

WHO IS THIS LEAFLET DESIGNED TO HELP?

This leaflet aims to offer practical information for service providers in Oxfordshire from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The following teams in your organisation/business may find it particularly useful:

- Customer service staff
- Human Resources
- Teams dealing with health/welfare issues
- Teams directly supporting young people

Language etiquette

If you do need to refer to somebody's sexual orientation, the following terms are regarded as acceptable:

- 'a gay man'
- 'a gay woman/lesbian'
- 'a bisexual person'
- 'a heterosexual person'

WHAT IS HALT?



HALT is a multi agency partnership which aims to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Oxfordshire.

WHO MAKES UP HALT?

- Representatives from the LGBT community in Oxfordshire
- The five district councils
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Thames Valley Police
- Terrence Higgins Trust
- Criminal Justice Board
- Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust

For more information about HALT, visit our website www.oxhalt.co.uk

Transgender service users/ employees - it is also important for service providers not to discriminate against transgender people. For more information, please see HALT's advice leaflet on promoting transgender equality (available at www.oxhalt.co.uk) or visit www.equalityhumanrights.com

Are your services accessible to all?

An advice leaflet for service providers about promoting sexual orientation equality



This leaflet has been produced by Oxfordshire's Homophobia Awareness Liaison Team (HALT).

WHAT IS SEXUAL ORIENTATION EQUALITY?

It's about making sure that people have the same opportunities in life, irrespective of their sexual orientation.

It means giving lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people the same access to the services and/or employment opportunities that you provide. They should not face any form of harassment or unlawful discrimination when either working for you or being served by you.

In order to achieve this, your business/organisation will need to be flexible towards and respectful of people's needs relating to their sexual orientation.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER TO MY ORGANISATION/BUSINESS?

By promoting sexual orientation equality for both your service users and employees, you will be:

- Providing excellent customer service for all, leading to increased satisfaction and repeat custom

- Providing a positive work environment where staff feel valued and motivated
- Staying within the law - service providers and employers must not discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation. This is set out in the **Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007** and the **Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003**.

KEY THINGS TO CONSIDER

Here's a list of some practical things you can do to help build a culture of respect and fairness:

Policies and procedures

- Review your Human Resources policies to check that they promote fair employment opportunities for everyone, including LGB people.
- Have and promote a zero-tolerance policy regarding harassment relating to somebody's sexual orientation - this should cover internal relations and external relations with customers.
- Have a clear process for dealing with any customer or employee complaints relating to sexual orientation discrimination.

Staff training

- Train your staff about sexual orientation equality so they understand their role and responsibilities.
- If appropriate, give your staff the information they need to help signpost service users to sources of support relating to LGB issues. Relevant support services are listed on the HALT website (www.oxhalt.co.uk).
- Encourage staff not to make assumptions about people but to be sensitive to people's personal lives and observe confidentiality.

Publicity/service information

- Try to use photos in your service information which represent your whole customer base.

Consultation

- Get feedback about your services from all sections of your customer base (including LGB people) to make sure that what you're providing is meeting their needs. For details of local LGB groups, please visit HALT's website.

Sources of further information

- Stonewall - www.stonewall.org.uk
- Terrence Higgins Trust - www.tht.org.uk