



LGBT+ Diversity & Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion Working Group
August 2021

Overview

We are living in a more progressive society than ever before. This is reflected in the workplace with demands for organisations to have a dynamic approach to diversity and inclusion. Research indicates increasing diversity, equity and inclusion brings a host of benefits to businesses in terms of profitability, innovation, decision-making, employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention (McKinsey & Company).

Embracing diversity and inclusion within the workplace can be viewed as a source of competitive advantage and a key enabler of growth. In 2016 the Financial Times highlighted evidence which showed companies that positively embrace and embed LGBT+ policies regularly outperform their rivals (acevo).

A workplace encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion can:

- be more successful
 - keep employees happy and motivated
 - prevent serious or legal issues arising, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination
 - better serve a diverse range of service users
 - enable better ideas and problem-solving
 - attract and keep valuable staff
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Diversity

The range of people in your workforce. For example, this might mean people with different ages, sexes, gender identities, religions, ethnicities, and people with disabilities. It also means valuing those differences.

Inclusion

An inclusive workplace means everyone feels valued at work. A blind spot often appears in organisations for members of the LGBT+ community. There is often a lack of understanding and knowledge about the unique experiences of trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming individuals and this is one of the main barriers to inclusion in the workplace.

Equality

In the workplace means equal job opportunities and fairness for all employees and applicants.

Understanding the terminology...

LGBT+

An umbrella term which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (transgender, transexual), but typically also refers to other types of sexualities (hence the +) such as pansexual, asexual, queer, questioning, unlabelled, and others.

Gender Identity

An individual's personal sense of having a particular gender.

Gender Non-Conforming

Refers to people whose gender presentation does not align with or reflect their actual gender.

Gender Neutral

Words, actions, or expressions that cannot be taken to refer to one gender only.

Gender Pronouns

The pronouns a person chooses to use for themselves to describe their gender (for example: He/Him/His, She/Her/Hers, They/Them/Theirs).

Transgender/Trans

A gender identity and umbrella term for people whose gender differs from, or does not sit comfortably within, the sex they were assigned at birth. A transgender person can have a gender outside of the man/woman binary.

Binary and Non-Binary

Gender binary is the classification of gender into two distinct opposite forms of masculine and feminine. Non-binary is an umbrella term for gender identities that are neither male nor female (Scottish Trans).

Binary Language

He/She
Open to both genders
Ladies and Gentlemen
Dear Sir/Madam
Mother and fathers
Husband/Wife
Brother/Sister
Men/Women

Non-binary Inclusive Language

He/She/They
Open to all genders
Honoured Guests
To whom it may concern
Parents/Carers/Guardians
Spouse/Partner
Sibling
People/Everyone

The Report

Welcoming new generations into the workforce has been a key enabler of a paradigm shift in the way we work and act. In workplaces across the globe, we are seeing more employers making changes against the backdrop of the pandemic. For example, gender pronouns are being used more and more on business emails, Zoom, Twitter and LinkedIn profiles to support the inclusion of transgender staff or those who do not identify with binary definitions of gender.

These changes can be viewed as a starting point to explore how support is currently offered to LGBT+ people in the workplace. The SMT at Epilepsy Scotland are looking to explore options that will strengthen and enable a more diverse and inclusive organisation. To kickstart this work four members of staff were selected to use their collective time and skills to research and make recommendations to support a push for change.

An anonymous survey carried out in June received 14 responses from members of staff throughout the organisation. The survey gathered informative and varied responses suggesting the organisation could be more responsive and make improvements in its approach to diversity and inclusion.

The responses from the survey suggests the focus on the LGBT+ community is just the beginning of what should be a foundation of an ongoing body of work that will explore the importance of diversity and how best to support other protected characteristics such as age, race, religion or belief, pregnancy/maternity and disability.

This report is based on views gathered from the survey and independent research in the field and makes five recommendations for positive change.

"From my perspective I feel the organisation is inclusive of all people. However, I am fully aware this is coming from a white straight person so I am coming from a position of privilege and although I may feel ES is inclusive that may not be the case for everyone. I feel there are areas where we can definitely improve."

Recommendation 1

To enact a new LGBT+ strategy that will align with the organisational strategy, guided by our values. In doing so, review and make appropriate updates and adjustments to policies and procedures.

