TOP TIPS FOR AN LGBT+ INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE
ACTION FOR CHILDREN HAS UNIQUE SERVICES AND WORKPLACES ACROSS THE UK, WITH A DIVERSE RANGE OF PEOPLE COMING INTO CONTACT WITH OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS ON A DAILY BASIS. AS THE MOST SENIOR LGBT+ MANAGER AND ROLE MODEL AT ACTION FOR CHILDREN, I WANT TO ENSURE THAT EVERYONE AT ACTION FOR CHILDREN NOT ONLY UNDERSTANDS OUR COMMITMENT TO LGBT+ SERVICE USERS, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS BUT ALSO FEELS IT WITHIN OUR SERVICES AND OFFICES. THIS HELPFUL GUIDE PROVIDES CLEAR TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR SERVICE AND WORKPLACE LGBT+ FRIENDLY FOR EVERYONE.

John Egan, Operational Director, North.
FOREWORD

‘It is a pleasure to introduce Celebrate LGBT+’s top tips guide for making your service and workplace LGBT+ inclusive.

As a children’s services manager, I know only too well the challenges that we face in our services and the importance of a culture that is supportive, creative and inclusive. We must celebrate diversity within our teams and services and encourage people to bring their whole selves to work.

This is why my role as chair of Action for Children’s LGBT staff network, Celebrate, is incredibly important to me. I feel passionately that an environment which encourages and supports diversity can ultimately improve outcomes for children, young people and families, by removing barriers that some colleagues might face if they do not feel able to be themselves at work.

I hope that you find the top tips beneficial and look forward to hearing what you have done to make your service and workplace LGBT+ inclusive.’

Claire Cahill, Chair of Celebrate LGBT+ and Children’s Services Manager

TOP TIP 1: WELCOMING

When an LGBT+ child, young person or parent enters an Action for Children service, their sexual orientation is unlikely to be the first thing they disclose. But that doesn’t mean they won’t be looking for signs that they will be respected, supported and treated fairly.

Action for Children’s staff and volunteers are the first point of contact for children, young people and parents accessing our services across the UK. They must treat everyone with equal respect, regardless of their identity or sexual orientation.

How an individual describes their own identity, gender, partner and relationships will affect their choice of language and how they wish to be addressed. Listen to how children, young people and parents describe their identity, gender, partners and relationships and reflect their choice of language. Avoid making assumptions about a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity and use gender-neutral terms such as partner.

Encourage staff and volunteers to challenge negative comments and ‘jokes’ about LGBT+ people, and ensure that people know they must take responsibility for modelling inclusive practice and challenging derogatory language and behaviour.

SUPPORT STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS SHOULD REPORT INCIDENTS OF HOMOPHOBIC ABUSE, WHETHER THEY OCCUR WITHIN OR OUTSIDE OF THE WORKPLACE.

Action for Children takes a zero tolerance approach to LGBT+ discrimination, so ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the dignity at work policy. Challenge preconceptions, look beyond the stereotypes and see the person. Take any reports of homophobic behaviour within the workplace seriously, and act on them promptly.
**TOP TIP 2: VISIBLE**

There are so many visual things you can do to make your service and workplace inclusive for service users, partners, colleagues and volunteers. The rainbow flag is immediately recognisable, vibrant and welcoming. Here are five ways to make your service and workplace visibly LGBT+ inclusive:

- **LGBT+ noticeboard in reception**
  The rainbow flag is easily identifiable, vibrant and welcoming. Include posters about Action for Children’s LGBT+ work and external posters from partners such as Stonewall. This is a cost-effective and relatively easy way to not only make LGBT+ people feel welcome and at ease, but also a way to share information and raise awareness of LGBT+ equality.

- **Rainbow lanyard**
  Action for Children’s national and regional role models wear rainbow lanyards so that they are easily identifiable to LGBT+ children, young people, families, colleagues and volunteers.

- **Display equality and diversity policy**
  Policies can be technical and wordy, so consider developing the key concepts of the policy into an understandable and child-friendly format. The key messages focus on being supported to be yourself in the workplace and to celebrate diversity. You could even ask children and young people to design a poster for your service.

