishing new schemes specifically tackling the issues raised.

4 **Promote** existing career development opportunities to lesbian and gay staff and allow all staff access to comprehensive information on all the career development opportunities throughout the organisation, rather than relying on their line manager for information.

5 **Encourage** and support lesbian and gay employees to come out. Ask them if they want to be a role model, provide support, and promote their existence in the organisation.

6 **Understand** the issues that affect lesbian and gay people. Provide careers guidance and support to all staff that responds to issues raised by lesbian and gay employees that relate to their sexual orientation. Ensure that this guidance is available through different channels and enables lesbian and gay employees to assess their own strengths, weaknesses and potential.

7 **Manage the expectations** of lesbian and gay staff who undertake career development opportunities. Make it clear to participants precisely what they will obtain from the opportunity and remind all staff that all promotions are based on merit.

8 **Ensure** that if offering tailored initiatives to lesbian and gay staff, similar training is provided for other staff. For example, if a course offering advice on coming out entails confidence building and assertiveness training, similar generic confidence and assertiveness training should be on offer for other staff.

9 **Communicate** with all staff as to why the organisation is addressing the career development of lesbian and gay employees. Consider funding the lesbian and gay network group to begin a visible campaign educating all staff about the difficulties lesbian and gay employees face.

10 **Monitor** sexual orientation across all levels of the organisation to obtain reliable data on the representation of lesbian and gay people across all levels, including internal promotion and exit interviews.

Stonewall Diversity Champions programme

Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme is Britain's good practice forum through which major employers work with Stonewall and each other on sexual orientation issues to promote diversity in the workplace. www.stonewall.org.uk/dcs

Workplace Equality Index

The Workplace Equality Index is Stonewall's comprehensive annual benchmarking exercise that showcases Britain's top employers for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff. www.stonewall.org.uk/wei

The Stonewall Leadership Programme

The Stonewall Leadership Programme provides a unique space to look at questions around sexual orientation and authenticity and how these can be used to develop an individual's leadership abilities. www.stonewall.org.uk/leadership

The Stonewall Workplace Conference

This conference is the must-attend event for anyone involved in delivering lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) workplace equality. It will give you all the tools you need to stay at the forefront of best practice. www.stonewall.org.uk/wpc

***Starting Out* Careers Guide and Proud Employers**

Profile your organisation to LGB talent in our guide and on our website at www.startingoutguide.org.uk. Also, list your career opportunities on the Proud Employers website www.proudemployers.org.uk. Both of these are exclusive benefits for Diversity Champion members.

Stonewall Workplace Guides are free to download from

www.stonewall.org.uk/at_work

Also in this series of Workplace Guides:

Network Groups	*Religion and Sexual Orientation*
Monitoring	*Bisexual People in the Workplace*
Bullying	*Straight Allies*
Marketing	*Procurement*

Thank you to all those who participated in this guide

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Stonewall

www.stonewall.org.uk