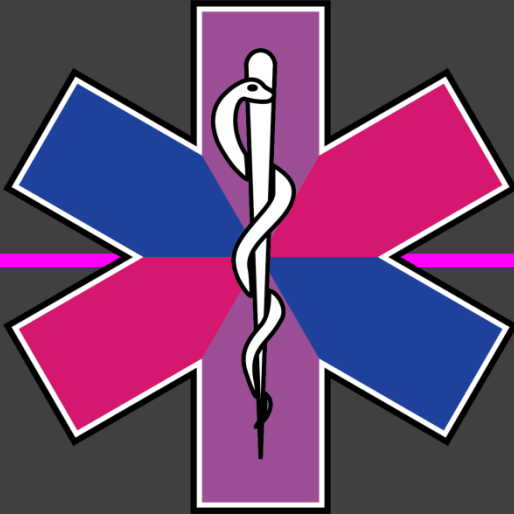


National Ambulance  
LGBT Network



Supporting Lesbian, Gay,  
Bisexual, Trans staff,  
patients and communities

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# Understanding the 'B' in LGBT

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Understanding the health and  
social issues for bisexual people,  
the hidden sexuality

Alistair Gunn and Drew Dalton  
14 December 2018



# Introduction



## Welcome!

As we have got more involved in setting up support mechanisms for LGBT people in the Ambulance Service, it has become increasingly apparent that there are differing needs for each letter within LGBT.

This pack is our first stage of raising awareness of the issues for bisexual people, something I have come to realise is often forgotten about.

Have a look at the the new bi-star of life logo that we have created especially for this pack. I hope you will enjoy reading the information and that you will adapt your practice to make sure bisexual people are included. Remember, informed care is great care!

**Alistair**



Alistair Gunn  
(above) is the  
Chair of the  
National  
Ambulance  
LGBT Network

## Hello All

As a bisexual man and activist, I am delighted that the National Ambulance LGBT Network have taken on my advice from my training workshop and have incorporated it into this pack.

This is a milestone as few organisations are addressing the often forgotten 'B' in their work and many do not recognise that bisexual people have specific needs too, which marginalises us much further. It is great to see a genuine want to create an inclusive workplace. I applaud this, well done!

**Drew**



Drew Dalton (left) is a  
Senior Lecturer in  
Sociology at University  
of Sunderland

# The Bisexual Flag

The bisexual pride flag was designed by Michael Page in 1998 in order to give the bisexual community its own identity and raise awareness of some of the issues specific to the bisexual people.

The rainbow flag is the symbol of the **LGBT** community and this often masks some of the complexity even within these four letters. **LGB** for example is all about sexual orientation whereas the **T** about gender identity. The issues for **L** and **G** people are different from the **B** too.

The point of this flag is not to divide people, but rather to make sure we understand the issues specific to bisexual people and increase their visibility. This is particularly relevant within the LGBT community.



The flag was created using the pink triangle, which was the main symbol for gay people before the creation of the rainbow freedom flag. The blue triangle denotes 'straight' people and when the two are mixed it gives the lavender colour which forms the centre stripe on the bisexual flag.



# LGBT Staff Survey 2018



In 2018 the National Ambulance LGBT Network conducted a survey to understand the experiences of LGBT people at work. Out of **443** respondents, **50** declared themselves as bisexual.

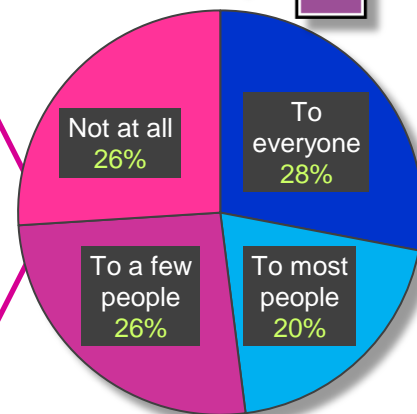
The survey found that fewer bisexual staff reported experiencing 'negative behaviours' at work. There is good reason for this...

There was also a massive difference in how 'out' bisexual feel they can be at work. **84%** of all respondents said they are able to be out to everyone or most people at work. Only **48%** of bisexual people said the same.

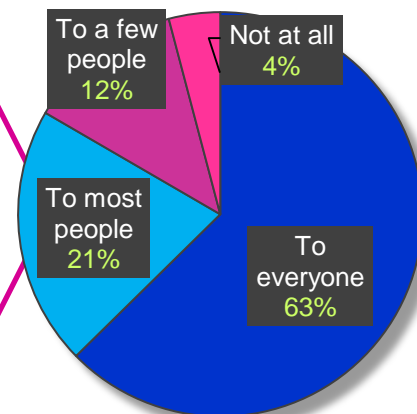
**4%** of the overall survey they were not out at all at work. This increased to **26%** for bisexual respondents.

