

### Glossary of Terms

**Direct discrimination** treating a person less favourably than others because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

**Indirect discrimination** applying criteria, provision or practice which disadvantages an individual because of their sexual orientation without good reason.

**Harassment** unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

**Victimisation** persecuting someone because they have made a complaint or allegation about discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

**Sexual Orientation** sexual attraction between people of the same sex (lesbian or gay), opposite sexes (heterosexual) or both (bisexual).

**Transgender** covers people who are transvestite or transsexual (who have changed or are in the process of changing their gender, including through surgery).

**A homophobic incident** an incident intended to have an impact on those perceived to be LGBT people.

**A hate crime** any crime in which the perpetrator's prejudice against an identifiable group of people is a determining factor in who is victimised.

### For Information, Support & Advice

**KCC's Staff Group** email: Rainbow LGBT Forum

**Support Line** (for KCC staff) with counsellors who have personal experience of LGBT issues  
Tel: 01622 605539

**Corporate Diversity Team** Tel: 01622 694659

#### Your Union or Personnel Representative

**Lesbian & Gay Switchboard** (London)

Tel: 0207 837 7324

**East Kent Friend** (Tuesday 7.30 -10.00 pm)

Tel: 01843 588762

**Stonewall** (national campaigns, research and information provision) Tel: 0207 881 9440

**Schools Out** (working for equality in education. Research, information & support)  
[www.schools-out.org.uk](http://www.schools-out.org.uk)

**The Gender Trust** (support to transgender people) Tel: 07000 790347

**Reporting 'hate crime'** contact the community liaison officers (who are sensitive to the needs of LGBT people) via your local police station or East Kent Homophobic Incident Reporting Line  
Tel: 0800 328 9162 (24-hour freephone)

**This leaflet is available in alternative formats. Please contact 01622 221163**

**This leaflet gives information and guidance to staff on making sure KCC services and employment opportunities are accessible to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and heterosexual people, supporting our aim of making Kent a great place to live, work, study and visit.**

## What does this mean to me?

We live in, work with and serve diverse communities. Understanding and responding to the needs of a diverse community is part of all our jobs, and affects how we work together and how we deliver services to the public. Managing and valuing different cultural and life experience needs our understanding, tolerance and commitment. Learning more about how to do this better helps KCC provide quality services and employment opportunities that are free from prejudice and discrimination, supporting safe and inclusive communities and workplaces.

KCC as an employer has a responsibility for the actions of staff, in addition to staff's own personal responsibility. It is unacceptable and against KCC policy to discriminate, harass or victimise anyone, employee or service user, on the grounds of sexual orientation. Breaches of policy will result in disciplinary action.

KCC wants to achieve equality and respect for all our staff and the people we serve. We will do this by challenging discrimination, prejudice and victimisation wherever they occur. This includes LGBT people, who are an estimated 10% of the UK population.

## What does the law say?

From December 2003 it is against the law (within employment) to discriminate, harass or victimise anyone because of their sexual orientation (see glossary for explanations of key terms used). We all have a responsibility to comply with KCC policy and legal requirements. This means we must not treat staff or job applicants less favourably because of their sexual orientation. We must not employ, decide not to employ, dismiss, refuse to offer training, or deny promotion because someone is, or is thought to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual. Transgender people have similar protection against discrimination under the Sex Discrimination Act.

There is planned legislation that affects KCC services, giving the same rights to same sex couples as to mixed sex couples.



## Facts about hate or homophobic crime

Hate crime is a reality. A survey of hate crime against lesbians and gay men (Stonewall 1993/6), found that:

- 34% of men and 24% of women had experienced violence
- 48% of young people had experienced violence. 50% of violent attacks were by schoolmates.

Like people from other minority communities, LGBT people frequently under-report hate crimes (not trusting agencies to deliver a fair and equal service, or fear of potential consequences). Our clients, customers and staff experience the reality of hate crime. We therefore need to demonstrate our support of anyone experiencing hate crime.

## Things to think about when you are at work

There can be a culture within workplaces where sexual innuendo, anti-gay jokes, mimicking or mockery are accepted. If this occurs where you work, don't encourage this or take part.

Workplaces can easily exclude lesbians and gay men, for example, in general conversations that assume partners are of the opposite sex.

LGBT people face a difficult (and varying) process when coming to terms with their sexuality. For example, some are aware of and identify with their sexuality from an early age; others do so later, sometimes well into adult life. Some marry and have children due to social expectations and pressures.

Sexual matters are private and confidential. Although some people are comfortable talking about their private lives/partners, many people do not share such information. Respect the privacy and dignity of others at all times. Be sensitive to difference and what people choose to tell you.

Telling someone (publicly or privately) you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is termed as 'coming out'. This is a continuous process, which raises issues about responses from family, friends or work colleagues. It causes concern about possible negative reaction (hostility, ridicule, violence or harassment) and the need for support and understanding.

Staff may be concerned about being 'outed' (where someone states their opinion on another's sexuality). 'Outing' someone to their family, colleagues or others in their community (whether intentionally or by accident) can have serious repercussions for the individual concerned. No one has the right to 'out' anyone, even if that person has disclosed information to you.

If within your work (for example as a social worker, youth worker or teacher), you believe a person's sexuality is relevant to issues they are working with, be aware of the duty to maintain the person's confidentiality and safety, and manage any disclosure sensitively.

Staff who experience discrimination, harassment or victimisation have to deal with the negative emotional and practical impact on their lives. When a colleague feels uncomfortable about sharing issues that concern them, it can lead to a stressful, hostile working environment that is the opposite of what we are trying to achieve in KCC.

## Giving and getting an excellent service

Our customers and work colleagues need to be able to access services and work without anticipation of prejudice or discrimination. How we communicate, whether talking with people, in writing or electronically, should demonstrate that KCC does not support or condone discriminatory practice or behaviour. Are you confident that you are putting this into practice?

Respect the privacy and confidentiality of colleagues and service users within the way you work and the procedures you follow (including record keeping on information systems).

Don't assume that the next of kin of a colleague or service user will be a blood relative, or an opposite sex partner. Be aware of different family structures and recognise that families can be two people or a larger (extended) number.

Some children may have same sex parents or extended family members who are LGBT. Don't make assumptions about who has legal responsibility for a child.

Staff should be impartial and treat individuals according to their needs. Don't make value judgements or statements about another person's lifestyle.

## Quick tips

- Remember, if you treat everyone with fairness, dignity and respect, being aware and sensitive to their needs, you won't go far wrong
- Challenge misinformation and inappropriate language or behaviour
- Don't make offensive comments or joke about a person's sexual orientation, or about LGBT people in general
- Don't make assumptions, for example, that everyone is heterosexual
- Never pass on your knowledge or opinion about a person's sexual orientation to others
- Don't stereotype people, for example, that HIV is an issue for gay men.