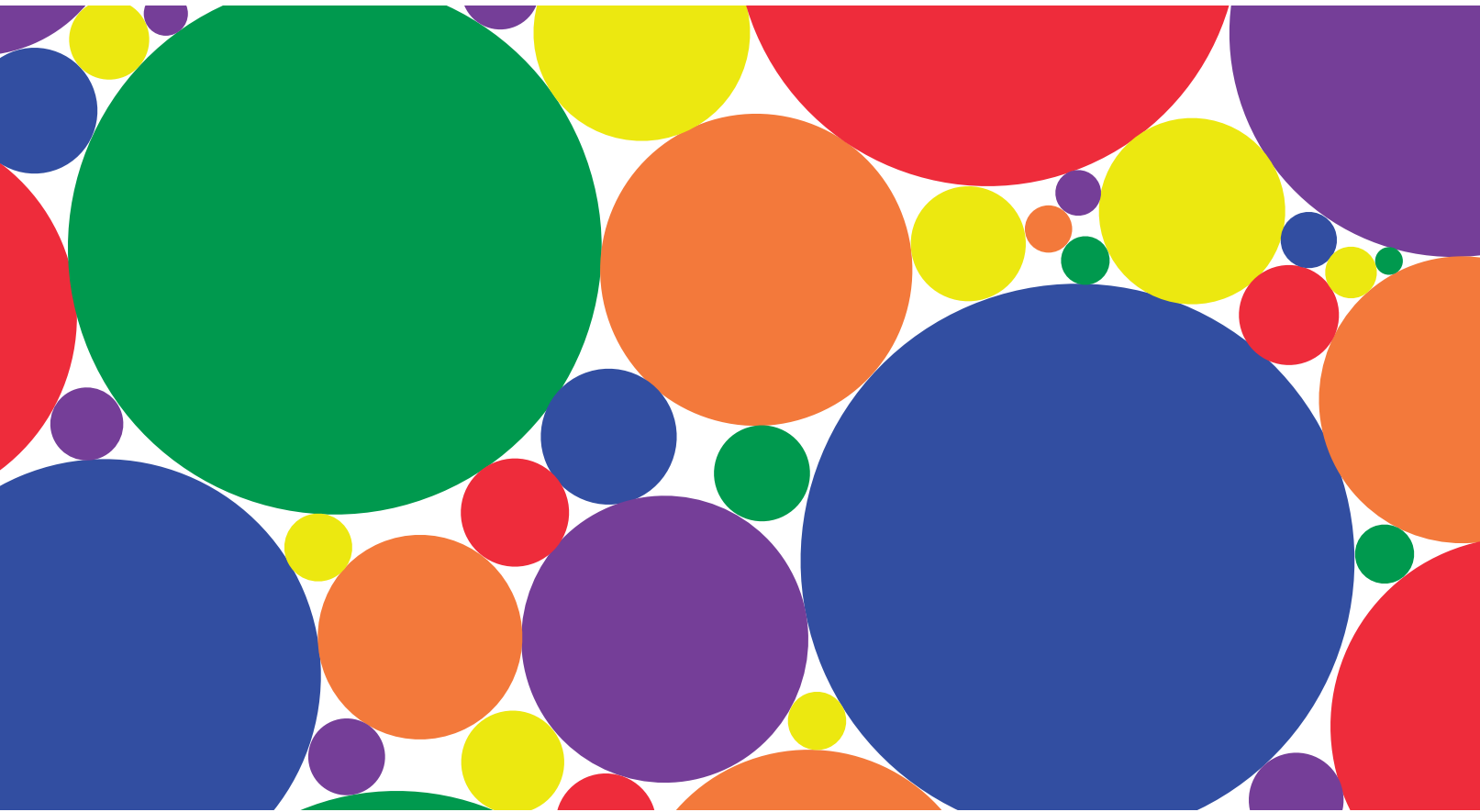


Reducing health inequalities for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people





Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Advisory Group

These Briefing papers were written by Dr Julie Fish of De Montfort University as part of the Department of Health's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Advisory Group's (SOGIAG) work programme. SOGIAG is a group of stakeholder individuals and organisations which assists the Department with the development and delivery of a programme of work to promote equality for and to eliminate discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people in health and social care – both as service users and as employees. The group has three workstreams: better employment; reducing health inequalities and promoting inclusive services; and transgender health.

In addition to the Briefings, the group has commissioned a number of other resources to assist health and social care services in providing appropriate, inclusive services.

