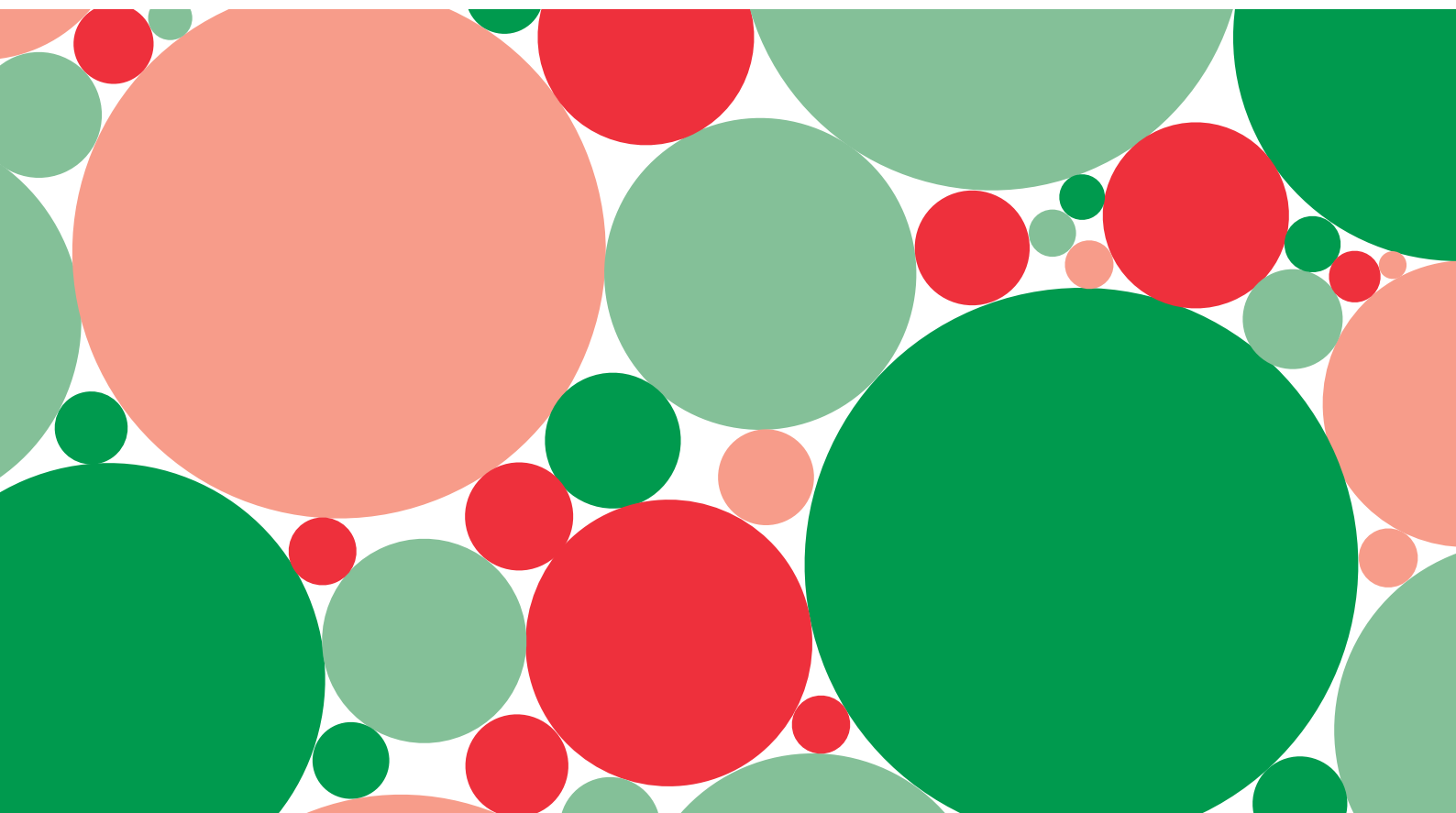


## Briefing 2

# Improving access to health and social care for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people

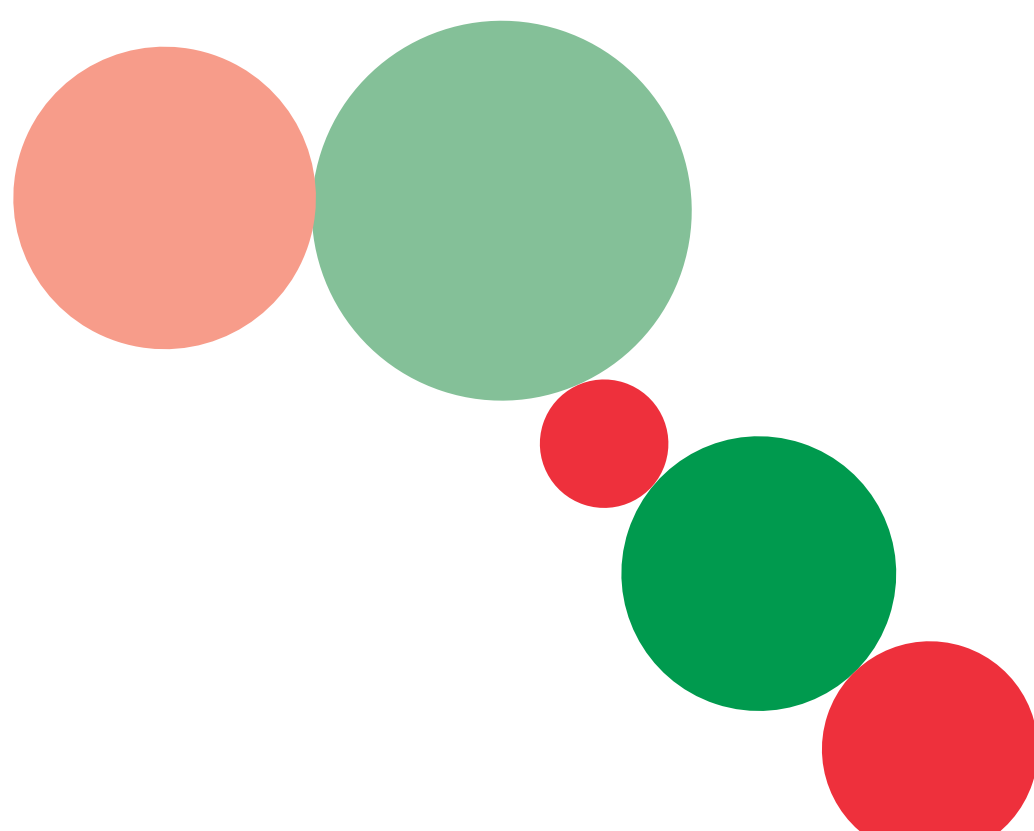




## (a) Introduction

A number of voluntary<sup>1</sup> and statutory health organisations are working to identify good practice in healthcare for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people. The need for this work is given a basis in statute by the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007. The Regulations, which came into force on 30 April 2007, prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services – including health and social care. The Government is also committed to amending the Sex Discrimination Act before the end of December 2007 to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment in the provision of goods and services.<sup>2</sup>

These Briefings aim to provide service planners and commissioners with relevant information in order to provide equitable and appropriate services for LGBT people.





