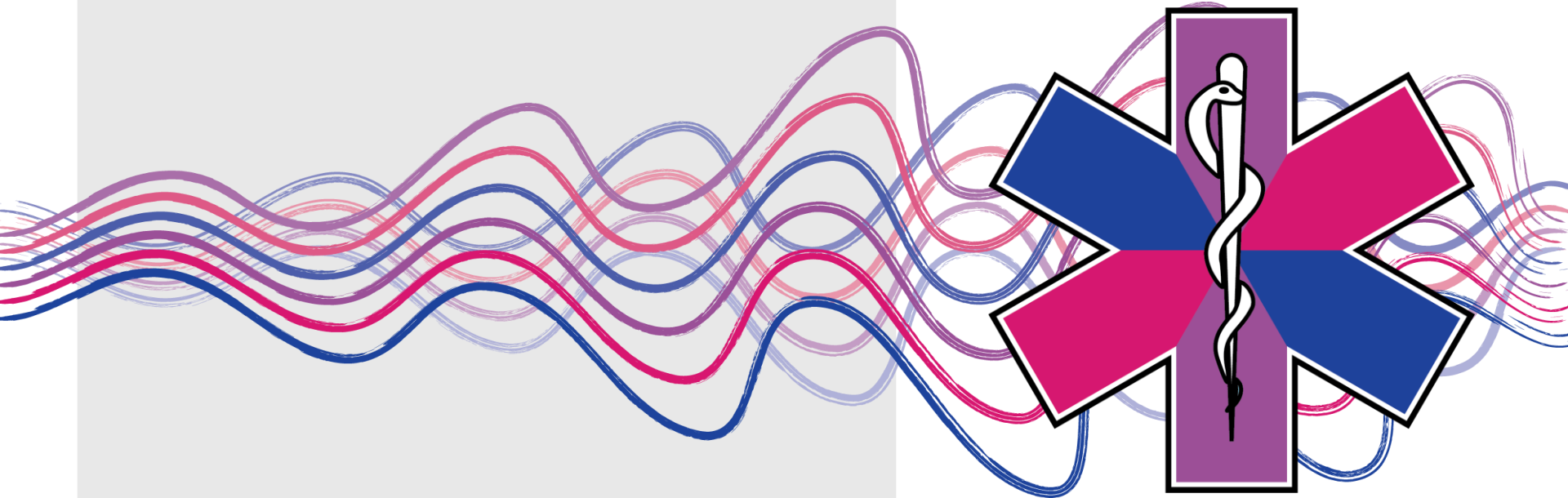


Understanding the 'B' in LGBT

National Ambulance LGBT+ Network

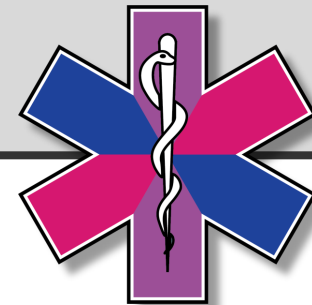


Alistair Gunn and Drew Dalton
February 2023

Celebrating the sexual orientations
and gender identities of all our
patients, staff and communities

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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 (right) is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at University of Sunderland



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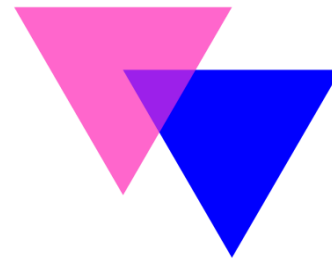
Part 4: **Thinking Differently**



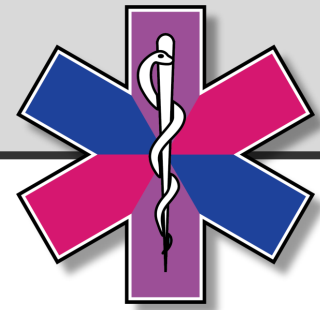


Part 1

Setting the Scene

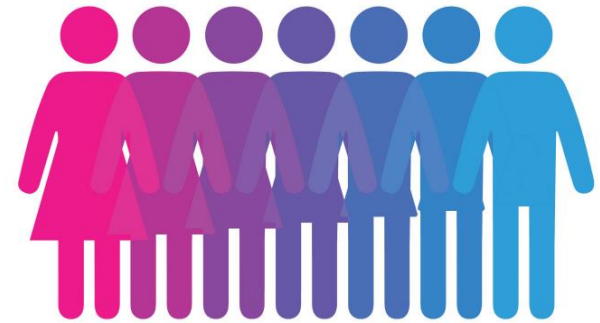


What is Bisexuality?



Bisexuality is...

