Swedish Agency for Work
Environment Expertise

A Good Work Environment
for LGBTQI people

A research-based guide
for workplaces

This guide is aimed at anyone working at a workplace, such as employees, managers, HR representatives, safety representatives, or union representatives. The guide is intended to disseminate knowledge about how to create a work environment that is inclusive and respectful of everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

An inclusive workplace is a workplace that supports and respects everyone. However, in this guide we focus specifically on the work environment of LGBTQI people.

To create an inclusive workplace, it is important to actively combat work environment problems and discrimination, but also to proactively promote equal rights and opportunities. The guide addresses how discrimination and exclusion of LGBTQI people1[1] can be prevented and describes, from a broader perspective, the development of an inclusive workplace and a good work environment for LGBTQI people. The creation of an inclusive workplace should be seen as a long-term, active and continuous effort that demands commitment at every level of a work organisation.

> *"Efforts to combat discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities must be conducted regularly and demand the involvement of both managers and employees within the work organisation."*

Andrea Eriksson, researcher at the KTH Royal Institute of Technology and one of the authors of the guide.

In an inclusive workplace, the focus is on the skills and performance of individual workers. All employees can feel that they "belong", and everyone is treated with respect, regardless of their gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation.

---
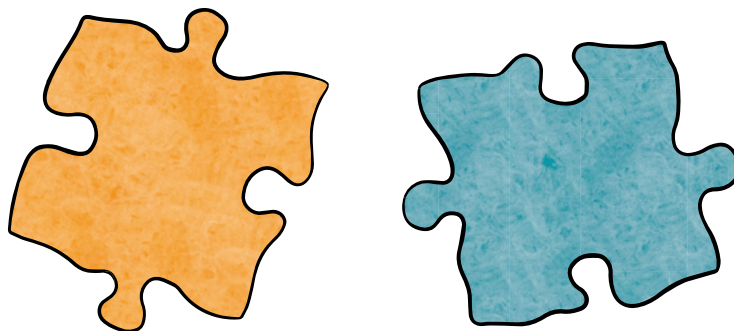
1   The guide primarily uses the acronym "LGBTQI" (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex). However, when references to research are made, "LGBTQ" is used, because the government commission to compile the knowledge on which this guide is based only included the letters "LGBTQ". Moreover, this knowledge compilation revealed no research on the work environment of intersex people.

The guide summarises and is based on current research

In a previous government commission, the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise mapped and summarised existing research on the organisational and social work environment of LGBTQ people. The original Swedish version of the report "The Organisational and Social Work Environment of LGBTQ People – A Systematic Literature Review" was submitted to the Swedish Government on 30 June 2022. This guide is based on and summarises the most important aspects of the report.

Summary of the content of the report

Although many LGBTQ people feel that they generally have a good work environment, many report that they are still subjected to discrimination, harassment and so-called microaggressions – subtle and sometimes unconscious aggressive actions that take the form of, e.g. jokes or questions. Such aggressive actions and harassment appear to occur primarily in workplaces characterised by a heteronormative climate, i.e. a climate where heterosexuality is assumed and rewarded.

Research indicates that LGBTQ people are often subjected to discrimination and harassment in their workplaces.

The assumption that everyone at a workplace is heterosexual and that they identify with the gender assigned to them at birth often makes LGBTQ people feel abnormal or invisible. It also leads them to be less open about their sexual orientation, trans experience or gender identity.

This lack of openness can, in turn, contribute to a lower degree of job satisfaction, job engagement, well-being and sense of community with their colleagues. Without visible support from managers, the risk that LGBTQ people will be harassed increases. This shows how important it is that managers engage in LGBTQ-related work environment issues.

Fear of sharing trans experiences

Research also shows that transgender and bisexual people are more vulnerable to discrimination, harassment and bullying than gay and heterosexual cisgender people (people who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth). Existing research offers no clear answer as to why bisexual people report a higher

degree of discrimination. However, discrimination against transgender people appears to be mainly due to transphobia.

