

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Equality in Employment Project



Earn More Than Respect

the business case for fostering LGB equality in the workplace



Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
www.delni.gov.uk

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The Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Equality in Employment Project would like to support your business by offering free half day seminars, tailored consultancy, support and advice, promoting greater equality and diversity in the workplace, leading to improved productivity and growth and keeping your business in line with current relevant legislation.

Businesses are facing increasing challenges in a competitive economy where workforces and customer bases are more diverse than ever. In a time of economic stress we need to find innovative ways to stimulate our economy, and reduce the number of days productivity lost each year. Businesses which foster and promote diversity do better in terms of productivity and growth, with higher staff retention rates.

While promoting equality and diversity in the workplace is one way a business can demonstrate their compliance with the law, evidence shows better results for businesses that view equality and diversity as intrinsic parts of their organisation, central to the ethos and culture of the business, rather than an add on.



Research carried out by The Rainbow Project in 2010/2011 showed that:

- *26.9% of LGB people working in the private sector conceal their sexual orientation;*
- *31.7% of LGB people working in the private sector believe that their sexual orientation will have a negative impact on their chances of progressing in work;*
- *42.5% of LGB people from the private sector have heard negative comments about LGB people from a colleague or colleagues in the workplace.*

Moreover it is estimated that the UK lost £4.55 billion due to work related stress in 2007 of which £682.5 million can be attributed to workplace bullying. It is also estimated that 33.5 million days were lost by UK businesses and organisations due to bullying related absenteeism, almost 200,000 employees would have left organisations and the equivalent of 100 million days productivity were lost as a result of bullying.

Introduction to the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Equality in Employment Project

The LGB Equality in Employment Project, funded by The Department for Employment and Learning, aims to promote greater diversity and equality in the workplace, leading to improved working relations for employees and, in the longer term, to improved productivity and growth across the Northern Irish economy.

Working in an “LGB friendly environment” has been shown to have a positive impact on LGB workers who are more likely to be ‘out’ at work. It fosters openness and confidence, improved productivity and effectiveness as well as loyalty and pride in the organisation.

The project will raise awareness among employers of the problems experienced by LGB people in the workplace and will highlight the benefits to employers of having robust equality and diversity policies in place.



Introduction to The Rainbow Project

The Rainbow Project is Northern Ireland's largest support organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people and their families.

We provide information, education and training on behalf of LGB&T people to community, voluntary and statutory agencies and private sector employers.

We work to deliver positive change for, and promote the health and well-being of, LGB&T people in Northern Ireland.

“I would love to feel comfortable talking about my partner the way straight people talk about theirs. They don't even have to think about it”

The LGB Workforce in Northern Ireland

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people make up between 6% and 10% of the general population in Northern Ireland. This means that out of a workforce of 814,000 people, approximately between 48,840 and 81,400 people are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.



The Legal Picture: Employers Statutory Responsibilities

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003;

outlaws direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the workplace on the grounds of sexual orientation.

The Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978;

makes employers responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees, which covers the effects of bullying and harassment.

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006;

makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services.

Sex Discrimination Gender Reassignment Regulations (NI) 1999;

protect against discrimination on grounds of sex in pay and treatment (only direct discrimination)

Sex Discrimination (Amendment to Legislation) Regulations 2008;

Protects against direct discrimination and harassment of trans people (those that intend on, are going through or have gone through gender reassignment)

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;

places a duty on public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity under various equality strands including sexual orientation.



“I feel like the company I work for is operating the ‘Don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy, the one that used to be in place in the US Army ”

Why Equality and Diversity in the workplace?

The ability of almost every private and public organisation to produce the best service or product is dependent on the knowledge, skills and contributions of their entire workforce.

It is clear that businesses which go over and above minimum requirements will see better results with the implementation of robust and comprehensive equality and diversity policies that are central to the functions of the business. It is important that employers take steps to foster safe and welcoming environments for their lesbian, gay and bisexual staff, as well as their customers, suppliers and service users.

Promoting a good and harmonious working environment where all staff, regardless of their sexual orientation, can be themselves, helps LGB staff form better relationships, enjoy work and demonstrate improved productivity. This affirmation of minority sexual orientations also makes a broader point to colleagues, both heterosexual and LGB, regarding the value and importance of being open about our differences.

“Maybe I’m blessed because where I work there is no discrimination regarding sexual orientation at all, and it wouldn’t be tolerated”



What's in it for you?

Benefits to employers

Promoting diversity in the workplace by developing inclusive workplace cultures, where all staff can perform to their full potential, makes good business sense and will have beneficial results including:

Reputation

Reputational benefits for the company, such as demonstrating that the company is open, creative and forward thinking. Highlighting your company as an employer of choice for diverse talent, increases your ability to attract the best staff from domestic and international labour markets.

Performance

Creativity resides in diversity. A diverse and open workplace, where LGB staff can be open and where homophobic bullying is effectively addressed ensures that staff satisfaction is high, staff sickness and absenteeism is low, which improves overall productivity

Recruitment and Retention

The values of diversity and inclusion play a significant role in human resources. An open, diverse and confident workplace does better at recruiting and retaining the best staff, which is particularly important in a global, competitive and fast changing economy.

Risk Mitigation

Companies that have robust policies and practices in place regarding sexual orientation are more likely to avoid the risk of complaints and grievances, incidents of bullying, sickness and staff absenteeism.

Competitiveness

Businesses that are open, diverse and LGB friendly not only retain and recruit good staff but also understand the needs of their customers better, enabling them to reach new markets and engage minority sectors positively and successfully.



Diversity in employment is important and contributes to better overall performances for not only individual employers but the economy as a whole. There is clear evidence of the positive relationship between the adoption by organisations of equality policies and employee performances resulting in increased commitment, better work/life balance, reduced stress, job satisfaction, innovation and creativity.

“Generally my sexuality is a non-issue in the workplace. It is used by a select few in order to undermine me in front of others”



We're here to help

The LGB Equality in Employment Project will provide employers with:

- LGB Equality in Employment Seminars (aimed at human resource, senior management and corporate personnel staff) covering sexual orientation awareness, experiences of LGB people in the workplace and the importance and benefits of having robust equality and diversity policies;
- Consultancy support on best practice policies and procedures covering Equal Opportunities, Anti Bullying and Harassment and Family Friendly policies;
- Training on Sexual Orientation Awareness, for staff at all levels and tailored to the particular employment sector of the company;
- Assistance with the development of equality and diversity policies or the inclusion of issues regarding sexual orientation into existing policies;

- Advice on the monitoring of sexual orientation of staff using best practice examples and how to use collected data;
- Guidance on establishing LGB staff support networks and engaging LGB staff and the wider LGB community.

What to do next

If you would like to avail of this FREE service or would like further information please contact Aidan on 02890319030 aidan@rainbow-project.org or go to www.rainbow-project.org Alternatively contact us via facebook or twitter @TRPNI.



