



The Seafarers' Charity: 'Coming Out' Toolkit

Supporting our LGBT+ staff
disclosing their gender and sexual identities



Purpose of the Toolkit

The purpose of this toolkit is to support LGBT+ in the workplace and encourage non-members of the LGBT+ community to develop their allyship.

From conversations with staff and delivery partners, we recognise the pressure that is associated with disclosing gender and sexual identity in the workplace. No individual should feel pressured or stressed within this environment and is why The Seafarers' Charity has taken the time to create this toolkit.

In the following pages, there will be information and guidance on equality legislation and best-practice featured. It will also include The Seafarers' Charity's stance on these areas and how we are consistently encouraging a more equitable, equal, diverse, and inclusive workforce.

We have attempted to create a comprehensive toolkit but do recognise that this document does not highlight all groups within the LGBT+ spectrum. It is also noted that situations may change and the needs of one person can be entirely different to the needs of another.

Therefore, this remains a working document which will be modified as and when it is needed.

What do we mean by 'Coming Out'?

'Coming out' refers to the process of disclosing something about yourself that is not immediately obvious. Regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, this means sharing with others that you identify as LGBT+. The process of 'coming out' varies with each individual. It can also take some time to reach a level of comfort to have those conversations, but The Seafarers' Charity will support you when you do.

Why do people come out?

The reasons for coming out varies with each individual. However, many people will say that this is because they want to be honest about their gender or sexual identity.

When this information is suppressed, it can be mentally and emotionally taxing. It can negatively impact important areas of a life, such as relationships with friends and family, or performance in the workplace.

Should someone decide to come out to you, they have most likely done so in confidence. Just because they have disclosed this information to you, it does not mean that they have told everyone in their life. It is a sign of trust, so do not share with others unless you have been told it is okay to do so.

How to tell people?

Ways of coming out vary. Everyone has their own preference, and there is never a correct way of doing it.

For some, sitting down with an individual to talk about being LGBT+ is preferred. It is a daunting task but allows the other person to ask any questions. Equally, you may disclose this information to colleagues in passing and not wish to elaborate.

Others may choose to send an email. At The Seafarers' Charity we encourage all our staff to include their pronouns at the end of their email signatures. It is also advised that a link to the Pronouns.Page is attached to email signatures. This will help those not aware of all genders to educate themselves on the differences.

Support with coming out

If you are working at The Seafarers' Charity, the decision to come out or not is one for you. But you can be assured that the charity is committed to equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion both internally and externally. Whether you decide to come out to us or not, you will always be supported.

The Law

Summary

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society. This replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. It also sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone.

Which groups are protected

The following characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 include:

Age: An individual cannot be treated differently because of their age.

Disability: A person cannot be discriminated against because of their physical or mental impairment.

Gender reassignment: Someone cannot be discriminated against because they have, or are in the process, of transitioning from the gender and/or sex they were assigned with at birth.

Marriage and civil partnership: The Equality Act 2010 states that someone cannot be discriminated against because of their marital or civil partnership status.

Pregnancy and maternity: Someone cannot be discriminated against because they are pregnant. The Equality Act 2010 also protects those who have miscarried.

Race: Someone cannot be discriminated against because of their race. Race includes: colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins.

Religion or belief: The Equality Act 2010 ensures that no religion, belief, or non-belief can be subjected to discrimination.

Sex: An individual cannot be discriminated against because of their sex. Sex is defined as a label assigned at birth and is based on attributes such as chromosomes, hormones, and external and internal anatomy.

Sexual orientation: The Equality Act 2010 states that you cannot be discriminated against if you identify as either heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Key features

Discrimination

According to the UK Equality Act 2010, it is illegal to discriminate against any group listed under their protected characteristics (see above). The Act outlines that an individual is legally protected from discrimination in the following situations:

- At work
- In education
- As a consumer
- When using public services
- When buying or renting property
- As a member or guest of a private club or association

You are also protected from discrimination if you are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, such as a family or friend. It also extends to protection from discrimination if you have issued a complaint about discrimination or supported another's claim.

