

Easy Read Version



**Making life fairer
for
lesbian, gay and
bisexual people**



**Equality and
Human Rights
Commission**

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What this paper is about



The Equality and Human Rights Commission started in 2007.

Its job is to make life fairer and more equal for everyone.



This paper is about 1 of the groups the Equality and Human Rights Commission is working to help: **lesbian, gay** and **bisexual** people.

Lesbian means a woman who is attracted to other women.

Gay means a man who is attracted to other men.

Bisexual means a person who is attracted to both men and women.



The Equality and Human Rights Commission has spent the last 18 months finding out how lesbian, gay and bisexual people are treated in Britain.

What we found out about....



This paper is about what the Equality and Human Rights Commission found out. It says what needs doing to make life better for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.



There are boxes in this paper giving examples of things that lesbian, gay and bisexual people have said. This text is in **green**.

A message from Trevor Philips



**Trevor Philips, Chair
Equality and Human Rights
Commission**



Law and rule changes in the last 10 years have helped lesbian, gay and bisexual people in their daily lives.



Today there are openly lesbian and gay people working in politics. In the past they would have kept this a secret.



People have worked hard to make to make sure that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are treated fairly.



But there is a lot more work to do. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people still do not have equal choices and chances. There is still a lot of **homophobia** that needs stopping.

We realise that a person's **sexuality** is a private matter. But to make changes we need information on:



- where lesbian, gay and bisexual people live
- where they work
- how they are treated and
- what public services they need.

Homophobia is a fear or hatred of lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

Sexuality means what type of sexual partner you prefer.



Having this information will help to make sure rules and services meet everyone's needs. It will help to make sure lesbian, gay and bisexual people are treated fairly.



This paper is about who needs to collect this information. It is about how they should do this.



The Equality and Human Rights Commission will check that this work is done. We will take action if things do not get better.



How things are now



New laws in the last 10 years have helped lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Things like:



- civil partnerships – this is where the law gives same sex couples equal rights as married couples



- letting lesbian, gay and bisexual people adopt children
- protecting them against **discrimination** at work.

Discrimination means treating someone worse because of who they are.



In 1987 a **survey** found that 7 out of 10 people thought being a lesbian, gay or bisexual person was wrong.

By 2008 this had gone down to 3 out of 10 people.



This is good news for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. But they still face **prejudice**.

Survey means asking different people the same questions.

Prejudice means thinking badly about someone because of who they are.



The Equality and Human Rights Commission found that from the **heterosexuals** who did the survey:



- 1 out of 4 said they would not be happy to vote for an openly lesbian, gay or bisexual person for Prime Minister



- 1 out of 5 thought that lesbians would be worse at bringing up children than heterosexual women and

- 1 out of 4 thought that gay men would be worse at bringing up children than heterosexual men.

Heterosexual means being attracted to someone of the opposite sex.



What people think is not the only problem. The Equality and Human Rights Commission found that homophobia has affected the lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.



Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are often attacked because of their sexuality. They are hurt and bullied.



There are places in Britain where lesbian, gay and bisexual people do not feel safe or happy to live.

Big changes are needed to make a real difference.



Being heterosexual is seen as normal. Other types of sexuality are hidden.



Some lesbian, gay and bisexual people feel they have to keep quiet about who they are.



Some people do not want to talk about lesbian, gay and bisexual people.



This secrecy is bad. It helps to keep people thinking that there is something wrong with being a lesbian, gay or bisexual person. It can lead to lesbian, gay and bisexual people being treated unfairly.



I still do not feel I can hold hands in public.

29 year old lesbian

Why is information needed?



We need to look at the issues that affect lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Things like:



- health
- education
- work
- safety and
- taking part in leisure activities – things like sport.



We need information to make things fairer.

The information from things like surveys will be used to make sure lesbian, gay and bisexual people get the services they need.



It will give them the chance to be open about their sexuality without worrying about what might happen.

Information on sexuality should be collected along with other information on **equality**.

Things like:



- disability
- race
- religion.

Equality means treating everyone the same.

Why is information not collected?



Reasons people give not to collect information include:

- They are nervous about collecting information on sexuality.
- They are not sure what questions to ask.
- They do not see why they need this information.
- They believe that some lesbian, gay and bisexual people do not want to give this information.



As a result **public bodies** say they do not have enough facts to do anything. They do not see a reason to take action on lesbian, gay and bisexual issues.

Public bodies are things like councils, schools and hospitals.



This means action to stop things being unfair for lesbian, gay and bisexual people does not happen.

This makes them feel even more left out. It makes them not want to give information because:

- they think it will be used against them or
- nothing will happen.

How can we get better information?



We need to make sure people know why information is needed. They need to know how it will be used to make things fairer.



People collecting information must keep it private. Anyone using the information must not be able to tell who said what.

People must be able to trust that what they say will be kept private.

What will the Equality and Human Rights Commission do to help?

We will:



- Work with public bodies and private business. We will make sure they set up ways to collect information on lesbian, gay and bisexual people. We will check they ask the right questions.



- Carry on working to get a question on sexuality included in the 2011 **Census**. A Census is a count of all people in the country. It gets information to help with plans for the future. A Census is done in Britain every 10 years.



- Finish the **Equalities Measurement Framework**. This will help us check that everyone has the things in life that are important.



Things like:

- good health
- chances to learn
- feeling safe



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- take action if information is not collected
- plan meetings and events to help to tell people about what needs doing
- help to find out the best way to ask young people about their sexuality



- carry on our lesbian, gay and bisexual **Research Network**. This is a group of people working on sexuality issues for the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The main issues:

1. Work



The law says that staff should not be treated unfairly because of who they are.