## (b) Access to healthcare

### Communicating with LGBT people

Good communication with LGBT people encourages them to be involved in their own healthcare and promotes better health outcomes. Using language that respects LGBT people and acknowledges same-sex relationships is needed for person-centred care. Communication is also enhanced if LGBT people are able to 'come out' (ie disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity) to their health or social care provider.

LGBT people are more likely to come out if they feel they are welcome and that their rights are respected. A welcoming environment can be made more explicit by providing a non-discrimination policy statement which states that equal care will be provided to all patients, regardless of age, disability, gender and gender identity, race, religion and sexual orientation; by providing details of local services relevant to LGBT people; and by using brochures and posters that include images of LGBT people.

### Taking people's histories; assessments; discussing needs and concerns

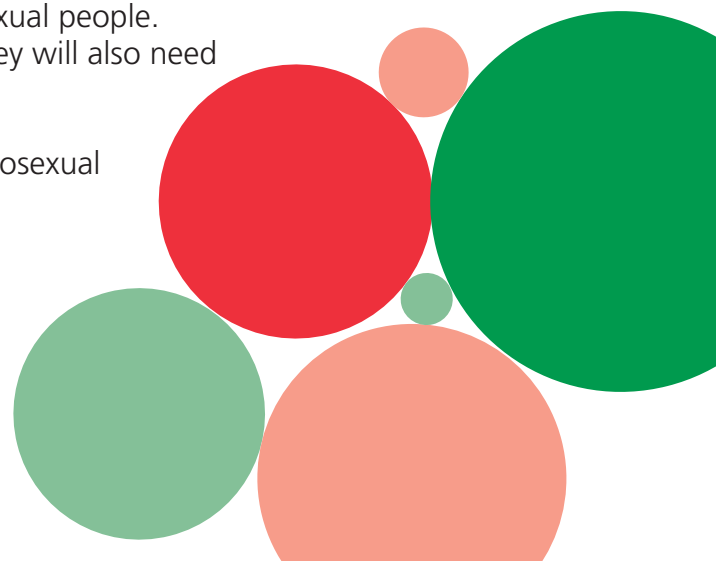
Encourage openness by clarifying **what** is recorded in an individual's notes and **who** would have access to sensitive information.

