

Message from DFID's Diversity Champion:

Sue Owen, DFID's Diversity Champion and Director-General, Corporate Performance says:

I am fully committed to the moral, business and legal reasons to develop DFID into a flexible, imaginative and diverse Department, which embodies diversity in how we do our work and provides an environment where all our staff are valued and respected.

I want to move forward with building staff awareness and confidence around sexual orientation to create an inclusive culture. People should be valued for their contribution at work, irrespective of their sexual orientation. Homophobic behaviour is unacceptable and illegal in the UK and the DFID workplace. DFID will create and maintain a working environment in which all employees are respected, valued and supported in maximising their potential and contribution to achieve more.

All managers must lead by example and have an important role to play in changing the culture. Managers need to create a culture where discrimination is not tolerated and where lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) staff feel respected, valued, supported and included. This means managers challenging homophobic comments and behaviour, being aware of legal and cultural issues in the countries in which they work, not making assumptions about employees' sexual orientation and respecting and supporting staff members' decision about how open they are about their sexual orientation.

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 make it unlawful to discriminate in employment or training on the grounds of sexual orientation.

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 make it unlawful to discriminate in the provision of goods, facilities and services on the grounds of sexual orientation.

For in-depth information please see **DFID's policy on Sexual Orientation** available on the Diversity pages of PeopleSight. <http://dfidinsight/PeopleSight/Diversity/SexualOrientation/index.htm>

The experience of being LGBT in DFID

Over the past few years, DFID has made great strides in diversity. However, a survey in 2006 showed that progress is patchy in terms of sexual orientation:

- 25% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) staff have experienced discrimination
- 25% of the workforce surveyed said they thought it was 'better for LGBT staff if they keep sexual orientation to themselves'
- 5% said they 'had problems working with LGBT colleagues'
- Over 20% of all respondents felt that it was not safe in their workplace for people to be open about their sexual orientation
- Just 20% of LGBT respondents are completely out at work

The overarching message coming from respondents was that LGBT issues remain fairly invisible in DFID.

What this means for DFID?

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people comprise around 6% of the UK population, that's approximately 1.7 million in the UK workforce. DFID recognises the need to draw on talent from all sections of the population and create a workforce that embraces diversity and equality.

The pain and hurt that can accompany LGBT staff experiences as described in the report: *Research on Sexual Orientation in DFID (2006)* is bad for business. They wear down people's confidence and distract staff from their core business at work. Living in fear of exposure reduces people's productivity.

The type of discrimination identified in the report mentioned above is **unacceptable and illegal**. DFID has a zero tolerance policy on discrimination, bullying and harassment in the workplace. We will strive for fairness and equality of treatment in all of the DFID offices in the UK and overseas.

Staff have a right to privacy. It is their choice whether to be 'out' at work about their sexual orientation and it is important for managers to be guided by staff about how far they wish to come out and respect their decisions.

Monitoring & Declaration

Monitoring is essential to check whether unfair discrimination is going on and whether our diversity policies are working in practice. DFID is committed to creating a confidential and safe environment and encourages staff to declare their sexual orientation. DFID wants to encourage staff to come out and recognises that we have to establish visible support systems to support staff that choose to come out at work. All this information will be treated with the **utmost confidentiality**.

So what is DFID doing? Some examples...

- The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Network was set up in 2007 and meets approximately every six weeks. The network has a budget of £2,500 per annum and its own intranet TeamSite which publishes both internal and external information relating to the LGBT agenda.

The LGBT Network key priorities are:

- *Reach LGBT staff who do not currently identify with the network*
- *To increase the remit of activities of the network*
- *To specifically address the issue of mobility to country offices for LGBT staff*

- In partnership with the Diversity Team, one of the LGBT Network's most recent outputs has been a poster, developed and designed to raise awareness of sexual orientation equality in the workplace. Network members have also been working on a Mobility Report, which will look at the legal and cultural barriers LGBT staff face when working overseas.
- DFID is a member of **Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme**. Stonewall is renowned for campaigning and lobbying to achieve equality and justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people.
- As part of the Diversity Champions Programme, DFID takes part in **Stonewall's annual benchmarking exercise** which looks at policies and practices in the workplace. In 2007, we scored 70%, which was an improvement from the previous year's score of 54%. Unfortunately DFID did not make it into the Stonewall Top 100 list of

organisations for LGBT employees, as we have much to do. **DFID wants to achieve the Stonewall Top 100 status by 2009** and therefore, we have made links with other organisations ranking highly in the Top 100 index (such as the FCO who were ranked at 26) to share best practice.

- This year, we are supporting the **Civil Service Rainbow Alliance's** (CSRA) participation in the London Pride march by contributing to the sponsorship of a float advertising DFID's logo. The CSRA is an umbrella organisation of departmental LGBT network groups and DFID will be taking part in their inaugural Workplace Conference in the autumn.
- We are also exploring appropriate learning and development programmes for LGBT staff to look at and help break down the barriers to career progression.
- We have purchased a training DVD on sexual orientation which is available for loan from the Diversity Team. Using a creative mixture of legislation, interactive programmes and thought provoking case studies, the DVD looks at the misconceptions and prejudices about sexual orientation in the workplace. The live situations help staff to understand why unwitting discrimination and harassment happens and how to ensure equal opportunities.

Although DFID has made a start, we still have a long way to go. We need to do more in terms of finding different ways of creating an inclusive culture and develop more diversity-friendly working practices for LGBT staff.

Support is available for managers and staff who want it. For further information please email The Diversity Team at: diversity@dfid.gov.uk

Useful websites:

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC):
www.equalityhumanrights.com

Civil Service Rainbow Alliance (CSRA)
www.civilservice.gov.uk/iam/groups/diversity/rainbow.asp

Stonewall:
www.stonewall.org.uk

Research on Sexual Orientation in DFID by Paul Barlow:
http://dfidinsight/Stellent/groups/quest/documents/document/pub_004534.pdf