Equal pay

The right to equal pay for equal work between men and women is set out in Article 141 of the EU Treaty and the UK Equality Act 2010. The Act implies a sex equality clause into each contract of employment, adapting any term that is less favourable to someone of the opposite sex. The European Commission and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) also publish codes of practice. Whilst the latter is not legally binding, it can be used as evidence for equal pay claims.

What does the law not include?

The UK's Equality Act 2010 is a piece of working legislation that has most recently (2022) recognised gender fluid and non-binary peoples as a protected group. However, there are a few exceptions which means that many are not protected under the legislation. For instance:

- Students are not protected at schools if they endure age discrimination.
- Those who are divorced, or separating are not protected against discrimination.
- Following years of campaigning, in 2022 the government implemented a ban on conversion therapy*. However, this only protects lesbian, gay, and bisexual groups. It does not offer safety for trans peoples despite this demographic being one of the highest risk groups likely to suffer from it.

Despite such prevalent gaps within the UK's Equality Act 2010, The Seafarers' Charity does not condone or tolerate any form of discrimination against anyone. We believe that a greater impact is generated by diverse thinking. We support all of our employees, delivery partners and beneficiaries, irrespective of race, gender, sexuality, religion or belief, marital status and so forth.

Coming out in the workplace

How The Seafarers' Charity will support you

Statement

The Seafarers' Charity remains committed to equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion. We believe that everyone has the right to identify as their true selves, and a diverse workforce creates a positive impact. In recognition of this, the Charity has implemented several different strategies to support our LGBT+ colleagues.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Following the government's changes in the Equality Act 2010 (2022), we have updated our GDPR policy to greater protect and support LGBT+ staff. In this situation, we recognised that the updates in the legislation still does not protect all members of the LGBT+ community, such as those identifying as asexual. Therefore, we updated our policy to ensure that we recognised all members of the community and reiterate that we do not tolerate any form of discrimination.

Equity, Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion policy (EEDI)

The Seafarers' Charity also has a separate EEDI policy which is embedded into the organisation's working practice. It reinforces the value and protection of all current and future LGBT+ staff. This policy also ensures that all staff undergo EEDI training twice a year and allots separate time for the internal EEDI group to meet regularly.

EEDI working group

The internal EEDI working group meets bi-monthly to discuss how societal injustices impact certain communities throughout the globe. In doing so, we hyper fixate on a topic for about 6 months to gather resources, discuss them, and educate ourselves on these matters. Once compiled, we discuss and distribute this information throughout the organisation. By educating ourselves on these issues, we also hope that it will positively impact our outreach, as well as helping us to develop as individuals.

Diversity in Maritime Charter Organisation

As part of our efforts to strengthen EEDI, The Seafarers' Charity has recently become a Diversity in Maritime Charter organisation and is working collaboratively with Maritime UK. We signed up to be a Diversity in Maritime Charter organisation to better educate ourselves and ensure that our workplace environment is as diverse and inclusive as it possibly can be.

For further information on this area, click [here](#).

How can we improve the workplace?

Continuing to create an inclusive environment for our LGBT+ staff

Whilst The Seafarers' Charity has already implemented ways to ensure the support of current and future LGBT+ staff, we recognise that this is a continuous journey. In the following section of this working document, there are a series of other methods listed to support current and incoming LGBT+ colleagues.

Continue to learn about LGBT+ issues

Proceeding to educate the organisation on issues of gender and sexuality. In doing so, staff can show solidarity with the community and the ongoing difficulties that are faced.

Consistent review of workplace policies

Ensuring that the workplace remains up to date with recent needs of the LGBT+ community. Further protecting and supporting all LGBT+ staff.

Attending pride events

Encouraging current staff to show solidarity with the LGBT+ community by attending the annual Pride events across the UK. This year, The Seafarers' Charity both attended and marched in Pride in London parade alongside other organisations in the maritime sector. Non-LGBT+ staff also participated to show solidarity and support for the entire community.