Do not assume that someone is heterosexual, and ensure that history taking and assessments are conducted in such a way as to facilitate disclosure, for example by asking open rather than closed questions.

If you are asking someone about their partner, refer to 'him or her', or let the person tell you which gender their partner is. Rather than ask a woman whether her husband will be coming with her, ask whether her partner will be coming with her. Rather than assume a baby has a 'daddy', use the term 'parent'.

Be able to discuss safer sex techniques and transmission routes for sexually transmitted infections for LGB people as well as heterosexual people. Remember, trans people may be LGB or heterosexual. They will also need appropriate safer sex and STI advice.

Avoid the use of language that assumes a person is heterosexual when discussing safer sex.



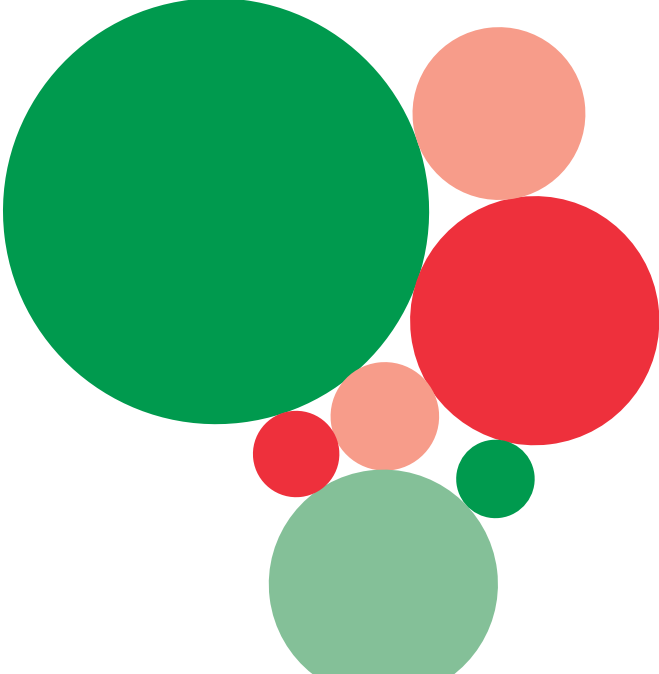


## Next of kin

Many LGBT people are concerned that healthcare workers may refuse or limit their partner's visiting rights, or refuse to involve them in discussions about their care. Although there is no legal basis for this, many people, including health and social care workers, believe that next of kin must be a married partner or blood relative. The Civil Partnership Act 2005 extends next of kin rights to same-sex couples who register their partnership.

Instead of using the term 'next of kin', ask patients to whom information should be given, and who should be involved in treatment decisions or contacted in an emergency. The Royal College of Nursing and UNISON have produced guidance (*Not 'just' a friend*) for those providing healthcare for LGB service users and their families.<sup>3</sup>

## Training: key topics

- Human resources issues emerging from the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999.
  - Service provider and commissioner issues arising from the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007, which give equal access to health and social care services to LGB people, and forthcoming amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act in 2007 for trans people.
  - Knowledge and awareness of LGBT issues, health inequalities data, staff attitudes, and their relevance to health and social care service delivery.
  - Special services and healthcare messages targeted at LGBT communities.
- 

## Access to care for trans people

Good communication principles for health professionals include:

- respecting trans patients by using appropriate pronouns for their gender, ie the pronouns for the gender they have chosen;
- using the name and title that the person who is transitioning deems correct (eg Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms); and
- when the word 'transsexual' is used, use it as a descriptive term (rather than as a noun), ie transsexual people, transsexual individual or someone who is transsexual.

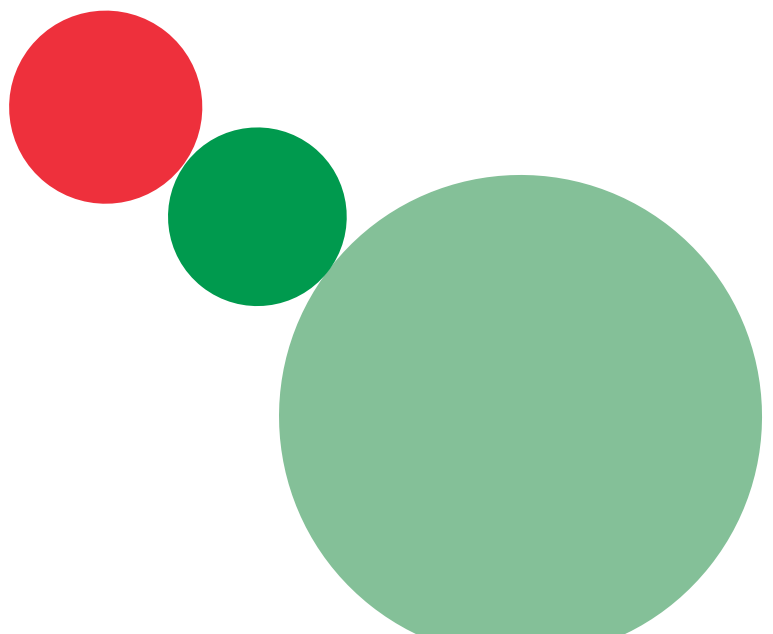
See Briefing 11 for further information about improving access for trans people.