## How 'out' are you at work?

### Bisexual Respondents (50 responses)



### All LGBT Respondents (443 responses)



# What is Bisexuality?



## Bisexuality is...

- 'A changeable sexual and emotional attraction to people, where gender may not be a defining factor.' However, bisexuality is often fluid.
- Extremely difficult to estimate the extent of bisexuality because it depends how the term is defined. It could be people who identify themselves as bisexual (in which case the estimate might be rather small).
- Or it could be all people who have ever had an aesthetic, romantic or sexual attraction to more than one gender, in which case the estimate might be rather large ([www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)).
- **Biphobia:** Biphobia is aversion toward bisexuality and bisexual people as a social group or as individuals

## Denied:

- Questioning the existence of bisexuality or of certain groups.
- Believing that bisexual people should 'make their mind up' or 'stop sitting on the fence.'
- Seeing bisexual people as 'confused' about their sexuality.

## Marginalised:

- Allowing biphobia comments to go unchallenged when homophobic comments would be challenged.
- Prioritising lesbian and/or gay issues over bisexual issues.
- Failing to engage with bisexual individuals or groups in relation to policy creation.

# Many False Assumptions



What do people think when they hear the term 'bisexual'?

*'You're just greedy really, aren't you?'*

*'Have you made your mind up yet?'*

*'What percentage are you?'*

*'You are gay but just daren't say so'.*

*'It's fashionable to be bi...'*

*'You must be a swinger then, right?'*

## Double Discrimination?

One author, Robin Ochs, writes about the 'double discrimination bisexual people can experience. As well as the false assumptions and prejudice often originating from 'straight' people, many lesbian and gay people compound this with attitudes indicating bisexual people are not 'proper gays' or 'just dipping their toes in the water'.

# Invisibility and Stereotypes



## Many bisexual people are invisible because:

- People assume sexuality on the basis of their current partnership.
- It is assumed bisexuality is a phase on its way to a lesbian/gay or heterosexual identity and pressurising bisexual people to become lesbian/gay.
- How do you know you are bisexual when you have only had sex with a man/woman? Would we doubt somebody like this if they were curious?



## Negative stereotypes:

- Object to fulfil a fantasy (threesomes).
- Assuming bisexual people will leave their partners.
- Passing as heterosexual has a 'privilege' to it.
- Seeing bisexual people as 'spreaders of disease.'
- Assuming that bisexual people are promiscuous or incapable of monogamy.
- A threat to families and relationships.



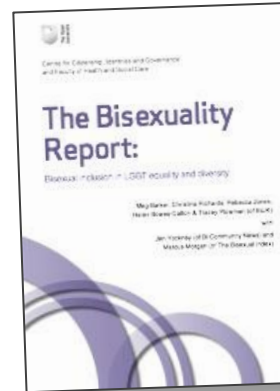


# Health Inequalities

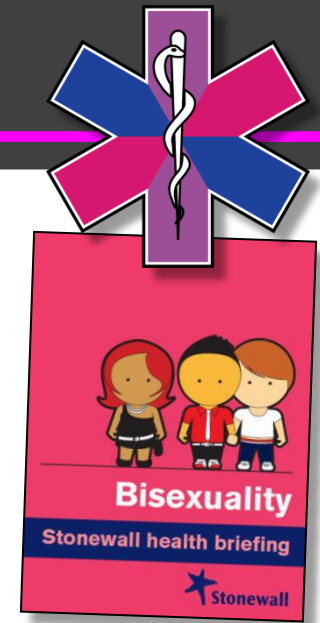
The first report on bisexuality was put together in 2012. It concluded that:

- Bisexual people's experiences differ in important ways from lesbian and gay people.
- Biphobia is distinct from homophobia.
- Bisexual people often face discrimination within heterosexual and lesbian and gay communities.
- This can be obscured by LGBT amalgamation.
- Bisexual populations have significantly higher levels of distress and mental health difficulties than equivalent heterosexual or lesbian/gay populations.

The Stonewall 'health briefing' from the same year also made some critical findings:



The first  
Bisexuality  
Report (Barker  
et al, 2012) and  
Stonewall report  
(2012)



- **45%** percent of bisexual women have considered or attempted suicide, followed by bisexual men (**35%**), lesbians (30%), gay men (25%).
- Bisexual women are **twice as likely** to have an eating disorder, and likely to drink heavily compared to lesbians.
- Bisexual men and women report the **highest rates** of smoking of all orientations.