In an interview study conducted in connection with the report, a majority of the 105 participants with trans experiences reported that they were exposed to microaggressions in their workplaces. Some of the participants also described being subjected to harassment, and others expressed a fear of possible consequences if they were to be open about their trans experiences. At the same time, the interview study indicated that many people with trans experiences still have positive things to say about their work environment, especially with regard to the support they have received from individual colleagues and managers.

Organisational support plays an important role in promoting a good work environment for LGBTQ people

According to research, a workplace climate that is perceived as supportive towards LGBTQ people helps to improve their self-reported job satisfaction and health. It also makes them more willing to be open about their sexual orientation, trans experience or gender identity. To support LGBTQ people, it is important that work organisations implement policies and activities aimed at combatting discrimination and promoting a generally supportive and accepting climate with regard to LGBTQ people. In this guide, we provide examples of how such policies and activities can be designed and how you can promote a supportive climate at your workplace.

A reader's overview
of the guide

The guide is divided into five parts:

Part 1. Introduction

The first part of the guide contains a description of its target readers – their roles in the workplace – as well as definitions of the terms "organisational work environment", "social work environment", and "discrimination".

Part 2. Key concepts

The second part contains definitions of key concepts that are good to know about when working for an inclusive work environment for LGBTQI people. It also lists some reflection questions related to these key concepts.

Part 3. Combatting discrimination and exclusion of LGBTQI people
Part 4. Creating an inclusive workplace

Parts 3 and 4 contain
- summaries of theories and research
- reflection exercises and examples that aim to improve understanding of the theories and research and provide support in efforts to combat discrimination and develop an inclusive workplace.
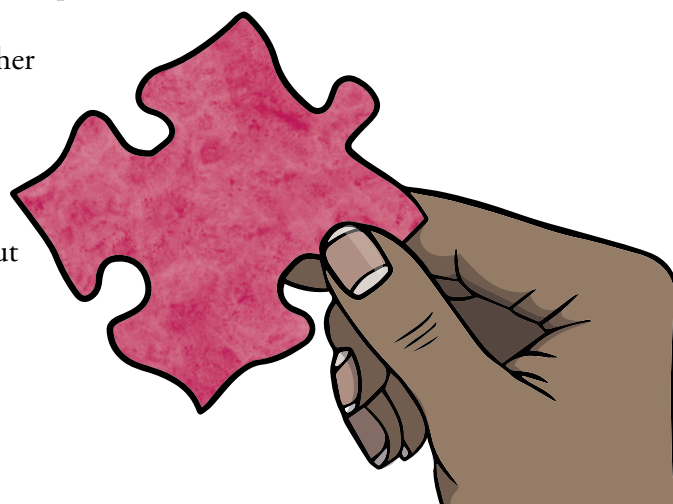
Part 5. Exercises and checklists

The final part contains in-depth reflection exercises and checklists.

Who the guide is intended for and how it can be used

The guide is suitable reading for everyone who wants to get an overview of important issues and aspects related to the creation of a good work environment for LGBTQI people. The content of the guide is primarily aimed at work organisations, but certain parts can also be used by other types of organisations, such as non-profit associations or schools. While the guide's content deals with Swedish employers' responsibility to adhere to work environment and discrimination laws in this country, much of it is relevant to workplaces in other countries, as well.

Each section summarises research and other factors significant to the content of the section. Reflection exercises, examples, advice, tips, checklists, and images are used to make it easier for the reader to absorb the content and inspire ideas about how it can be put into practice.

The reflection exercises provided in the guide are aimed at various roles within the work organisation. Colour-coding indicates which reflection exercise is aimed at which role::

- **Red:** Reflection exercises and checklists that are ideal for individual work.
- **Yellow:** Reflection exercises and checklists aimed at managers, HR roles, senior management, or other key employees.
- **Green:** Reflection exercises and checklists aimed at union representatives and safety representatives.
- **Multicolour:** Exercises and checklists that are more general and aimed at several different roles.

The general reflection exercises (multicoloured) can also be used in groups. This makes them more efficient and creates greater added value. We have developed materials that can be used to support the implementation of exercises from the guide. For more information, see the reading instructions (in the end of this section).

