

LGBTIQ INCLUSION TOOLKIT

**Building Blocks for Safer and
Inclusive Homeless Services
for the LGBTIQ Community**



FEANTSA

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Introduction

According to the Fundamental Rights Agency 1 in 5 LGBTIQ people have had an experience of homelessness, rising to 1 in 3 for trans people, while 39% of intersex people have experienced homelessness. LGBTIQ people are over-represented in homeless services. Research from Ireland, Denmark, France, Germany, UK, Canada, and the US consistently shows that LGBTIQ people experience homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination within services.

As a sector there is a lot that we can do to improve how we support LGBTIQ people experiencing homelessness.

This inclusion toolkit is designed to aid homeless services in improving how they support the LGBTIQ community.

The toolkit starts with a glossary of terms to build shared understandings of core terminology and then addresses how services can review and improve the following:

- The layout of services
- Policies
- Services and Programmes
- Staff Training
- Data Collection

Terminology

The definitions below have been developed by [ILGA-Europe](https://www.ilga-europe.org/), a European and Central Asian organisation advancing LGBTIQ equality and inclusion.¹

Bisexual: when a person is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to persons of more than one gender.

Cisgender: a term that refers to a person who does not identify as trans.

Depathologisation: The recognition that no sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression is an illness. Depathologisation allows trans people to access trans specific healthcare without a mental health assessment or diagnosis.

Gay: refers to a person who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to people of the same gender. It traditionally refers to men, but other people who are attracted to the same gender or multiple genders may also define themselves as gay.

Gender: refers to a social construct which places cultural and social expectations on individuals based on their assigned sex.

Gender expression: refers to people's manifestation of their gender identity to others, by for instance, dress, speech, and mannerisms. People's gender expression may or may not match their gender identity/identities, or the gender they were assigned at birth.

Gender identity: refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical, or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech, and mannerisms. Some people's gender identity falls outside the gender binary, and related norms.

Gender non-conforming: refers to gender expressions other than male or female.

Heterosexual: refers to a person who identifies as man who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted only to people who identify as women. It also refers to a person who identifies as woman who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted only to people who identify as men.

Heteronormativity: refers to the set of beliefs and practices that consider gender to be an absolute, unquestionable binary, and therefore describe and reinforce heterosexuality as a norm.

It implies that people's gender, sex, and sex characteristics are determined by nature and should always be aligned, and therefore heterosexuality is the only conceivable sexuality and the only way of being 'normal'.

¹ <https://www.ilga-europe.org/about-us/who-we-are/glossary/>

Homophobia: fear, unreasonable anger, intolerance or/and hatred directed towards homosexuality.

Homosexual: people are classified as homosexual on the basis of their gender and the gender of their sexual partner(s). When the partner's gender is the same as the individual's, then the person is categorised as homosexual. It is recommended to use the terms lesbian and gay men instead of homosexual people. The terms lesbian and gay are being considered neutral and positive, and the focus is on the identity instead of being sexualised or pathologised.

Intersex: intersex individuals are born with sex characteristics (sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal structure and/or levels and/or chromosomal patterns) that do not fit the typical definition of male or female. The term "intersex" is an umbrella term for the spectrum of variations of sex characteristics that naturally occur within the human species. The term intersex acknowledges the fact that physically, sex is a spectrum and that people with variations of sex characteristics other than male or female exist.

Lesbian: a woman who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women.

Non-binary: refers to gender identities other than male or female.

Sex: the classification of a person as male or female. Sex is assigned at birth and written on a birth certificate, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy and on a binary vision of sex which excludes intersex people.

A person's sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

Sex characteristics: a term that refers to a person's chromosomes, anatomy, hormonal structure and reproductive organs. OII Europe and its member organisations recommend protecting intersex individuals by including sex characteristics as a protected ground in anti-discrimination legislation. This is because many of the issues that intersex people face are not covered by existing laws that only refer to sexual orientation and gender identity.