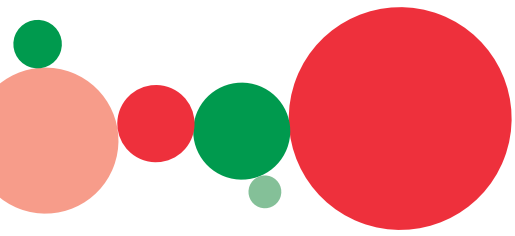
*Evaluating Care Approaches and Services for Trans People*<sup>4</sup> includes a manifesto for care for trans people and seven practical tests to help commissioners provide appropriate services, which are: accessibility, timeliness, empowerment and choice, respect and dignity, equality and partnership, autonomy and independence, and the right to complain.

*Not So Much a Care Path...*<sup>5</sup> outlines the hurdles that trans people encounter in accessing gender treatment services.

## Parliamentary Forum on Transsexualism

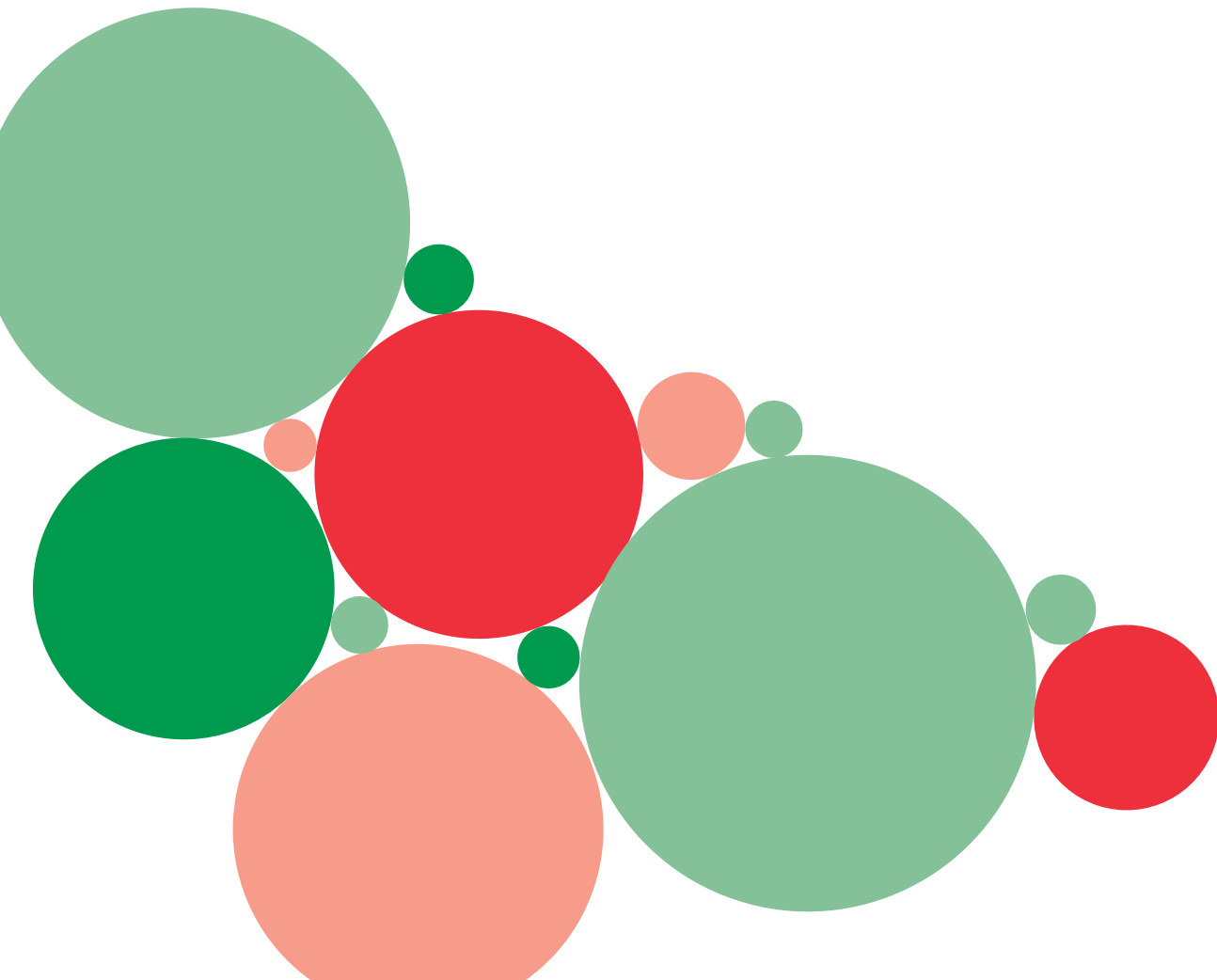
*Guidelines For Health Organisations Commissioning Treatment Services For Individuals Experiencing Gender Dysphoria And Transsexualism*<sup>6</sup> outlines the healthcare support that commissioners should make available for people seeking treatment.





