Knowledge Gateway

Practice Guidance and Information

Top Tips for inclusion of LGBTQ+ volunteers

Recruiting and Supporting LGBTQ+ Volunteers

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

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

We support LGBTQ+ young people in all aspects of their lives through the provision of amazing youth work, and we support them to use their voice to create change in equality and human rights. Our vision is a Scotland where LGBTQ+ young people can flourish and thrive.

LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer & questioning, and the positive '+' aims to represent and respect everyone on the gender and sexuality spectrum, including intersex.

By reflecting on the following, we 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 LGBTQ+, 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 LGBTQ+ identity, don't assume they're asking for your help. They might be, but equally it might just be important to them that you know. It's also best to 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, you should 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 LGBTQ+ 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 LGBTQ+ 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? Here’s a **guide to equalities monitoring**.

9. Check that any data collection forms and other documents you give to volunteers aren’t exclusive of LGBTQ+ identities. For example, does your equal opportunities monitoring form allow for gender identities other than male and female? Do your forms have non-gendered titles like Mx?

10. Think about how your organisation presents itself to the world and ask yourself how visibly LGBTQ+ people are portrayed within that. Are LGBTQ+ people visible in your volunteer recruitment advertising and other resources? Think too about visibility within your organisation’s premises. Displaying a few LGBTQ+ posters, pictures, flags etc. can be a great way to let your LGBTQ+ 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 LGBTQ+ 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 LGBTQ+ people! Find out more about the **LGBT Charter.**

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/

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Knowledge Gateway

This resource was created in partnership with:

National Inclusion in Volunteering Group

LGBT Youth Scotland

The Knowledge Gateway is created and led by **Volunteer Scotland**

Volunteer Scotland

This is a regularly reviewed resource. If you have any suggested updates, please email Volunteer Scotland at **hello@volunteerscotland.org.uk**