There are jobs that some lesbian, gay and bisexual people decide not to do:

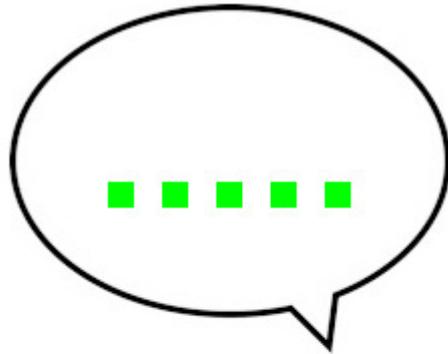


- police
- armed services (army, navy, air force)
- teaching
- manual trades (like working on a building site).



This is because they do not think they would be treated very well.





My flatmate is doing very well at work. But he often comes back from work feeling unhappy. He has not told them he is gay. He is worried this will stop him getting on.

I wonder how many other people are doing well in their jobs, but at the price of hiding who they are.

What employers need to do:

- get the right information



- explain why this information is needed
- make sure information is kept private



- look at why lesbian, gay and bisexual people do not want to do some jobs. Use what they find out to make changes



- stop bullying of lesbian, gay and bisexual staff
- make sure all staff are treated fairly.

What the Equality and Human Rights Commission will do:



- work with employers to make the workplace fair and safe for everyone



- make sure employers understand why it is important to collect information



- use our legal powers to stop lesbian, gay and bisexual people being bullied at work.

2. Education



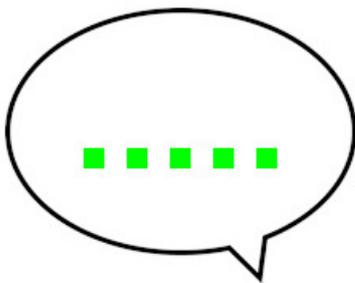
Some lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils and teachers are treated badly. For example they are:



- bullied
- hurt
- called bad names.



A lot feel they have to keep quiet about who they are to stay safe.



People call me 'gay' every day. Sometimes people kick me or push me. They shut me out of games during school gym. They steal my things. James, 17

What education needs to do:



- work to stop bullying of pupils and staff



- include lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in classes

- support lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils and staff



- make sure staff know what the law says they must do about equality



- get groups in charge of schools and colleges to take a lead in collecting information.

What the Equality and Human Rights Commission will do:



- work with the people running schools and colleges to stop bullying of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils and teachers



- work with the people running schools and colleges to make sure lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils are treated fairly



- aim to get more lesbian, gay and bisexual people working as teachers.

3. Safety



Lesbian, gay and bisexual people worry about being attacked because of who they are. This is called **hate crime**.



A lot of hate crime is not reported to the police. This is because lesbian, gay and bisexual people think they will not be listened to.



For hate crime that is reported, records show that most of it is done by people under 25 years old.



My friend was beaten and left in the road. She is now scared to go out.



Some lesbian, gay and bisexual people feel they have to keep it a secret to stay safe where they live.



Action is needed by the **justice system**. The justice system includes things like:



- the police
- courts
- prisons.



Action also needs to be taken in local areas. This is called **community safety**.

What the justice system and community safety need to do:



- work to stop hate crime against lesbian, gay and bisexual people
- work to show that homophobia is wrong



- support lesbian, gay and bisexual people to report hate crime. Let them know that they will be listened to



- keep proper records for hate crime against lesbian, gay and bisexual people

- work to make sure people who do hate crime get punished for it

- train people working in the justice system and community safety to treat lesbian, gay and bisexual people fairly.

What the Equality and Human Rights Commission will do:



- find out what the criminal justice system needs to do to make things equal for everyone
- help to make sure there is equality in the police service



- check that action to stop hate crime is working
- work with the criminal justice system to support lesbian, gay and bisexual people reporting hate crime



- let the public know that everyone needs to help stop hate crime.

4. Health and social care



Some lesbian, gay and bisexual people think they will be treated badly by health and social care services.



I felt it was important to tell my doctor that I am a lesbian. After I told her she acted different towards me. She was cold and not nice to me.

I changed my doctor after that.

What health and social care need to do:



- look at what stops lesbian, gay and bisexual people using health and social care services



- take action so that lesbian, gay and bisexual people can be open about their sexuality in old age



- use the new NHS patient survey to make things fairer. Use what they are told to make services better.

What the Equality and Human Rights Commission will do:



- work with the health service to make sure plans include the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people



- work with health and social care services to make sure they treat lesbian, gay and bisexual people fairly

- check that services for lesbian, gay and bisexual people are getting better



- work with social care services to make sure older lesbian, gay and bisexual people are treated with respect and dignity.

What else the Equality and Human Rights Commission will do:



We will keep working to make things more equal for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.



We will keep working with national groups and government to make changes.



We will check that things are getting better.



We will also work with other countries to help protect the rights of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.



We will carry on with our work to get everyone in Europe treated fairly.

Bisexual – a person who is attracted to both men and women

Discrimination – treating someone worse because of who they are

Equality – treating everyone the same

Gay – a man who is attracted to other men

Heterosexual – a person attracted to someone of the opposite sex

Homophobia – a fear or hatred of lesbian, gay or bisexual people

Lesbian – a woman who is attracted to other women

Prejudice – thinking badly about someone because of who they are

Public bodies – things like councils, schools and hospitals

Sexuality – what type of sexual partner you prefer

Survey – asking different people the same questions



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