## (c) Evidence and statistics

- There are an estimated 3.6 million LGBT people living in the UK.<sup>7</sup>
- They make up over 10% of the population of Greater London.<sup>8</sup>
- They form approximately 5% of the total UK population.<sup>9</sup>
- They live throughout the UK: in cities, towns and rural areas.<sup>10</sup>



## **(d) Policy/legislation: key points for commissioners of services**

### **Choosing Health**

The White Paper *Choosing Health: Making healthy choices easier*,<sup>11</sup> recognises that health is linked to the way people live their lives. Many LGBT people socialise in venues where alcohol and drugs are commonly consumed. Therefore, their opportunities for choosing healthier options are compromised in comparison with their heterosexual peers.

*Choosing Health* aims to tackle the causes of ill health and reduce inequality. It identifies key areas of health inequality. Many of these are known to have relevance for LGBT communities: smoking, alcohol consumption, obesity and sexual health. LGBT people's needs in relation to these four lifestyle issues should be more explicit in local commissioning guidance, in addition to promoting the uptake of health screening for this group.

*Choosing Health* (Department of Health 2004) is available at:  
[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_4094550](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4094550)

### **Our Health, Our Care, Our Say**

*Our Health, Our Care, Our Say*<sup>12</sup> aims to achieve better access to general practice and community services. This White Paper introduces the right for people to choose which GP they wish to register with. For LGBT people, this may offer real possibilities for improving their experiences of primary care services by being able to choose a surgery that offers a caring or possibly gay-friendly environment. The White Paper introduces Practice Based Commissioning and this may allow GPs to commission services, eg smoking cessation programmes, which include targeting of LGBT people.

*Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* (Department of Health 2006) is available at:  
[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_4127453](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4127453)

### **Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007**

These Regulations prohibit discrimination in the provision of goods and services on the grounds of sexual orientation. The legislation means that health providers should provide the same standard of care as that offered to heterosexual patients.

