



Care Under the Rainbow

Things you can do to make your care home more inclusive for older LGBT+ residents

LGBT+ definitions: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other diverse sexual orientations or gender identities. There have been major legal, policy and social changes over the last 50 years, which has led to increased recognition of equal rights for LGBT+ people in the UK. Increasing numbers of older adults are 'out' in later life. Here are some ways you can create a more inclusive care home for older LGBT+ people.

1. Commit to and promote social inclusion as a core value of the care home.

Embrace and support the diversity among older people to build an inclusive culture for all, including LGBT+ residents. Ensure the home ascribes to shared values of respect and dignity for diversity (this includes residents, staff and visitors).

- ★ Be mindful that some residents may identify as LGBT+, be sexually active and have experienced same-sex relationships, be gender diverse or undergone gender reassignment at an earlier point in their lives.
- ★ Make sure you respect the views and wishes of individuals with different sexual identities, gender identities and life histories.
- ★ Provide safe and comfortable environments for ALL residents to be themselves and come out as LGBT+ if they wish to.

2. Have open conversations with staff, residents and visitors about what inclusion of LGBT+ people means.

Create a safe and open learning culture for all staff. Participate in diversity and inclusion training and take time to discuss with your colleagues on what inclusion of LGBT+ people means. This should happen from the induction of new staff onwards.

- ★ Make sure all staff (e.g. managers, care workers, cleaners, kitchen staff, etc.) are equipped with interpersonal skills and knowledge to communicate with residents confidently about emotionally-sensitive and sometimes private topics.
- ★ Make LGBT+ residents feel comfortable and respected to convey their personal and sexual lives and care needs to staff and other residents.

3. Raise awareness of historical and current discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion experienced by LGBT+ people.

Engage staff in regular team discussions on how they can address and prevent discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion of older LGBT+ people.

- ★ Be aware that many older LGBT+ people will have potentially experienced discrimination or prejudice during their lifetime, including from service providers. These experiences can make people anxious about how they will be treated in residential care settings.
- ★ Have a good understanding of generational differences in experiences of LGBT+ people and changes in social attitudes towards sexuality, gender diversity and equality.
- ★ Be proactive in preventing and addressing discriminatory or offensive comments and behaviours from staff, residents or visitors.

4. Challenge discriminatory behaviours and homophobic, transphobic and biphobic comments in care homes.

If you see behaviours that could discriminate, marginalise or exclude LGBT+ residents, speak up and discuss it with both the person affected and the person who is acting in a discriminatory way. At the same time, be reflective and open to feedback from residents and colleagues on your own attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.

5. Support residents and staff to express concerns and report discriminatory behaviour.

Make sure residents and their significant others know there are policies and procedures in place to make a complaint or report discriminatory behaviours.

6. Appreciate older LGBT+ people's diverse care needs.

Older LGBT+ people's social, practical and emotional needs must be recognised, respected, supported, well treated and valued.

- ★ Be attentive to different personal histories, relationships and life-stories of all older residents.
- ★ Be mindful of the critical turning points within residents' stories and their distinct care needs.

7. Respect and support intimate relationships and support networks of LGBT+ residents.

LGBT+ older people may have developed their own support networks beyond biological family members. Regular contact with same-sex partners and significant others must be respected and supported in the care home.

- ★ Welcome partners and friends and uphold the privacy of residents by facilitating private time together.
- ★ Try not to make assumptions about sexual orientation or gender identity of older residents' visitors and the relationships between them (e.g. husband/wife/father/son).

8. Maintain independence and decision-making power of older LGBT+ people.

Make sure that older residents have control over their own space and care arrangements. Important people in older LGBT+ people's social networks need to be identified and included in decision-making about current and future care. This may not always be biological family members.

9. Recognise the diversity within the LGBT+ group.

Discrimination and exclusion can be experienced by people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (e.g. race, sex, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation and age). This is unlawful under the Equality Act. Aspects of identity are often interconnected. For example, the experience of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic LGBT+ older people and older disabled LGBT+ people may be different and varied. Therefore, older LGBT+ people can experience multiple levels of discrimination.

- ★ Do not assume LGBT+ older people are one group. Be aware of differences in sexual identity, gender identity and life history within the group.
- ★ Be aware of the intersectional needs of the protected groups and how they can interconnect. Discrimination can increase minority stress and impact on mental health and wellbeing.

10. Prioritise person-centred care.

Diversity and the unique experiences of all individuals must be valued, including sexual identity, gender identity and relationship histories.

- ★ Be aware of and sensitive to the unique needs of each resident as an individual.

11. Create inclusive home settings for LGBT+ residents.

Make older LGBT+ people, and their loved ones, feel welcomed and respected from entering the care homes. Make sure everyone who visits and lives in the home knows about the home's values of respect for diversity, equality and inclusion for all.

- ★ Display physical signs of LGBT+ affirmation, such as rainbow pride or trans pride signs on entrances and uniforms, pride flags and pictures of diverse older relationships and couples around the home.

12. Engage with external LGBT+ community and events.

This could include things like advertising local Pride Events or LGBT+ History Month activities within the home or supporting residents to attend these. It may involve having a stall at a public LGBT+ event to show your support.

This resource is produced in collaboration between the School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol and Diversity Trust, March 2019.

For more information and resources, please visit www.diversitytrust.org.uk/careunderrainbow.