- 'Being sexually attracted not exclusively to people of one particular gender; attracted to both men and women.' 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).
- **Biphobia:** Biphobia is aversion toward bisexuality and bisexual people as a social group or as individuals.



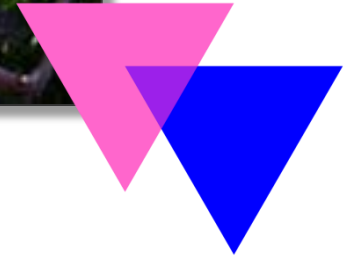
The Bisexual Flag



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.



The Kinsey Scale

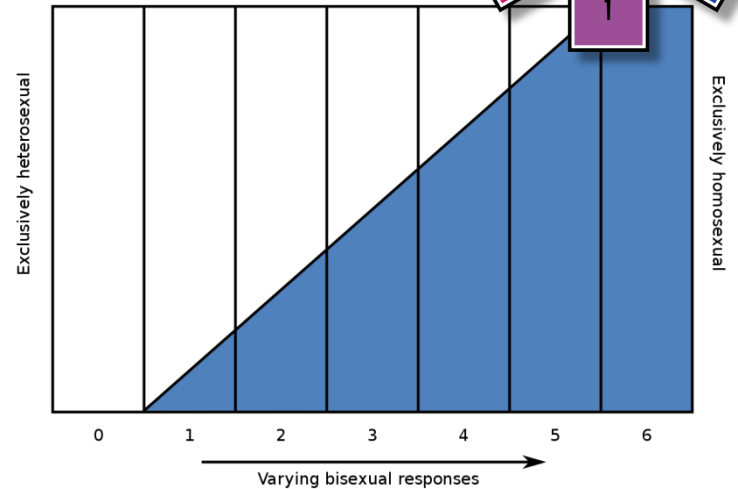
Dr Alfred Kinsey (right) was an American biologist who founded the Institute of Sex Research at Indiana University in 1947.



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'.

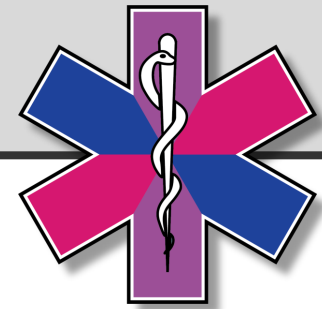
Kinsey's research was controversial at the time but his findings have been upheld by those who have repeated the research.

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.

Bisexual or Pansexual?



Bisexual

Def: Being sexually attracted not exclusively to people of one particular gender; attracted to both men and women.



The bisexual flag

Pansexual

Def: Sexual attraction not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, gender, or gender identity.



The pansexual flag

The Difference Between Bisexual and Pansexual

When it comes to the spectrum of sexuality, bisexuality and pansexuality are sometimes used interchangeably, but they're not quite the same. The main difference between bisexual and pansexual is rooted in the attraction felt.

A bisexual person is someone who is attracted to two or more genders, whereas a pansexual person is attracted to people *regardless* of gender. The terms are closely related, and some people identify with both terms while others prefer one over the other.



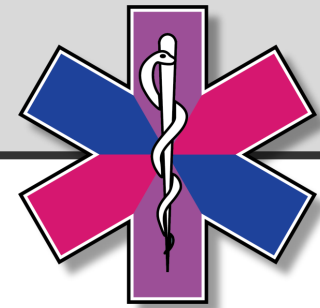


Part 2

Research and Statistics



Research



Most research into bisexuality concerns itself with quantifying the numbers of people, or looks at peoples' experiences. A poignant quote from our 2018 staff survey stated:

*'I've been in a hetero-relationship for 15 years and married for 10, but that doesn't make me any less bisexual and that's still what I identify as. But I don't feel comfortable saying so. **I think bisexuals are often overlooked** because if we are in a hetero-relationship it's as if we don't face any challenges or have a reason to speak up. But if that's true, then why do I have to lie about who I am? I don't even feel comfortable speaking up to the LGBT network about it. I think it would be great if bisexuals were made to feel a bit more validated for who they are.'*

Bisexuality can be 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.

Bisexual people can be 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.