This is seen as being a more inclusive term than 'intersex status' by many intersex activists, as it refers to a spectrum of possible characteristics instead of a single homogenous status or experience of being intersex.

Sexual orientation: refers to each person's capacity for profound affection, emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.

Trans: is an inclusive umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differ from the sex/gender they were assigned at birth.

It may include, but is not limited to: people who identify as transsexual, transgender, transvestite/cross-dressing, androgyne, polygender, genderqueer, agender, gender variant, gender non-conforming, or with any other gender identity and/or expression which does not meet the societal and cultural expectations placed on gender identity.

Transphobia: Refers to negative cultural and personal beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and behaviours based on prejudice, disgust, fear and/or hatred of trans people or against

variations of gender identity and gender expression.

Re-thinking the Design of Spaces

The first thing an LGBTIQ person entering into a service will observe is the *physical space*. LGBTIQ people experience minority stress due to (often) living outside of heterosexual and cisgendered norms. LGBTIQ people express themselves through their relationships, how they dress, and their mannerisms, and can speak differently to the dominant values of society. This is not a case of ‘right or wrong’ values, but rather a difference. However, this difference can lead to tension, misunderstanding and sometimes homophobia, transphobia, discrimination, and exclusion.

Services should be mindful that LGBTIQ people live their lives outside of a dominant value. A person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics or gender expression can result in the general feeling of exclusion, and in the context of homelessness it can be a trigger for trauma as it may have played a factor in their entering homelessness.

Box 1: Minority Stress

Minority stress is the relationship between minority and dominant values and resultant conflict with the social environment experienced by minority group members. [American Psychology Association](#)

It is important that an LGBTIQ person feels welcomed, included, respected, and validated within a service. Taking some small steps to make the space feel inclusive can have a huge impact.

Here is a list of things a service can include to physically make a space more welcoming.

Pride Flags:

Using a pride flag is a small, but visible gesture that signals that LGBTIQ identities are welcomed in your space.

The rainbow flag is traditionally used as a symbol of inclusion for the entire LGBTIQ community. In recent years, the flag has evolved to be more inclusive of the LGBTIQ community bringing visibility to intersex and trans people, and the inclusion of brown and black colours brings further visibility to the different ethnic minority groups, often overlooked, which comprise the LGBTIQ community.

Research shows that black and other ethnic minority groups are over-represented among LGBTIQ people experiencing homelessness, as are trans and intersex people. Displaying a fully inclusive pride flag can be a small but powerful signal that the organisation is inclusive to all LGBTIQ people.

Depending on the space available you can further display flags designed for the bisexual, intersex, and trans communities.



The Pride Flag



The Bi Flag



The Intersex Flag



The Trans Flag

Box 2: A Note on Spaces

The layout of a service should not happen in isolation. How LGBTIQ people are spoken to and treated is as important as how they move through the space. Rethinking spaces should go hand in hand with reviewing policies and programmes and providing training for staff, to ensure that how spaces are designed align with the overall treatment of LGBTIQ people.

Visual Cues:

In addition to displaying flags the service should consider reviewing other visual cues which can create an inclusive atmosphere. Representation matters and supports people to feel part of the service.

- Magazines: Does your service have magazines in common spaces or receptions, consider including magazines written for and by LGBTIQ people.
- Books: If your service has a library or books, assess if you have books that include LGBTIQ characters, storylines and LGBTIQ authors.
- Posters and artwork: Review any artwork or posters on display, do these posters reflect the diversity of LGBTIQ people and their relationships, gender expression etc.
- Name badges: Do staff have pronouns written on their badges, or do lanyards for name badges come in rainbow colours? Gender diverse people experience discrimination and harassment due to their gender expression or identity, including pronouns on name badges signals the organisation understand the importance of respecting a person's pronouns.

Visual cues help ensure that when an LGBTIQ moves through the space, or is waiting for an appointment, they see signs that make them comfortable, feel safe and included in the service.

Inclusion Statement:

Organisations should develop an inclusion statement which mentions the organisation’s values and commitment to equality and non-discrimination, which specifically mentions LGBTIQ. The inclusion statement should be on display and clearly visible, written in simple language that is easy for everyone to understand.