# The Kinsey Scale

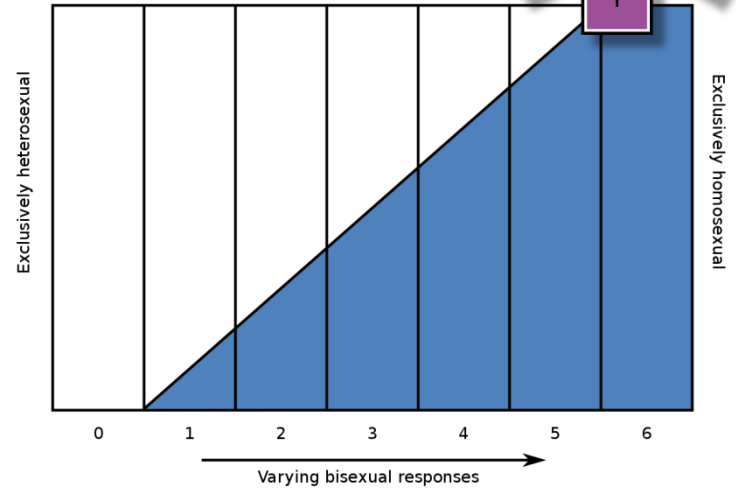
Dr Alfred Kinsey (right) was an American biologist who founded the Institute of Sex Research at Indiana University in 1947.



He is best known for his research into human sexual behaviour and the creation of a 'scale' to explain sexual preferences. His famous scale asked respondents to classify their own sexual orientation from 0 (exclusively heterosexual) to 6 (exclusively homosexual). That would leave the numbers 1 to 5 representing different levels of 'bisexuality'.

Kinsey's research was controversial at the time but his findings have been upheld by those who have repeated the research.

The Kinsey Scale  
created in 1948



Kinsey's research concluded that around 10% of respondents were 'more or less exclusively homosexual', giving rise to the one in ten estimate often quoted. His research also found that more people could be defined as 'bisexual' than exclusively heterosexual or homosexual, yet this is quoted far less.



# The Brokeback Debate



The 2005 film *Brokeback Mountain*, starring Jake Gyllenhaal and the late Heath Ledger has divided opinion on the sexuality of the two main characters.

It is often referred to as the 'gay cowboy movie' when infact the issues are much more complex. Despite their initial passionate encounter on *Brokeback Mountain*, the two go on the marry and live their separate lives, meeting occasionally to rekindle their love for each other.

Many critics assert this film is a true depiction of bisexual men and explores the complex issues many bi-people associate with. Whatever the meaning, it has certainly generated some debate, and maybe it is a film worth watching so you too can decide.



Jake Gyllenhaal and  
Heath Ledger in  
*Brokeback Mountain*



In 2018 *Brokeback Mountain* has been added to the US National Film Registry by the Library of Congress. They cite the film as being important because it is 'culturally, historically or aesthetically significant'.

A warning to those who do watch the film for the first time. This film also explores homo / biphobia in its most tragic form. Be prepared for a less than happy ending.



# Inclusive Patient Care



Here are some guidance on how to make your practice inclusive for bisexual people:

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect. Your treatment of people will have a huge impact on how people view health services in general and our role is to be supportive to everyone. Do not judge people and allow people to speak openly about their lives.
- Don't assume a person's sexual orientation or the relationship with people around the patient. Sometimes it may be obvious but very often the expression 'hidden in plain sight' is very relevant. Don't jump to conclusions.
- Use inclusive language such as 'partner' when referring to people and allow people to talk openly about their lives. If you use non-inclusive language people will assume they can't talk to you!



## **Informed Care is Great Care!**

Emergency situations are stressful enough for people without people feeling they need hide who they are.

Wearing the rainbow star of life pin badge shows people you are a 'safe person' for LGBT people.



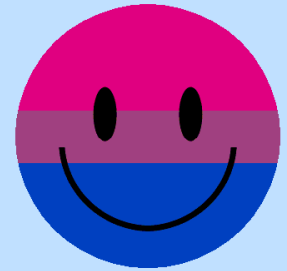
# Supporting Bisexual Colleagues



The Workplace Survey (2011) found that:

- Half of respondents felt that their co-workers had misperceptions about bisexuality. In general, respondents reported a number of similar issues to those reported by lesbian and gays.
- However, they suffered an additional disadvantage of being seen as not belonging to either 'side' (gay or straight) and therefore reported a degree of distrust from both those groups.
- Respondents reported that bisexuals who leave a partner of one sex and then become involved with someone of another sex are gossiped about much more than someone who is straight or gay.
- This effect then filters through into other aspects of work life, including the perception that bisexuals are often seen as unstable, unreliable, and therefore un-promotable.

**23 SEPTEMBER**



**CELEBRATE  
BISEXUALITY  
DAY**

**Bisexuality Day**

Help to make your  
colleagues valued and  
understood by recognising  
Bisexuality Day, which  
takes place on  
23 September every year.

# Closing Thoughts...



**TO ACT AS IF**  
**MARRYING A MAN HAS**  
**"DE-QUEERED" ME**  
**IS TO DENY ME THE RIGHT**  
**TO BE MY FULL SELF.**



Do not say you talked to 'LGB&T people' if you only talked to lesbians and gay men!

'I think choosing between men and women is like choosing between cake and ice cream. You'd be daft not to try both when there are so many different flavours' (Bjork)