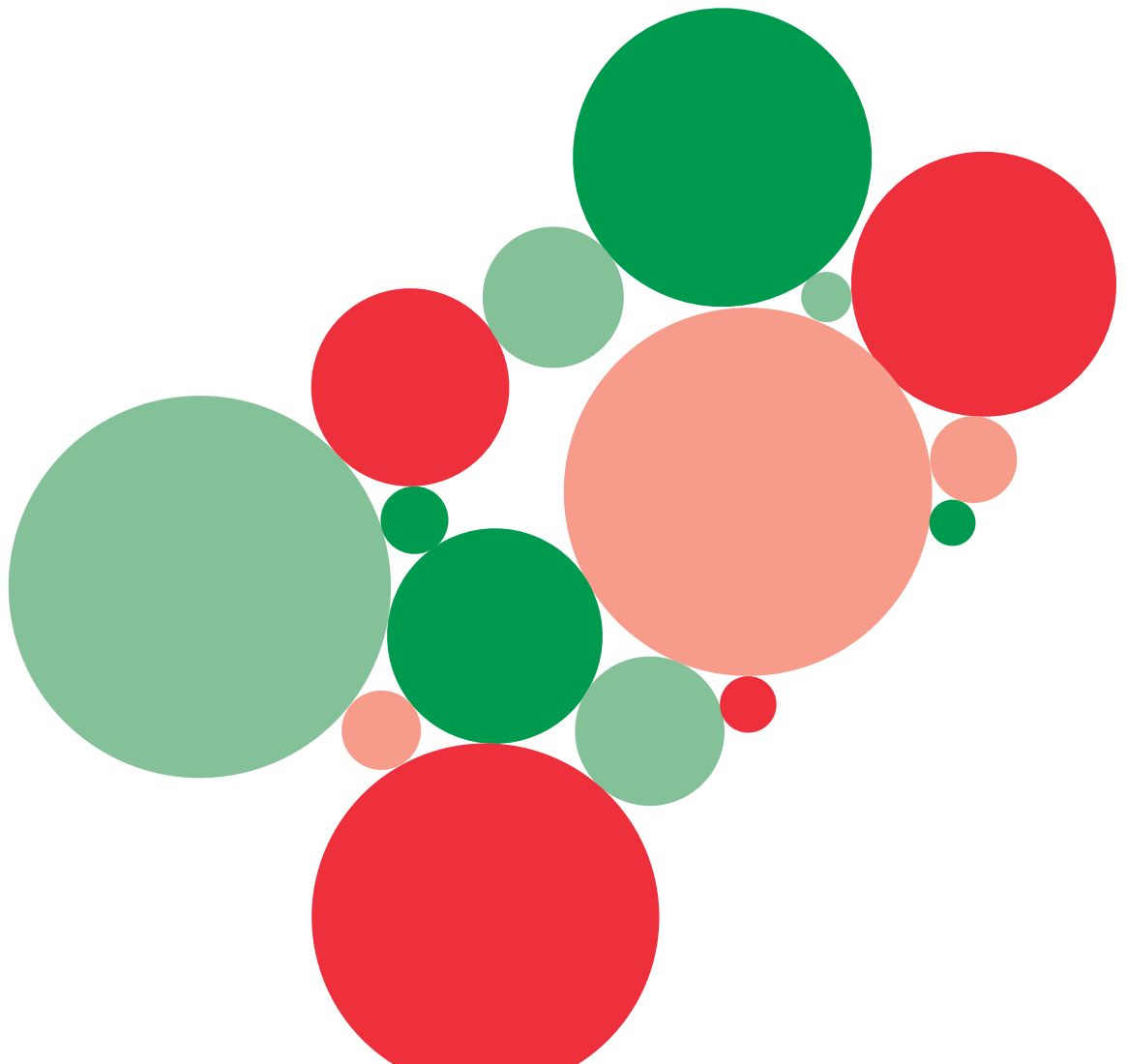
### **NHS Plan (2000), principle 3**

The NHS of the 21st century must be responsive to the needs of different groups and individuals within society, and challenge discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability and sexuality.

## (e) Implications for service commissioners

Primary care trusts (PCTs) are expected to respond to the responsibilities they now face under *Commissioning a Patient-Led NHS*.<sup>13</sup> Together with the White Paper, *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say*, it sets clear priorities for PCTs which will mean an increasing emphasis on:

- strong commissioning for improved quality and choice, and to tackle health inequalities; and
- collaborative commissioning arrangements for acute trusts, combined with strong support for practice-based commissioners developing services locally to help manage demand and improve choice.





## (f) Links and resources

### **Real Stories, Real Lives: LGBT people and the NHS**

This Department of Health DVD and online resource aims to support healthcare organisations in developing strategies to promote equality and eliminate discrimination for LGBT people. It can be used as a practical tool in training staff and raising awareness.

[www.dh.gov.uk/equalityandhumanrights](http://www.dh.gov.uk/equalityandhumanrights)

### **Understanding that Trans Health Matters** (forthcoming)

This training course, developed by Health First, includes a DVD (produced by Transfabulous) featuring trans people discussing their experiences of healthcare.

[www.dh.gov.uk/equalityandhumanrights](http://www.dh.gov.uk/equalityandhumanrights)

### **Core training standards for sexual orientation: Making National Health Services inclusive for lesbian gay and bisexual people**

Training has an important role to play in helping healthcare organisations ensure services are inclusive for LGB people. Best practice training standards for sexual orientation can be found at:

[www.dh.gov.uk/equalityandhumanrights](http://www.dh.gov.uk/equalityandhumanrights)

### **LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing**

The LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing promotes healthy lifestyles and improves the accessibility of mainstream health services for LGBT communities in south-east Scotland.

[www.lgbthealth.org.uk](http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk)

### **Healthy Gay Scotland**

Healthy Gay Scotland is a Scotland-wide HIV health promotion initiative.

[www.healthygayScotland.com](http://www.healthygayScotland.com)

### **Steve Retson Project**

A sexual health service for gay men in Glasgow.

