

Progressing Outcomes from the 2011 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T) Consultation

As reported to the University of Cambridge E&D Committee June 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Equality Act 2010 increased the rights and protections of LGB&T people within the University, covering staff, students and visitors. As there is limited quantitative information available to inform relevant policy development and service delivery, during 2010-11 the University has undertaken engagement initiatives to capture the views and experiences of its LGBT staff and students in line with current legal requirements and the development of good practice in this area.

These include:

1. A closed focus group of LGB&T staff and students (May 2010)
2. Staff responses to the 2011 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI) survey (September 2010)
3. An open discussion, 'LGBT Speak', on the findings of the focus group and identification of objectives regarding sexual orientation and gender reassignment (November 2010)
4. Participation of the LGB&T Staff Network in consultation on the development of policy and equality objectives

Participants in the consultation exercises were a cross-section of University LGB&T staff and students including post-graduates, College members and all categories of University staff (Assistant, Academic-Related, Academic and Research).

1. Focus Group

The purpose of the initial focus group event was to gather information on the following areas:

- Organisational culture towards LGB&T people
- Opportunities and actions that could be developed to support LGB&T staff in the University
- Views on monitoring
- Profile of LGB&T issues in the University

Findings

Overall, it was felt that the University was an inclusive environment for LGB&T staff and students. Areas in need of further consideration were identified:

- Adopt inclusive language in all policies and forms
- Consult with transgender staff and students on relevant matters
- Articulate a clear policy on anti-gay bullying and harassment; promote through staff/student handbooks and via the Dignity at Work programme

- Ensure all LGB&T diversity initiatives/policies are tailored to and meet the needs of both staff and students
- Identify and empower senior LGB&T role models
- Improve communications around LGB&T issues
- Promote the University as a LGB&T-friendly place to work and study
- When collecting sexual orientation/gender identity monitoring data, ensure that information about why the data is being collected is available
- Participate in the Stonewall WEI

Actions undertaken as a result of findings:

- Production of the Diversity Network publication¹
- Promotion of the University's support services to LGBT staff and students, for example Dignity at Work/Study, the Counselling Service, the Centre for Personal and Professional Development
- Improvements to the website for the LGB&T Staff Network², incorporating profiles of staff and information on contacts

2. Stonewall WEI LGB Staff Survey

As part of the WEI submission, LGB staff members participated in a confidential survey focusing on their experiences of working within the University.

Findings

Areas identified for development included:

- Better informing non-LGB&T staff and students about issues related to sexual orientation
- Increasing senior management engagement in sexual orientation equality

Actions undertaken as a result of findings:

- Findings and recommendations from the LGB&T consultation and Stonewall LGB staff survey results formally reported to E&D Committee and University Equality Champions in June 2011

3. 'LGB&T Speak'

The open 'LGB&T Speak' session was held in November 2010 as part of the E&D Section's termly calendar of events, to inform the development of equality objectives in relation to sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

Findings

The resulting priority objectives in relation to sexual orientation and transgender identified were identified:

- Strengthen the profile of LGB&T issues, staff and students

¹ www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/equality/networks/networks.pdf

² www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/equality/networks/lgbt/#introduction

- Support the personal and professional development of LGB&T staff/students
- Increase awareness of LGB&T specific issues and requirements

Actions agreed as a result of findings:

- Sexual Orientation at Work Questionnaire

As part of the strategy to redress the information gaps in relation to sexual orientation³, an online questionnaire has been developed for members of staff to undertake on a voluntary 'opt in' basis (July 2011). Results will be reported to E&D Committee in Michaelmas term 2011.

- Focus on Specific Characteristics

Transgender

The University is currently developing updated guidance on gender reassignment for staff and students, incorporating the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and drawing on external good practice guidance.

Bisexuality

Greater awareness of specific bisexual issues has been identified as necessary to support bisexual members of the University; in light of this a presentation was given to Dignity at Work representatives in July 2011.

Dual Characteristics

This refers to the interplay between LGB&T and other protected groups and whether a combination of characteristics leads to increased negative experiences. Examples include older Lesbian women or Black gay men, which combine sexual orientation and age, and sexual orientation and ethnicity.

- Promotion of LGB&T Information and Guidance

To support consistency of practice across the Collegiate University and managers and colleagues in understanding LGB&T issues, specific guidance will be developed by the E&D section during the next academic year. Particular topics include guidance on homophobic bullying and harassment, and regarding international work or study placements in relation to LGB&T staff and students.

- Participation in the 2012 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

4. Participation of the LGB&T Staff Network in the development of policy and equality objectives

Actions to progress:

The LGB&T Staff Network formally participates in the University's newly established HR Network Group, which reviews policy, and in the Equality

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Assurance Assessment Review Group, which oversees the University's equality impact assessments. The Network is also a member of the E&D Consultative Forum which is formally represented on the E&D Committee. The LGBT Staff Network has also been consulted in the development of the University's Equality Objectives, a requirement of the Equality Act 2010.