Printing copies of this statement in the space and/or hanging it on a wall provides evidence that this service takes measures to protect the LGBTIQ community. An inclusion statement should be adapted by the team and/or organisation during training days around LGBTIQ inclusion.

Box 3: Sample Inclusion Statement

Women of all sexual orientations, gender experiences (cis and trans), and nonbinary people, and those who are intersex, should feel safe and welcome accessing women’s services.

Men of all sexual orientations, gender experiences (cis and trans), and nonbinary people, and those who are intersex, should feel safe and welcome accessing men’s services.

Homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, and prejudice against or pathologizing of intersex people, are not tolerated.

All of our guidelines, policies, procedures and practices aim to ensure equality and participation, at all levels of the organisation, regardless of gender identity, age, ethnicity, cultural background, disability, religion, sexual orientation and/or professional background. Our service welcomes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and intersex (LGBTI) people.

Toilets:

Many organisations have gendered toilets because they have always had gendered toilets. It is not a chosen policy. Take time to reflect on whether toilets need to be gendered, or if a non-gender toilet can be added. Remember gender neutral toilets are not a safety risk. For gender diverse and non-binary people, the existence of non-gendered toilets removes a stressor of which toilet to use and any potential conflict if they don’t use the assumed toilet of staff or other clients.

Online Space

While the layout of services is important, many people will use online search engines to find help and supports. Consider how accessible and inclusive your online presence is. Some factors to consider when reviewing your online presence, which can be made visible on your website and social media accounts, include:

- Do you use diverse representation of LGBTIQ people in pictures?

- Do you share your statement of inclusion on your website? Is there a clear sign of your organisation's commitment to LGBTIQ equality?
- Do you share stories or experiences of LGBTIQ people who have previously been supported by the organisation?
- Has your organisation participated in any trainings on LGBTIQ equality and inclusion? If so, share these on your website.
- Do you have partnerships with LGBTIQ organisations? Then share this on the website; demonstrating that you collaborate with a trusted LGBTIQ organisation will help build a sense of safety and trust with LGBTIQ people in need of support.
- Share information relating to specific programmes or services that are designed for LGBTIQ people.
- If you participate in LGBTIQ events such as pride or organise workshops share this on social media or include a blog entry on your website.
- Include pronouns of staff pages or biographies
- In email signatures include pronouns and/or a short line on your organisation's commitment to LGBTIQ inclusion.

Review of Existing Policies

Homeless services are rarely designed around the needs of LGBTIQ people. Therefore, it is important to review policies through the lens of sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, and gender expression. This doesn't mean the existing policies are 'wrong', but as we improve our understanding of LGBTIQ homelessness we should create space to review and improve policies accordingly. When reviewing policies here are some things to be considered:

Language:

Review the language used in policies and formal discussions, to ensure they are not exclusionary. This can include internal and external communications, and existing resources and publications. For example, consider language such as 'person' instead of gendered terms like 'man' or 'woman', or replacing the use of 'girlfriend', 'boyfriend', 'wife' or 'husband', 'mum' or 'dad', with 'partner' or 'parents'.

Similarly in verbal communication replace greetings like 'Good morning, guys' with 'Good morning, folks' or 'Welcome, everyone'. When greeting someone you don't know, don't assume their gender based on their gender expression if meeting in person, or by the sound of their voice if speaking on the phone.

In written correspondence re-consider the use of titles; does a letter or email need to be addressed to Mr, Ms or Mrs.? Simply addressing the email to their first and/or surname may be sufficient, being careful to use the chosen name the client wishes to be addressed with.

Develop a specific policy around LGBTIQ inclusive communication for all staff members.

Participation:

When reviewing policies consult both LGBTIQ+ representatives and LGBTIQ organisations. Giving space to these voices can improve the development of future policies. You may have LGBTIQ staff, clients, or former clients, all of whom have a unique experience and perspective of your service. They will see things that heterosexual and cisgendered peers are unconscious of.