Strategy and Policy

When it comes to workplace diversity, organisations from local councils, large third sector funders, corporate companies and charities have been creating an inclusive environment that supports the evolving needs of LGBT+ employees.

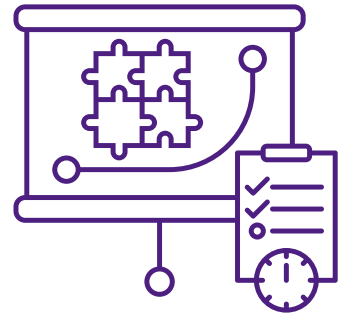
Although every individual gender identity journey is different, there are common practices and processes that employers can start to implement towards educating and facilitating acceptance. These systems are not about legal compliance, they are about human-focused strategy (HR Zone). Creating an inclusive environment where employees feel included helps everyone fully reach their potential and flourish regardless of their gender identity. This in turn will strengthen the vision and mission of Epilepsy Scotland.

Actions

We must be proactive, prepare to address questions, anticipate any obstacles and have the mechanisms in place to address them.

- We can do this by involving the whole organisation in various activities that will help build a new LGBT+ strategy.
- We can seek advice and work with external organisations such as Stonewall and Trans Alliance Scotland who can support the development of a LGBT+ strategy and help us review policies of the organisation.

Consultations with internal stakeholders and guidance from experts will ensure our organisation's policies, procedures and systems are in place to support this push for greater inclusivity (Scottish Trans).



"We should always strive to be more inclusive and to listen to others. It would be good to see this become a part of our strategic planning."

"I generally think as with most things there is always more that can be done. Besides from the policy we have on inclusion I'm not sure what else ES do, so that in itself could be improved."

Some options to be considered:

Redesigning forms – with the inclusion of gender-neutral pronouns and inclusive language that helps reduce emphasis in gender throughout all forms and policy documents.

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Better in-workplace monitoring forms so people can express their gender identity accurately.

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Remove gendered assumptions and give opportunities to ask before using language that reinforces these assumptions.

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Make sure any policies that deal with discrimination, harassment and bullying name trans people as explicitly included and expand on this to make it clear that this covers all trans people.



Some policies to be reviewed:

Code of Conduct

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Equal Opportunities Policy

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Equal Opps & Harassment Policy

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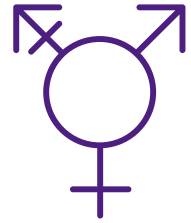
Induction Checklist

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IT Policy

Recommendation 2

To adopt gender inclusive language throughout the organisation.



Gender Inclusive Language

Adopting gender inclusive language is a way of treating colleagues, clients and service users, with respect. Gender inclusive language is language that avoids bias towards a particular sex or gender (Scottish Trans). This can include the use of inclusive pronoun practices and other gender-neutral terminology.

Normalising the use of gender inclusive language, such as adopting the use of pronouns, can help to create an inclusive environment. This builds a culture of respect, benefiting transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, and anyone who challenges the traditional model of gender identity and expression (CIPD).

If people feel valued and respected, they will have a greater sense of belonging. The option of including gender identity in job applications helps signal you are inclusive of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, and can help reach a more diverse applicant pool (Out & Equal). This simple act can support Epilepsy Scotland staff and external stakeholders, including service users and volunteers.

Benefits of
creating an
inclusive
environment:

Mental health

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Wellbeing

-

Job commitment

-

Job performance

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Collaboration

Actions

When adopting gender inclusive language we must do so in the most effective way. For some, the use of gender inclusive language, such as pronouns, may be a new concept, while others may have a distorted understanding of their purpose. It is therefore vital all staff are offered the opportunity to learn more about this.

When using pronouns, we must not mandate their use or non-use. People should have the option to voluntarily declare how they identify, with a recognition some people may not be ready to share their pronouns, or feel comfortable doing so. We must also avoid any language around preference (i.e. what pronouns do you prefer?). Using the correct pronouns is not a matter of preference, but rather a requirement (Out & Equal).

Gender inclusive language extends beyond pronouns. For example, when addressing groups, we can use gender-neutral greetings and allow space to introduce pronouns in meetings. Swapping terms like 'ladies and gentlemen' for 'everybody' are simple practices which will help us become more inclusive, and avoid the alienation of anyone.