Keep in mind that in most cases, work groups that complete the reflection exercises need to have an experienced discussion leader who leads the group's work. This is especially true for groups with less knowledge and experience in working with issues related to LGBTQI people and the work environment.

Select the starting point that suits you best

Workplaces or organisations are advised to work with the entire content of the guide, or to choose to work with the sections that feel most urgent. You can work with different sections in different situations, and in the order that suits you best. Adapt the work depending on where you are in the process of combatting discrimination and developing an inclusive workplace.

If your workplace has already come a long way in promoting equal rights and opportunities, you can start with the final reflection exercises and checklists in Part 5, to check which issues most urgently require your attention. Then you will continue to work with the specific parts of the guide that address the matters that appear most in need of continued work. If you have less experience in working with LGBTQI issues, we recommend starting at the beginning of the guide. That way, you can establish a knowledge base and get guidance on how to get started. Select and focus on the themes, reflection questions and exercises that suit you best right now.

Research indicates that the formal role of managers in combatting discrimination and creating a good work environment is of particular importance for an inclusive workplace, but that the social work environment in the work group also plays a major role. If you have limited time and resources, we therefore recommend that you focus on the sections of the guide that deal with managerial competence and involvement in the issues (for example, the last

section of Part Three: *Fight silence and be prepared to act!)* as well as sections related to the creation of a supportive work climate (for example, the second section of Part Four: *A supportive work climate).*

Leading exercises and reflections in groups

To conduct the reflection exercises in groups, an open and safe conversation climate is essential. Most groups need a discussion leader who leads the exercises and ensures that the results of the discussions are documented and that joint decisions or action plans are clearly formulated.

The discussion leader can be someone appointed from within the group, or a resource person in the organisation (for example from HR or occupational healthcare) or an external facilitator. In some work groups, the manager usually leads discussions and meetings. If, as a manager, you are comfortable discussing LGBTQI issues with your work group that is fine. However, if you are not comfortable discussing such matters, it might be better for someone else to lead the discussion.

An important task of the discussion leader is to ensure that everyone gets an equal chance to speak to the point. They must also prevent the group from getting stuck on certain questions, thereby stalling the discussion. The discussion leader should regularly summarise what the group has come up with and ensure that everyone in the group agrees with the summary.

Sensitive topics need a safe group

Some of the exercises can lead to discussions about sensitive subjects or discussions in which personal opinions take over. The discussion leader may need to determine whether the group is safe or if there is a risk that the discussions could expose participants to prejudice or discrimination. If such a risk exists, it is better for the participants to conduct individual reflection exercises instead. As a leader, it is important to be flexible and carefully track the progress of the discussions in the group. If a sensitive topic is being discussed, the leader may need to assume a more controlling role. If discussions are going smoothly, the role of the discussion leader may be to ask follow-up questions and listen. It is also worth pointing out that the members of the group may have different prior knowledge and to encourage participants to ask about words they do not understand.

"The discussion leader can also emphasise that it is okay to have differing views, but that the goal of working with these issues is a legally compliant work environment."

Sara Andersson, Senior Lecturer at
University West and one of the authors of the guide.

Common rules of conduct

At the beginning of a discussion, it may be useful to agree on clear rules of conduct for how the group's discussions should be formulated. The discussion leader can ask the group questions like "What do you need to feel safe during the discussions?" and "What do you think others need to be able to actively participate in the discussions?". It is a good ideal to jot the group's rules of conduct on a whiteboard or similar surface, so that everyone in the group has them in front of them during the discussions. It is important to emphasise that comments about, e.g. the appearance and private lives of individuals are off-limits.

The discussion leader can point out that what one person might consider a funny joke can be offensive to someone else. Discourage joking at someone else's expense – whether that person is in the room or not.