LGBT+ Staff Survey 2018

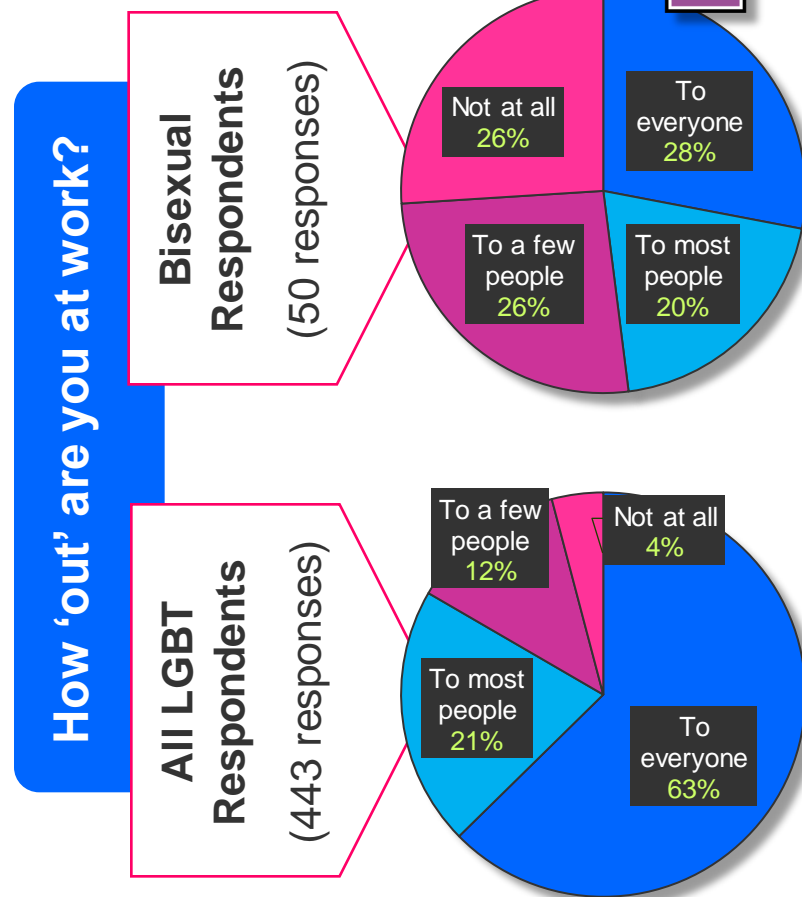


In 2018 the National Ambulance LGBT Network conducted a survey to understand the experiences of LGBT people at work. Out of **443** respondents, **50** declared themselves as bisexual.

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.



Health Inequalities

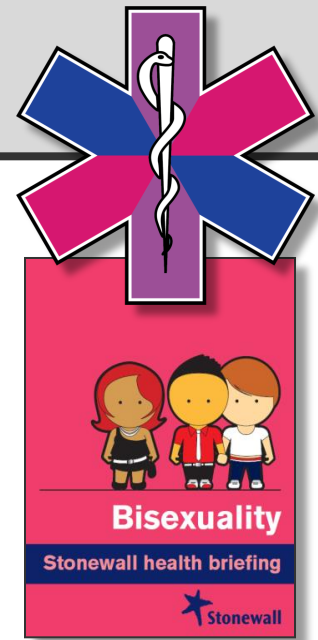
The first report on bisexuality was put together in 2012. It concluded that:

- 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:

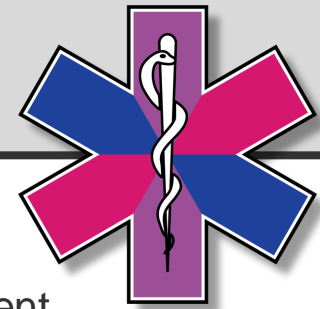


The first Bisexuality Report (Barker et al, 2012) and Stonewall report (2012)



- **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.

Hidden Figures Report



The excellent *Hidden Figures* report produced by the LGBT Foundation in 2018 draws together a wide range of research. In the report they state: *'Bisexual people feel unable to be open about their identities with friends and family and face a worryingly high level of discrimination from within LGBT communities'*.

Some of the statistics the report quotes come from a 2018 study by Stonewall, which concludes:

- **30%** of bi men and **8%** of bi women say they cannot be open about their sexual orientation with any of their friends, compared to 2% of gay men and 1% if lesbians.
- **27%** of bi women and almost **18%** of bi

men have experienced discrimination or poor treatment from others in their local LGBT community because of their sexual orientation, compared to 9% of lesbians and 3% of gay men.

A 2015 study by the Equality Network found:

- **66%** of respondents feel that they have to pass as straight and **42%** feel they need to pass as gay or lesbian when accessing services.
- **48%** have experienced biphobic comments and **38%** have experienced unwanted sexual comments about them being bisexual when accessing services.
- **61%** have experienced multiple discrimination.



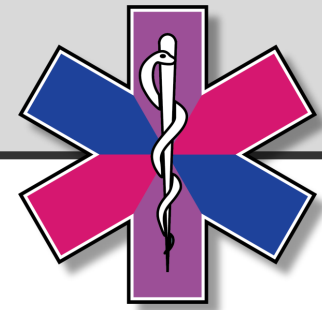


Part 3

The Issues



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'.