Some options to be considered:

Staff should be given the option to use their pronouns and have the opportunity to adapt documentation to share their pronouns. For example:

Staff bios

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Email signatures

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Zoom/Teams names and social media

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Business cards, nametags and signs

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Personnel records

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Job applications

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Forms (ie, training forms)

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Option for volunteers and participants to share with welfare rights, wellbeing and youth services

Recommendation 3

To create a more gender inclusive workspace and environment.

Gender Inclusive Workspaces

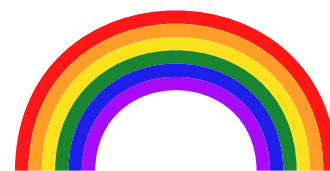
To be a gender-neutral workplace is to be more visibly welcoming (Transwellness). Individuals who come through our doors include people from all backgrounds, staff, service users, funders, supporters and carers. Our office should reflect our organisation's values through staff conduct and by having an immediately obvious safe space and facilities that are accessible to all.

Choosing male or female assigned toilets can be emotionally damaging and stressful to those who identify as trans, gender-fluid or non-binary amongst others. This can pressure people into uncomfortable decisions or be a threat to those not yet ready to share their gender identity. There is also the risk of transgender people facing intimidation and harassment in gender-segregated facilities.

The question of safety can be raised about gender neutral toilets, with the fear they take away a safe space for women. While there is no evidence gender-neutral bathrooms are linked to an increase of assault or harassment, we should consider the comfort levels of all individuals using the space. The important thing is we create equally accessible options for everyone.

Epilepsy Scotland's Youth Development Workers attended an LGBT+ Scotland Q&A session hosted by young members of the Community. One young person, who identified as a trans male, highlighted how grateful he was to step into a new space and see a small rainbow flag (a flag used and recognised as representing the LGBT+ Community). "I immediately recognised the organisation as being trans-allies and felt like I could be myself without worry. Just from that small signal."

Inclusive language can be tricky at times, however, clear and positive signage can demonstrate our inclusive ethos and is a simple way to signal Epilepsy Scotland is a safe space for all. By having our office space and facilities gender-neutral, we can help to avoid unintentional exclusion based on gender or sexual identity.



"Generally I think we are inclusive to people who we support and who connect with us externally. The office could be more inclusive for everyone coming into the space and not just staff members."

Some actions for a more gender inclusive workspace:

Gender-neutral bathroom(s)

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Ensuring any staff dress codes are not gender specific

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Signage around office that supports inclusivity and signals we are a safe space for anyone in the LGBT+ Community.

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Diversity & Inclusion Training

Recommendation 4

To enable and encourage all staff to attend diversity and inclusion training.



The Value of Training

Diversity and inclusion training helps to facilitate a better understanding of LGBT+ issues, experiences, and expectations, creating a more inclusive environment and workplace. Training should be given to all existing staff and board members, reviewed annually, and embedded into the training requirements of new staff.

Providing training can help members of the LGBT+ community feel more comfortable at work. For others, it will help their understanding, use of language and actions with colleagues, service users, carers etc.

Training will underpin how the recommendations made in this report are interpreted, and is vital for their success. The Scottish Trans Alliance highlight the need for inclusive policies to be combined with knowledge and awareness raising amongst staff, to ensure there is an understanding of why these policies exist ([Scottish Trans](#)).

The employer is automatically liable for discriminatory actions by anyone acting on their behalf, whether or not it was done with their knowledge, unless the employer can show that they had taken all reasonable steps to prevent such actions ([Stonewall Scotland](#)). By training staff, Epilepsy Scotland are making progress to ensure LGBT+ issues are taken seriously to minimise discrimination and to support staff to feel confident in what language and actions to take.

The Training

There are several training options around LGBT+ and diversity themes in the workplace. Some suitable providers are [Stonewall](#), [The Scottish Trans Alliance](#) and the [Equality Network](#).

Another is to provide our Training Manager, Nicola, with the guidance and resources to deliver this training. To do so, we must ensure Nicola goes on a training course specific to LGBT+ themes in the workplace, is confident at training our staff on the subject, and uses resources that share peoples' personal experiences in addition to facts and figures.

More detailed training structures and quotes should be obtained once it is agreed the training should take place and the number of people involved.