Homeless services are not expected to have all the knowledge and expertise around sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression in house. Involve and collaborate with LGBTIQ organisations. Most LGBTIQ organisations are happy to partner with a range of services to help improve the quality for the LGBTIQ organisation and can provide tools and resources tailored to your cultural context.

Gendered Policies:

Review policies for gender-specific services, such as those specifically for women or for men, to assess if they are inclusive for trans, intersex, non-binary or gender diverse people. Are there barriers preventing them accessing services? For example, some services request a form of government ID to access services, review why this is requested and needed, and consider ways of making the service

more inclusive. Accommodation and services should be offered on the basis of self-identified gender, choice, and risk assessment.

Some services need ID due to rules set through government funding streams. In this case consider how you have these conversations with clients, and how to explain to them why the ID is needed. Consider if can you allow people to self-identify, recognising the complexity of changing government IDs to reflect your gender identity. If you are required to collect this information for funders, then engage funders and advocate for a change in the rules in order to create a safer and more inclusive space. If there are no rules mandating using IDs to access the service, consider why this is done and find new ways of achieving the same means, without excluding vulnerable members of the LGBTIQ organisations.

Dress Codes:

If there is a dress code for clients or staff, make sure that it is not gender-based and still supports clients to express their identity.

Code of Conduct

Ensure that all staff, clients, and visitors are aware of a code of conduct which recognises LGBTIQ people and promotes anti-discrimination and tackles harassment, homophobia, and transphobia throughout the homeless service. Make clear the code of conduct is applicable throughout the service in common spaces, meetings, online and any spaces organised by the organisation.

Box 4: Sample Code of Conduct

“ [Name of Your Organisation] and all employees must always maintain a respectful relationship with all clients in this service. We welcome all clients and aim to deliver a safe and inclusive services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people. Clients will be supported regardless of their gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, religion, or professional background. This organisation maintains a zero tolerance on discrimination, harassment, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia or any form of bullying, any such experiences should be reported and will be dealt with by the management team”.

Hiring and Onboarding

Representation matters, it is important for young people to see themselves reflected within the teams that support them. Job vacancies should encourage applications from the LGBTIQ community. Consider inviting LGBTIQ clients, or former clients, as part of the interview panel to help select staff. During the interviews ask specific questions around

Box 5: Word of Warning

Avoid having a single LGBTIQ champion in the organisation who is responsible for everything. LGBTIQ inclusion is an organisational wide goal and requires a group to advance full inclusion. Encourage a group or space for interested staff to join this work. This group should include LGBTIQ people and allies and should include trans and intersex people.

the LGBTIQ community to assess the candidate's skills and competencies. Such questions could include:

- How would you respond if a person you worked with disclosed to you that they wanted to change their pronouns?
- Should we determine the service a person uses based on their gender identity or their sex assigned at birth? Why do you think this?
- How comfortable and competent are you in speaking to clients about their sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics or gender expression?

During interviews you can also explain that you have an onboarding and training programme for new staff members to develop such skills and competencies, but including such questions can help improve the quality of the selection of candidates.

Box 6: Partnering with LGBTIQ Organisations

In Scotland the Rock Trust partners with LGBT Youth Scotland to review their services to help improve the quality for the LGBTIQ young people they work with. Using a blind shopper experience a representative from LGBT Youth Scotland goes through the Rock Trust service and provides constructive feedback on how the service can be improved. Together with the Rock Trust, LGBT Youth Scotland proposes practical steps the organisation can make to be more inclusive, which has included trainings for all staff members, from the receptionist the clients first meet to the board of directors, ensuring an organisational wide approach to inclusion.

Review of Programmes & Services

Similar to the organisational policies, most programmes and services have been designed for heterosexual and cisgender people, which requires reviewing how such services are delivered.

Segregation of Services

Social and homeless services can be segregated and differentiated between men and women. Many organisations have been delivering such services for years, and in some instances decades. However, organisations should reflect on these programmes.

