



Considering Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual People at Manchester Metropolitan University

This factsheet supports the University in strengthening its general duty under the Equality Act 2010 and to have due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic¹ and those who do not.

It contains information for staff and students at MMU on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) people in order to help raise awareness, support and understanding and sets out the definitions, the legal context and ways in which to meet people's needs.

Who are lesbian, gay or bisexual people?

'Bisexual' is an orientation involving physical and/or romantic attraction to both females and males, especially in regards to men and women.

'Gay' in simple terms, means that you are sexually attracted to members of your own sex and that you identify with other gay people or the larger gay community.

'Gay Man' is an orientation involving physical and/or romantic attraction of men towards other men.

'Lesbian' is an orientation involving physical and/or romantic attraction of women towards other women.

Legal context

The provision of *Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003)* within the *Equality Act 2010* protects employees and students (and prospective employees and students) from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Heterosexual people as well as LGB people are protected by this legislation, which the courts have interpreted to extend to discrimination on the grounds of 'perceived' sexual orientation.

Confidentiality

Revealing the sexual orientation of a person to others, either by disclosing information to individuals or groups – in other words 'outing' someone, amounts to bullying, harassment and discrimination which are unlawful.

Confidentiality can be a matter of personal safety rather than purely about privacy.

Communication and engagement

Good communication for university staff includes:

- Listening to how people describe their own identity, gender partners, relationships and reflect their choice of language.
- Avoiding making assumptions about a person's sexual orientation or gender identity; use gender neutral terms such as 'partner(s)'.
- Respecting people's privacy.
- Respecting people's boundaries. If you feel it is appropriate to ask a personal question, first ask if it is ok to do so.

Do not be afraid to challenge negative comments and jokes about LGB people and or LGB issues or report any incidents of homophobic abuse.

A cautionary note, some LGB people may have reclaimed derogatory words such as 'dyke', 'fag', or 'queer' to describe themselves but it is not appropriate for our organisation to use these words to describe people. As a general rule, people should also avoid using the label 'homosexual' as it is still viewed negatively. Most people are happy with 'lesbian', 'gay', or 'bisexual' but if in doubt, ask! Please note, some lesbians do not identify with this description and class themselves as 'gay women'. Do not use the word 'gay' as a negative connotation as this is extremely offensive.

Meeting other needs

Gender reassignment is a separate protected characteristic and unrelated to sexual orientation. It is important to remember that being trans is about gender identity and not sexual orientation. Trans people can be LGB or straight (heterosexual).

¹ The new duty covers the following 8 protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Links and resources

Albert Kennedy Trust - AKT Now! Supporting Young LGBT People

www.akt.org.uk

Equality Challenge Unit's Guidance 'Experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans staff and students in higher education: research report 2009'

www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/lgbt-staff-and-students-in-he

Equality Challenge Unit's Guidance 'Advancing LGB equality'

www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/advancing-lgb-equality

The Lesbian & Gay Foundation - Ending Homophobia, Empowering People

www.lgf.org.uk

Stonewall: The Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Charity

www.stonewall.org.uk

For more information

For more information, please contact the Equality & Diversity team:

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Acknowledgments

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NHS Trusts