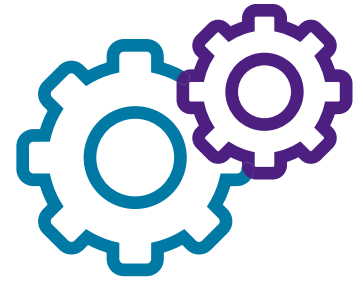
86%

of Epilepsy
Scotland staff
surveyed see
value in
diversity training

"Training to all staff on LGBTQ+ would be helpful as I think the landscape has changed and people may be fearful of "saying the wrong thing" or being unintentionally discriminatory because of lack of knowledge and understanding."

Recommendation 5

To make the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group permanent and expand the remit of the working group to continue to explore diversity and inclusion in the workplace.



The Working Group

The Diversity and Inclusion Working Group is an excellent vehicle to kickstart change. We envision this to be ongoing and feel it is important everyone at Epilepsy Scotland can input to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion sits within the fabric of the organisation and the work we do.

By initially focusing on strategies to support LGBT+ individuals, we have been able to take a more detailed approach to diversity and inclusion. However, this work must not stop here. Diversity is an encompassing concept, with LGBT+ issues representing only a small fraction of this, and so we must expand this remit.

The varied insight gained through our staff survey demonstrates the importance of making this an ongoing project. Valuable ideas like launching inclusivity initiatives, designed to empower staff to feel more part of the Epilepsy Scotland team and diversifying the way we advertise vacancies, with the goal of reaching a more diverse applicant pool are all projects this group could address.

As an ongoing project, we can ensure this working group was not simply a 'tick box exercise' as warned against in the survey, but rather a long-term approach to promoting diversity and inclusion within the organisation. This group can be proactive, looking at the wider picture.

"...I think ES is open to making adaptations which are person specific once they are raised but the wider picture is often not looked at."

Going Forward

This group represents a shift from traditional top-down structures, taking a community-led approach to diversity and inclusion. It allows everyone to have agency in the matters which affect them. This should be a permanent group, creating targets, encouraging action, and evaluating outcomes. As raised in the survey, this group must be open to all. We could have changing members, a rotational chair, offering people the opportunity to opt in to work on themes of interest to them, such as race or religion, or inclusivity as a whole.

As eloquently stated in the survey, 'this group is a good start'.

Conclusion

Epilepsy Scotland's values are important to the fabric of the organisation. We strive to embed these in everything we do, and we must be proactive to ensure we continue to champion these values. With COVID-19, we have championed change. We must harness this and embrace the changing world in other ways. The recommendations made in this report represent the starting point for building a more diverse and inclusive organisation. Starting with a focus on LGBT+ issues, we have gathered valuable insight from our staff, research in the field, and from LGBT+ organisations.

By updating our existing policies and procedures, training, and taking steps to becoming more gender inclusive, we can enact positive change. The recommendations must be given due consideration, and if taken forward, we must ensure they are met within a timely manner. If we do not take action to become more diverse and inclusive now, by consciously remaining stagnant, we run the risk of falling behind the times, alienating staff, service users, funders and other stakeholders alike.

Looking to the future, we must continue this momentum, and continue to involve all staff in our journey to becoming a more diverse and inclusive organisation.

Our Values

Honesty

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Compassion

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Kindness

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Equality

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Trust

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Empowerment

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Fairness

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Transparency

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Integrity

"I think this is a valuable exercise to reflect on how ES can improve and be a better organisation, no one is perfect and it is having the self awareness to recognise that. The intention is there, it is just about ensuring intentions turn into action and steps are taken to improve diversity and inclusivity."

References/ Further Reading

Building inclusive workplaces, CIPD

Changing for the better: How to include Trans people in your workplace, a guide for employers, Scottish Transgender Alliance and Stonewall Scotland

Diversity wins: How inclusion matters, McKinsey & Company

Employers battle ingrained prejudice against LGBT staff, Financial Times

Getting Equalities Monitoring Right, Scottish Trans

Guide to All-Gender Spaces, Heartland Trans* Wellness Group

Including non-binary people: guidance for service providers and employers, Equality Network & Scottish Trans

Leading with Pride: how to make your charity more LGBT inclusive, ACEVO

The business of gay pride, Financial Times

What's Your Pronoun? Strategies for Inclusion in the Workplace, Out & Equal

Why the human-focused workplace leads to competitive success, HR Zone



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