- Why do you segregate services?
- How does a segregation of services align with your organisation's values and mission statement?
- How does a segregation of services impact trans, intersex and gender non-binary people?

Some additional factors to consider when reviewing programmes:

- Never place LGBTIQ people in a service where there is a high risk they will experience homophobia, transphobia, or discrimination.
- How can you mitigate the risk of an LGBTIQ person experiencing violence, homophobia, transphobia, or discrimination?
- Ask clients how comfortable they are in a service, or being referred to a service. Identify any safety concerns they have, and propose solutions, explain any queries they may have or collect common issues that arise which can be fed into a review of programmes and services.

Peer Led Groups

Create spaces where LGBTIQ people can come together. These peer groups can create a trusting and safe space where LGBTIQ people can support one another. Such spaces can have many different benefits including:

- Combatting loneliness and isolation, and creating a community
- Promoting the sense of inclusion in the service
- Creating spaces to share stories and process traumas related to their sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics and gender expression.
- Identifying challenges experienced by the LGBTIQ community within the service, facilitated by the organisation to propose solutions.
- Organising events to mark LGBTIQ related days including Pride, LGBTIQ history month, International Transgender Visibility Day, Bi Visibility Day, and Intersex Awareness Day.

Workshops

Design and deliver workshops with all clients in the service around sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. These workshops can be delivered using non-formal education methods, and storytelling experiences of clients within the service. These workshops can address:

- Examples of homophobia and transphobia
- The impact of discrimination
- Tools and skills to call out discrimination in a constructive way
- How to be an ally

Referral Systems

Most homeless services will make referrals to other organisations such as housing providers, health services, judicial services, municipality services etc. When you've built an inclusive service that promotes trust and respect of LGBTIQ clients it's important that referrals can be done in a safe way, to avoid traumatising a person through a referral, or putting a client in a service where they are at risk of experiencing discrimination, homophobia, or transphobia. Factors to consider about how you make referrals include:

- Asking services you partner with what training do they have on LGBTIQ inclusion.
- Do they have frameworks in place to support LGBTIQ people?
- How do you share data with those services? If the client has shared important information about pronouns or gender identity how is this respected?
- Do you set up meetings with the client and the referral service?
- Do you accompany the client through the referral service?

Staff Training & Development:

It is frequently reported that frontline workers don't have the skills and competence to engage with clients on topics related to sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics and gender expression. Few social workers are given the necessary training, and lack knowledge on the topics to confidently support clients. When considering training for staff the following should be considered.

Training should be for all staff. It shouldn't be reserved for support workers, but everyone in the organisation should be involved including receptionists, catering, executive management, the board, caretakers etc. It is important the entire organisation has inclusion training to ensure clients feel respected throughout the organisation.

Pronouns should be addressed during such training. This can include explaining why pronouns are important and how to mainstream their use in email signatures, name tags and in conversations. Organisations could consider template scripts around asking a person their pronouns. For example, when staff encounter a client for the first time they should use gender neutral language.

Box 7: Sample Scripts on Pronouns

"I would like to ask some questions about your gender so I can be sure that you receive the most appropriate services here and are treated in a culturally appropriate way with dignity and respect. Would you mind letting me know your gender identity? And what pronouns (if any) do you use for yourself? For example, I identify as female, and my pronouns are she/her. How would you like to be referred to with other people and services, and in correspondence such as mail?

Thank you for telling me".

Staff should never make assumptions about a client's sexual orientation, gender identity, pronouns or preferred name based on mannerisms, expression, voice, or clothes. Staff should have a thoughtful and considered approach to collect and store that information, involving the clients.

Trainings should be a space to not just learn, but to also practice skills and put knowledge to use. When delivering trainings include time for individuals to develop their competencies in practice.

Staff should be aware that the language that people use to describe themselves can evolve over time, either as they get more comfortable with themselves, or on their journey of self-discovery, so be aware that agreed names or pronouns can evolve.

Not everyone is an expert on everything, and that's ok. If a team member doesn't understand something, respectfully share this with the client and ask for their support.