Assumptions and Stereotypes



Many bisexual people are invisible because:

- People assume sexuality on the basis of 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?

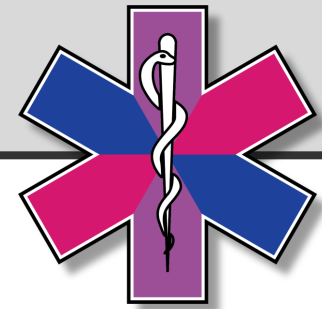


Negative stereotypes:

- 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.



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 in fact the issues are much more complex. Despite their initial passionate encounter on *Brokeback Mountain*, the two go on to 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.



Famous Bisexual People



Megan Fox

'Transformers' actress



Angelina Jolie

Actress



Billie Joe Armstrong

'Green Day' Musician



David Bowie

Musician



Drew Barrymore

Actress



Gillian Anderson

'X Files' actress



Pete Townsend

'The Who' musician



Marlon Brando

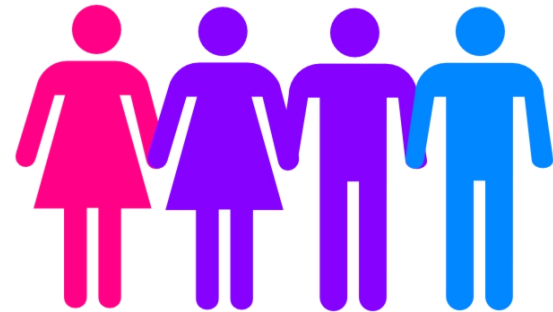
Late actor





Part 4

Thinking Differently



Support



Providing support for bisexual people works on several levels. Before we look at the specific guidance for patient and staff, which differs little from general LGBT+ support, we need deal with our personal thoughts and bias.

Most of us develop our assumptions and references about people from the people we interact with. If that cohort of people is small it is highly likely those assumptions will not be representative of everyone in that identity. Reviewing our assumptions and allowing them to be challenged is very important, and documents such as this one identify the fact that different people's experience of a single identity can be very different.

Having said this, there are also usually big

areas of commonality and we will more than likely start to see these as we interact with more people.

Making sure bisexual people can be themselves and represented has benefits both ways. If we really aspire to be true allies to bisexual people then we need to sort this out. One quote in the Hidden Figures report particularly stands out and makes a key point:

'Being bisexual means finding yourself excluded by gay people and straight people in social settings. I only tell friends about my sexuality, meaning it is hidden from my family and my work colleagues. Bisexuality is a hidden sexuality through people's lack of acceptance.'



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.

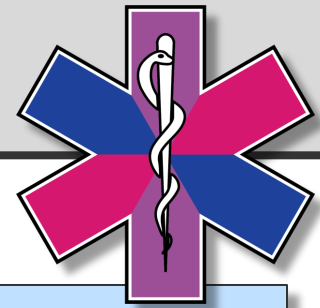
Wearing the rainbow star of life pin badge shows people you are a 'safe person' for LGBT people.



Supporting Bisexual Colleagues

The Workplace Survey (2011) found that:

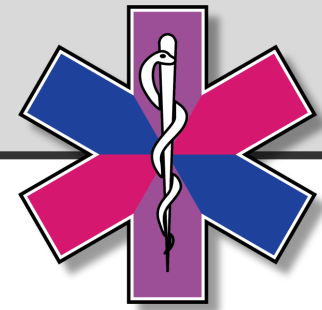
- Half of respondents felt that their co-workers had misperceptions about bisexuality. In general, respondents reported a number of similar issues to those reported by lesbian and gays.
- However, they suffered an additional disadvantage of being seen as not belonging to either 'side' (gay or straight) 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.



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



An LGBT+ Friendly Service



Five principles of good practice are:



Show the same professional courtesy to everyone you meet. You are there to look after people, not to judge them.



Take your cues from the person and mirror their terminology. If they refer to 'partner', you refer to 'partner'.



Call out bad practice and non-inclusive behaviours when you see it. If you walk past bad behaviour, you are accepting it.



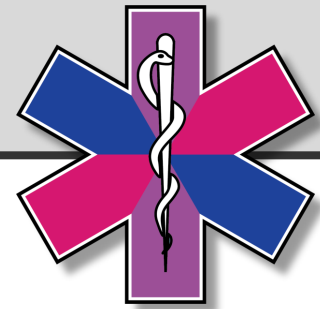
Saying 'I treat everyone the same' is admitting to bad practice. Be informed and attune your care to the people you treat.



Be a true ally to LGBT+ people. Talk to people and 'walk in someone's shoes' to see what their lives are really like.



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 'LGBT+ 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)