[www.sandyford.org/srp](http://www.sandyford.org/srp)

### **Pitstop Clinic**

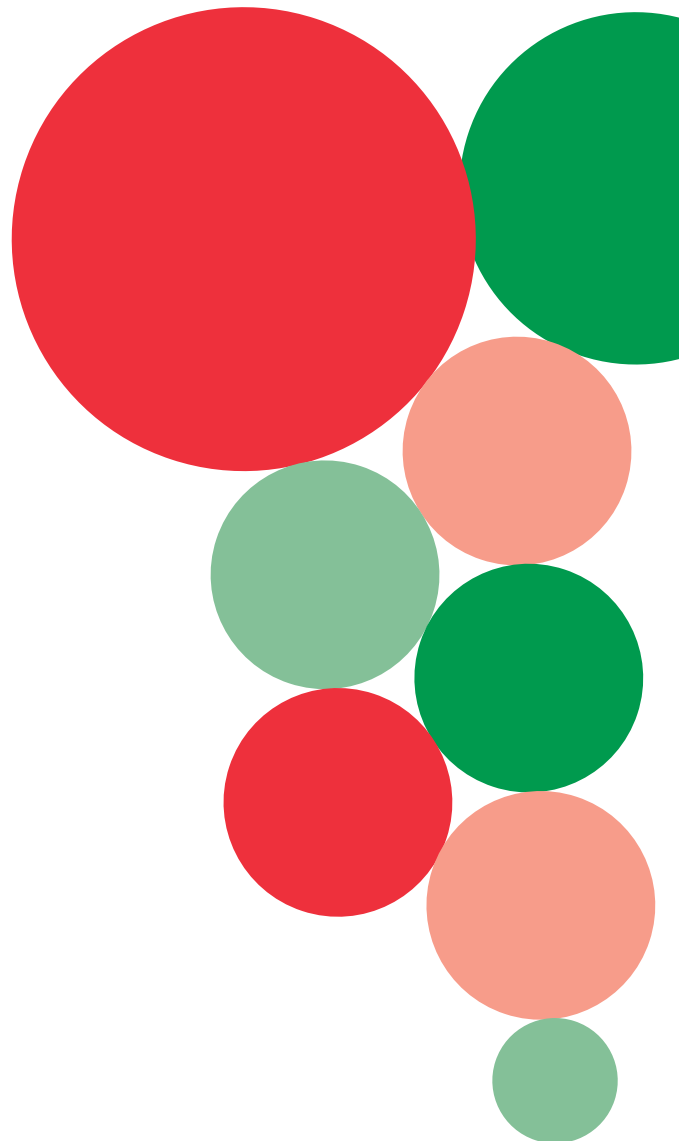
Offers testing for HIV and sexually transmitted infections, and hepatitis A and B vaccinations for gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men.

[www.metrocentreonline.org/hiv\\_pitstop.htm](http://www.metrocentreonline.org/hiv_pitstop.htm)

### **Trafalgar Clinic (for gay and bisexual men)**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Stadium Road, Woolwich, London SE18 4QH

Tel: 020 8836 6969



### **Department of Health Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Advisory Group**

The Department is working with external stakeholders on the delivery of a programme of work to promote equality and eliminate discrimination for LGBT people in health and social care (as both service users and employees). The work is organised in three workstreams: better employment; transgender health; and reducing health inequalities and promoting inclusive services.

[www.dh.gov.uk/equalityandhumanrights](http://www.dh.gov.uk/equalityandhumanrights)

### **NHS Inclusion Project Scotland**

The Inclusion Project aims to mainstream LGBT equality and diversity issues in the NHS, and has produced guidelines<sup>9</sup> for good practice in healthcare for LGBT people.

[www.lgbthealthscotland.org.uk](http://www.lgbthealthscotland.org.uk)

### **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health Summit**

The inaugural Summit, held at Guy's Hospital in June 2006, highlighted key health issues and inequalities for LGBT communities. The second Summit took place in August 2007 in Manchester. It attracted over 300 delegates from across the UK.

[www.lgbthealth.co.uk](http://www.lgbthealth.co.uk)

### **Gay and Lesbian Association of Doctors and Dentists (UK)**

[www.gladd.org.uk](http://www.gladd.org.uk)

### **Health with Pride**

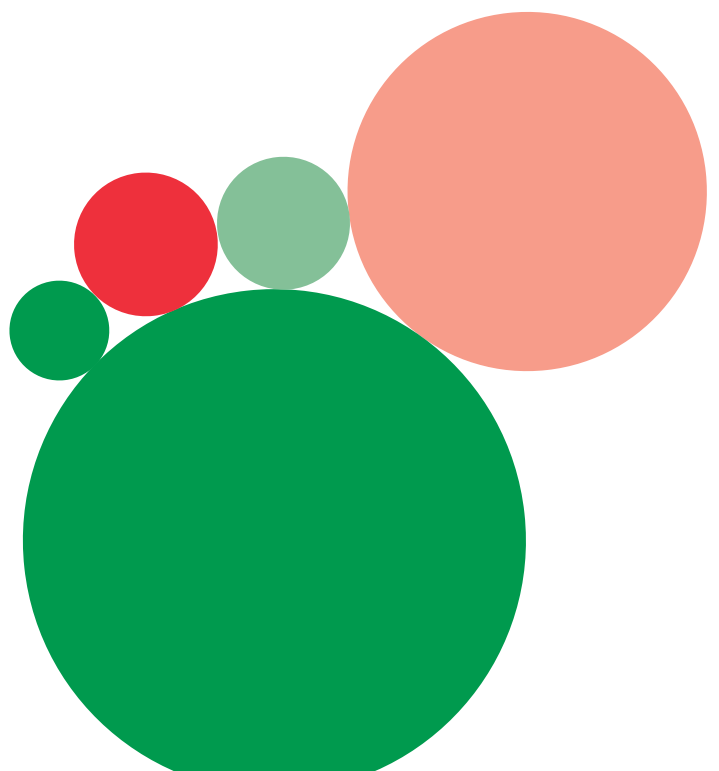
This is an online resource for LGB patients and the healthcare professionals who serve them.