During the training, team members should either contribute towards a code of conduct around LGBTIQ equality and inclusion, or where one exists, they should be introduced to the code.

Box 8: Sample Code of Conduct

“Employees must at all times maintain a respectful and appropriate relationship with all clients of this service. They shall deliver quality, inclusive services, regardless of the Resident’s gender identity, age, ethnicity, cultural background, disability, religion, sexual orientation and/or professional background. Discrimination, harassment, any displays of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and/or bullying of any kind, will not be tolerated within the workplace, and will be dealt with through the performance management and/or existing disciplinary system. Our aim is always the delivery of inclusive and respectful care and services, to all, including people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and intersex (LGBTI) communities”.

Identify people within the team that LGBTIQ people may be comfortable working with. This can include LGBTIQ staff or allies. But all staff should be able to competently engage with a young LGBTIQ person.

Box 7: Self-Assessment Toolkit

The Ljubljana Pride Association has published a toolkit for organisations working with young people around the topic of LGBTIQ inclusion. You can access the toolkit [here](#). Chapter 3 includes self-assessment questions that can assist the reflection process which can identify topics to be included in the review of policies and programmes and what should be included in team trainings. Self-assessments can be done on the level of i) operation of the organisation, ii) guidelines and policies, iii) safe spaces, iv) diversity among staff and clients, v) participation of clients, vi) allocation of resources, vii) networking and partnership and viii) monitoring and evaluations.

Data Collection

LGBTIQ homelessness remains hidden due to poor data collection systems used by services. Accurate and reliable data is important to improve our understanding of the scale and causes of LGBTIQ homelessness in Europe. Although part of policies and programmes, data collection should be distinctly reviewed. Here are some things to consider when reviewing data collection systems.

Use open ended questions. Rather than ticking a box of male or female, simply ask the question ‘what gender do you identify as? _____.’; allow a space for the person to use their own label. Clients shouldn’t feel as though they have to fit into a box. You can also include answers such as ‘prefer not to say’ or ‘don’t know’.

For instances where sexual orientation or gender identity played a role in entering homelessness, services should understand that not everyone will be comfortable disclosing this information at the point of entry to the service. Staff should be aware that this information may be disclosed by the clients in conversations, as they build a trusting relationship.

Ensure the person only has to ‘come out’ once. If a person discloses this information, their file should be updated accordingly, with their consent. Clients shouldn’t have to come out multiple times to different staff within the same service. It’s not just about collecting data, but using the data to improve the clients experience.

Explain why the data is being collected, for example outlining that collecting this information helps to improve the delivery of services for everyone and ensure the team is adequately trained to meet the needs of all clients.

Explain how the information is stored and used, who has access to it and why.

Box 9: Sample Scripts on Data Collection

“It is really important for us to collect good information about the people that need services like ours. Part of that includes representing the different experiences and needs you have, and the communities or populations you are part of.

We are a service that is inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people, so it is important for us to reflect this when collecting information. These are some questions that help us show that.”

“We know that everyone is different, so I’m going to ask a few questions about how you identify, such as your cultural background and sexual orientation. You don’t have to answer these questions if you don’t want to, and I want you to know that we keep this information confidential and only ask to ensure that we can be respectful of who you are.”

“The staff at this service have been trained in the importance of confidentiality, and not revealing personal or private information about clients to other services without permission, unless there is a legal obligation to do so. Please let me know if there are people or agencies that you would prefer not to know about your gender identity, intersex variation, or sexual orientation, or if there is a particular way you would like to be known to others.”

“Thank you for letting me know that. It is helpful so that I can provide the best service.”

<https://lgbtiq.gitbook.io/inclusive-practice-guide/1.-content-for-service-workers/1.1-disclosure-and-confidentiality>

Respect people's information as much as possible. For example, if a trans person has their dead name and their gender assigned at birth on their identification, but government funding means you must collect this information, explain this to the client. But have a system in place which ensures that within the service the client will be called by their chosen name and the gender they identify with will be respected. Even if this information must be collected, it shouldn't be used against the clients wishes.



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