

Volunteer Practice Guidance Note Top Tips Inclusion in Volunteering – Recruiting and Supporting LGBT Youth Volunteers

These Top Tips were produced by Volunteer Scotland and the National Inclusion in Volunteering Group.

Top Tips for Recruiting and Supporting LGBT Youth Volunteers

LGBT Youth Scotland are Scotland's national charity for LGBT young people, working with 13 to 25-year-olds across the country. We also deliver the LGBT Charter programme to schools, organisations and businesses.

Our goal is to make Scotland the best place to grow up for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex young people. We play a leading role in the provision of quality youth work to LGBT young people that promotes their health and wellbeing and are a valued and influential partner in LGBT equality and human rights.

By reflecting on the following we would hope that these points would help you make your volunteering offer more inclusive:

1. Try to avoid making assumptions about other people's sexual orientation or gender identity. A good habit is not to use gendered words when they aren't needed. For example, asking a man if he has a girlfriend or wife might assume that he is straight. "Do you have a partner?" is a great alternative.
2. If a volunteer comes out to you as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or trans (LGBT), remember that this might've taken some courage and they've chosen to tell you something personal and important about themselves. You don't need to make a big fuss, but it can be good to thank them for sharing this with you.
3. Similarly, if a volunteer lets you know about their LGBT identity, don't assume they're asking for your help. It's possible they might be, but equally it might just be important to them that you know. It's also best to also avoid responses like "that's not important to me" or "I don't care about that".
4. If a volunteer tells you they want to be known in a different gender and/or by a different name and pronoun to before, it's important that you make every effort to respect their wishes. It can be difficult to get right every time; but if you slip up just say sorry, correct yourself and move on.
5. Remember that not all people identify their gender in binary terms (i.e. either as male or female). Many non-binary people identify their gender in some other way. Although "he/him" and "she/her" are common pronouns, many non-binary people use "they/them", for example: "This is Jack, they'll be joining our volunteer team next week. I know you'll all make them very welcome!"
6. If you're not sure what pronouns someone uses, it's fine to ask! "Which pronouns do you use?" is perfectly acceptable. Another good way is to make it part of introducing yourself: "Hi I'm Mary, and I use she/her pronouns. What are your name and pronouns?" Asking someone which pronouns they'd like you to use has the added benefit of letting them know you're supportive of trans and non-binary identities, and it can help put them at ease.
7. Don't get too stressed about learning all LGBT terminology. Taking personal responsibility for having a good basic understanding of common terms is recommended, but getting your own attitudes and values right is much more important. If you're unsure what a word means, it's generally always fine to ask.
8. Make sure LGBT identities are considered in your monitoring and evaluation of volunteers. Do you monitor sexual orientation and gender identity in a way that is safe, confidential and appropriate? You'll find an excellent guide to

doing that [here](#).

9. Check that any data collection forms and other documents you give to volunteers aren't exclusive of LGBT identities. For example, does your equal opportunities monitoring form allow for gender identities other than male and female?
10. Think about how your organisation presents itself to the world and ask yourself how visibly LGBT people are portrayed within that. Are LGBT people visible in your volunteer recruitment advertising and other resources? Think too about visibility within your organisation's premises. Displaying a few LGBT posters, pictures, flags etc. can be a great way to let your LGBT volunteers, staff, visitors and service users know that they are equally welcome!
11. When developing or reviewing policies for your organisation, consider their relevance in relation to LGBT identities and make specific reference where necessary.
12. LGBT Youth Scotland's LGBT Charter is a great way to help make sure your organisation is as inclusive as it can be when working with LGBT people! To find out more, click [here](#).

Need some more help?

If you would like more help or advice in relation to this guide, please contact us:

- <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/>
- Telephone: Volunteer Scotland 01786 479593
- Email: volunteerpractice@volunteerscotland.org.uk



Volunteer Scotland
Jubilee House, Forthside Way, Stirling FK8 1QZ
T: 01786 479593 E: hello@volunteerscotland.org.uk
W: volunteerscotland.net



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