Encouraging gender neutral language

Staff may not be at the stage of feeling comfortable disclosing their gender or sexual identity. As a result, it can be challenging to answer questions like *'how is your wife/husband and kids?'* Instead, staff could modify their language to make it more gender neutral. For instance, *'how is your family?'*, *'how is your partner?'* This way, new staff who are LGBT+ can disclose their gender or sexual identity if/when they are ready to.

Becoming a Stonewall Diversity Champion

The Seafarers' Charity has signed up to become a Diversity in Maritime UK Charter organisation. This is a great effort made by the organisation to pledge its commitments to diversity, equality, and inclusion.

Following this process, The Seafarers' Charity may want to consider also becoming a Stonewall Diversity Champion as part of their ongoing commitment to education and support for the LGBT+ community. This way, the organisation will reap the benefits of having regular updates and assistance from Stonewall. Information will also be provided by them, which can be redistributed throughout the organisation to aid the efforts of the internal EEDI group. Click [here](#) for further information.

Summary

The notion of 'coming out' refers to the act of disclosing something about yourself that is not initially obvious. In the context of this document, this specifically refers to sharing your gender and sexual identity with others. The process is different for each individual, but The Seafarers' Charity supports all our colleagues regardless of whether you choose to disclose this information.

The Seafarers' Charity has implemented a separate EEDI policy that aligns with the Equality Act 2010. The legislation protects 9 characteristics against discrimination in the workplace, but we are aware that there are groups neglected. Regardless, the charity will not tolerate anyone who is discriminated against and ensure that all of our colleagues are entitled to the respect that everyone is warranted as humans.

To support our LGBT+ staff, we have also updated our GDPR policy, implemented an internal EEDI working group and signed up to become a Diversity in Maritime Charter organisation. In moving forward, we will constantly review our policies to amend the changes when they are needed. We will also encourage gender neutral language in the workplace for new colleagues, continue to educate ourselves on LGBT+ issues and show solidarity during pride events.

Finally, coming out in the workplace will always be your decision. Regardless of what you decide to do, our staff are here to support you in whatever way you need.

Resources on 'Coming Out' and Knowing Your Rights

- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Out & Equal Workplace Advocates](#)
- [Stonewall](#)
- [The Trevor Project](#)

Mental Health Resources for LGBT+ Staff

These sources are directly taken from our mental health research exploring how these difficulties impact different communities. We will revisit and update both documents with useful resources for those who may find value in them.

[CRISIS Text Line](#): a crisis network who will put you in contact with a crisis counsellor. They have a division which primarily caters to those who identify within the LGBT+ community; however, they are also open to anyone and everyone. They operate 24/7 and are reachable via phone, text, or chat.

[Diverse Church](#): a supportive community of over 600 LGBT+ Christians in the UK and Ireland. They provide support for those who identify as both LGBT+ and Christian.

[Hidayah](#): provides guidance and support for LGBT+ Muslims in the UK and wider globe.

[House of Rainbow](#): establishes relationships among LGBT+ people of colour, people of faith and allies to create a safe and inclusive space.

[LGBT Foundation](#): the LGBT foundation offer a helpline service which allows LGBT+ people to speak openly and honestly with full anonymity. They are available via phone on weekdays, 9am-9pm or can be contacted via email.

[The Trevor Project](#): the world's largest crisis intervention organisation for LGBT+ young people under the age of 25. They operate 24/7 and are reachable via phone, text, or chat.

*Conversion therapy, also referred to as 'cure' or reparative therapy, is a form of treatment or psychotherapy which attempts to change a person's sexual orientation. In doing so, the intended aim is to suppress a person's gender or sexual identity. It derives from the assumption that being a member of the LGBT+ community is a mental illness which can be 'cured.'

For further information, click [here](#).

At The Seafarers' Charity, we've been improving the lives of seafarers and their families for over 100 years. We started as the King George's Fund for Sailors, providing vital assistance in troubled times.

Today, we're evolving guided by the same powerful vision. Through our grant giving, we're bringing about truly life-changing impact for many who work – or have worked – at sea, and their families. Alongside this we're also using funding collaboration, research and advocacy to tackle the root causes of seafarer hardship and disadvantage in the UK and around the world.

www.theseafarerscharity.org



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