- **Advertise Celebrate LGBT+ staff and volunteer network**
  Celebrate LGBT+ is open for all staff and volunteers to join. Members can receive a monthly newsletter and training and development opportunities. This is another way of ensuring visibility for LGBT+ service users, staff and volunteers and contributes to an inclusive environment.

- **Promote your role models and allies**
  Encourage senior LGBT+ people to come out and support colleagues, volunteers and individuals who access our services. Senior visibility is symbolic and can contribute significantly to an inclusive service and workplace. Also, straight allies of LGBT+ people can be a powerful tool in the pursuit of inclusivity. A support network of allies enables individuals to join in without actually coming out; this can be particularly useful in less inclusive environments.

**TOP TIP 3: SUPPORTIVE**

It is important that your service and workplace is supportive of all LGBT+ people, some of whom will have multiple identities.

The T stands for transgender and often has nothing to do with sexuality; yet, surprisingly, many think it does. Transgender people are a minority within a minority and all too often face invasive questions, rumours and discrimination, not to mention being overlooked in business. Support of transgender people is vital to a truly inclusive environment for all. Display Action for Children’s guides for working with trans colleagues, volunteers and children and young people. Ensure that the guides are readily available.

You may also have a young person, parent, colleague or volunteer who wants to come out but needs support. Don’t assume everyone is heterosexual and acknowledge the relationships of staff equally, by ensuring that anniversaries, births, marriages and civil partnerships are celebrated in the same way. Use the term ‘partners’ when inviting spouses to social activities. This is a more inclusive and non-gender-specific term, and includes same-sex couples.

**BE CAREFUL NOT TO REVEAL A LGBT+ PERSON’S SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY WITHOUT PERMISSION, AND IN TRAINING OR INFORMATION SESSIONS FOR EMPLOYEES OR MANAGERS, USE CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF SITUATIONS THAT PERTAIN TO LGBT+ INDIVIDUALS.**

For example, ensure that everyone is aware that Action for Children’s benefits are inclusive of LGBT+ staff.
**TOP TIP 4: ENGAGING**

Gender-neutral language can be helpful when you don’t know someone. Try not to ask your colleague if she has a boyfriend; ask about her partner and go even further by offering Mx as an alternative to Mr/Mrs/Ms. Know what’s offensive and challenge homophobic language everywhere.

Take the time to learn about the cultural backgrounds, lives and interests of employees and volunteers outside of the workplace. Building relationships through increased understanding and trust can help to foster inclusion within your workplace.

It’s important to consider opportunities for staff to interact in settings outside of work, so that staff and volunteers have the opportunity to get to know their colleagues. Be creative, flexible and look for new ways of doing things. For example, organise a summer BBQ and make sure that everyone has the opportunity to take part in decision-making and planning for social activities.

**BE AWARE OF AND CELEBRATE CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AND HOLY DAYS, HELPING COLLEAGUES AND VOLUNTEERS TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF MULTIPLE IDENTITIES, RECOGNISE AND ACKNOWLEDGE SPECIAL DAYS AND EVENTS, SUCH AS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, BLACK HISTORY MONTH, AND IDAHO DAY.**

**TOP TIP 5: INSPIRING**

We want LGBT+ staff and volunteers to have more positive workplace relationships and experiences. In this guide, we have already explored the benefits of visibility, engagement and support. But how can we ensure that Action for Children is a fully LGBT+ inclusive service deliverer and workplace?

This is where LGBT+ managers, and straight allies, can help to inspire others to raise awareness of LGBT+ equality and become visible role models. LGBT+ role models and straight allies show a passion for their work and are able to infect others with their passion. They provide a working environment that empowers children, young people, families, staff and volunteers to be themselves and live their values in their work. In addition, they are open-minded and have a true acceptance of others who are different from them.

Do you have a senior member of staff who is openly LGB or T? Has someone in your network group recently won an award or been successful in a particular project? Profiling these people will send a positive message that your organisation is one which values all staff and service users, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Even if you do not have out and visible LGBT+ role models, inspire colleagues and volunteers by hosting events or inviting guests to speak.
NOTES.
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Action for Children supports and protects the young and vulnerable as they grow up. We make their lives better: now, tomorrow and every day.

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