[www.healthwithpride.com](http://www.healthwithpride.com)

### **Stonewall**

LGB campaigning organisation. Provides information about research on LGB healthcare needs.

[www.stonewall.org.uk/information\\_bank/health/default.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/information_bank/health/default.asp)



**The After Five Clinic (for gay and bisexual men)**

Guy's Hospital, Thomas Guy House, St Thomas Street, London SE1 9RT  
Tel: 020 7188 2664

**Tower Hamlets PCT**

Within Tower Hamlets, a new LGBT Patient Forum has been established.  
[www.thpct.nhs.uk](http://www.thpct.nhs.uk)

**West London Centre for Sexual Health**

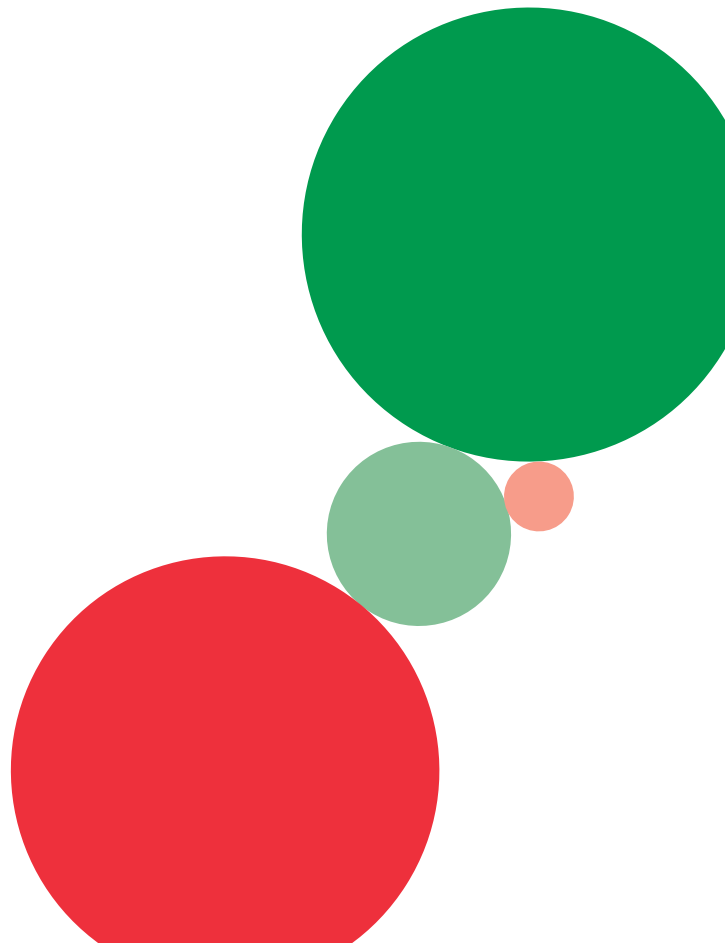
This centre runs two clinics: the Orange Clinic (for women who have sex with women) and West 6 (for men who have sex with men).  
Charing Cross Hospital, Fulham Palace Road, London W6 8RF  
Tel: 020 8846 6699

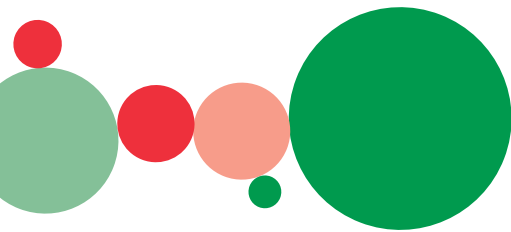
**Information on trans issues****Press For Change**

Press For Change is a political lobbying and educational organisation, which campaigns to achieve equal civil rights and liberties for all UK trans people.  
[www.pfc.org.uk](http://www.pfc.org.uk)

**National Coalition for LGBT Health (US)**

Organisation committed to improving the health and wellbeing of LGBT individuals in the United States.  
[www.lgbthealth.net](http://www.lgbthealth.net)





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