These include:

- An introduction to working with lesbian, gay and bisexual people;
- An introduction to working with trans people;
- Being the gay one: Experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual people working in the health and social care sector (by Stonewall);
- Core standards for training on sexual orientation (by Diverse Identities);
- Harassment and sexual orientation in the health sector (by Stonewall);
- Monitoring of sexual orientation in the health sector (by Stonewall); and
- Real Stories, Real Lives: LGBT People and the NHS (a DVD to be used as a practical tool in training and raising awareness).

It has also commissioned the following guides for patients/service users:

- A guide for young trans people in the UK (by Sci:identity); and
- Bereavement: A guide for transsexual, transgender people and their loved ones (by Professor Stephen Whittle and Dr Lewis Turner).

All of these, plus further resources currently under development, can be found on the Department of Health's sexual orientation and gender identity web pages at: www.dh.gov.uk/EqualityAndHumanRights



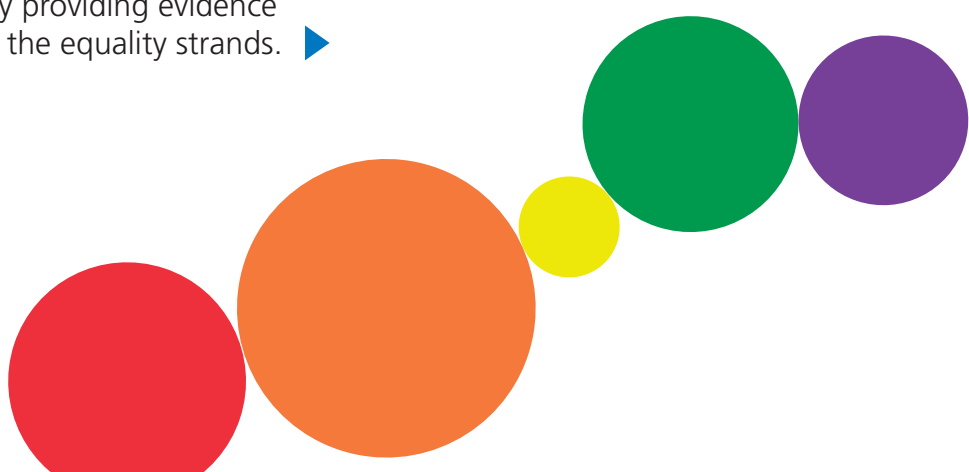


Introduction to the briefings

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people experience a number of health inequalities which are often unrecognised in health and social care settings. Research suggests that discrimination has a negative impact on the health of LGBT people in terms of lifestyles, mental health and other risks. Many people are reluctant to disclose their sexual orientation to their healthcare worker because they fear discrimination or poor treatment.

Healthcare and other professionals commonly assume that LGBT people's health needs are the same as those of heterosexual people, unless their health needs are related to sexual health. These Briefings are intended to show that LGBT people can be younger, older, bisexual, lesbians, gay men, trans, from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and disabled, and to dispel assumptions that they form a homogeneous group.

These Briefings were commissioned as part of the work programme of the Department of Health's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Advisory Group. They provide easy-to-read guidance for health and social care commissioners, service planners and frontline staff. They aim to inform the delivery of appropriate services and to support health and social care professionals in their everyday work with LGBT people by providing fundamental awareness and evidence of LGBT needs in relation to health. The Briefings may also inform the work of the new single equality body – the Commission for Equality and Human Rights – by providing evidence of health needs across the equality strands. ▶





◀ Each Briefing covers:

- the identification of health needs;
- communicating and engaging with the particular group;
- relevant policy and legislation;
- evidence and statistics; and
- links and resources, which provide an indication of the range of services that exist currently.

The Briefings reflect the availability of research evidence about LGBT populations. Where possible, we have tried to draw upon existing published research, although some reference is made to 'grey' or unpublished research material. In the UK, there is limited research about LGBT communities currently, and this is reflected in the briefings; further research is urgently needed.

The Briefings may also be seen to be controversial. In focusing on health inequalities, they may create the impression that being LGBT is a negative experience. LGBT activists and others have campaigned for many years to challenge (and overturn) such false assumptions. These have included, for example, the fact that until 1992, being gay (lesbian or bisexual) was considered to be a mental disorder by the World Health Organization.

Many LGBT people live fulfilled, healthy lives. A substantial proportion, however, do not. The aim of these Briefings is to contribute towards improving the health of LGBT people and the healthcare experiences of all.

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