Where should you draw the line? When the discussion heads in the wrong direction

Sometimes it can be difficult to determine where the line is drawn between expressing a personal opinion and offending someone. If you are acting as discussion leader, you should pay attention to whether someone is openly commenting on LGBTQI people in a prejudiced or stereotypical way, or whether jokes are being made about LGBTQI people at their expense. If this occurs, alert the person or group that prejudice, stereotypical statements, and misguided jokes undermine the very purpose of the discussion. Furthermore, it is rarely beneficial for groups to discuss prejudices and stereotypical perceptions as a way to "clear the air", although the intention behind doing so may be good. Venting prejudices in groups can wind up establishing them further, rather than counteracting them.
 In other words, the simple rule of thumb is to prevent discussions focused on

prejudice and stereotypical perceptions of LGBTQI people, even if they are expressed in a joking tone. As discussion leader, you are responsible for keeping the discussion on track – not least by setting the tone and laying out the rules of conduct, but also by being on the lookout for any sign that things are headed in the wrong direction. If people in the group continue to express prejudice against LGBTQI people (or other minorities) even though the leader actively endeavours to stop them, this could be considered to constitute harassment. Make the offending individual(s) aware of this.

Table of Contents

Part 1.
Introduction

LEGISLATION
WORK ENVIRONMENT
MANAGEMENT
PREVENT

competence
RIGHTS
PREVENTION

In this section of the guide, we describe how people in different roles in the workplace can contribute to creating a good work environment for LGBTQI people. We also provide definitions of organisational work environment, social work environment, and discrimination. We have based our description of various roles and the definitions on the prevailing conditions and legislation in the Swedish labour market.

Different people's roles in ensuring a good work environment for LGBTQI people

This section describes the importance of people in different roles in combating work environment problems and creating a more inclusive workplace. It is important that individuals who do not occupy a management position are not forced to shoulder responsibility for the organisation's work with LGBTQI and inclusion-related issues. However, it can be of great value to the organisation if individuals with a commitment to these issues participate in the work of developing an inclusive workplace.

The manager's role

Managers are important for LGBTQI people's work environment, because they have a formal employer responsibility to investigate and prevent risks in the work environment. This includes actively counteracting and addressing victimisation. Managers must also comply with the Discrimination Act, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and also prohibits reprisals against anyone who reports discrimination. The content of this guide can serve as a support for managers in determining how they can fulfil their employer responsibilities through active measures.

The role of safety representatives and union representatives

Safety representatives (or work environment representatives) represent all employees within their so-called safety area and are tasked with promoting a good work environment for everyone at the workplace. The role of union representatives is to represent their members, including on work environment issues. Many union representatives are also safety representatives. It is possible to hold both positions at the same time.

Safety representatives and union representatives are not subject to any statutory requirements to engage in LGBTQI issues, but can use their positions to highlight how the development of an inclusive workplace can foster a good work environment for everyone.

The role of HR personnel and other key functions

The role of the HR department is to serve as a support function that assists the employer, i.e. in systematic work environment management and the handling of discrimination cases. To this end, HR needs must be competent and prepared to work with LGBTQI, issues so that they can support the employer in matters related to discrimination against LGBTQI people and in promoting equal rights and

opportunities. An HR representative could also act as the process manager for the development of an inclusive workplace based on the content of the guide.

There may also be other key functions in the workplace that can support the employer on issues related to the work environment of LGBTQI people, such as occupational health care specialists or strategic functions that work with the work environment and active measures to promote equal rights and opportunities within the work organisation.

The role of the work group and the individual

The social climate in a work group plays a major role in the work environment of LGBTQI people. In an inclusive work group climate, it is not taken for granted that everyone is heterosexual or has a certain gender identity. It is important that everyone in the work group is included in the social community and that everyone is treated as an equal. A work group can help improve the work environment for LGBTQI people by developing a supportive and inclusive social climate in which everyone is respected, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. At both the individual and work group level, the way you treat your colleagues thus plays a key role in creating a good and inclusive work environment for everyone at your workplace.

Definitions of the organisational work environment and social work environment

The Swedish Work Environment Authority provisions on organisational and social work environment, "OSA", which stands for *"organisatorisk och social arbetsmiljö"* – "organisational and social work environment") regulate the employer's responsibility for managing work environment risks in the organisational and social work environment, as regards such issues as unhealthy workload, working hours, and victimisation. The provisions aim to promote a good work environment and prevent the risk of ill health resulting from organisational and social conditions in the work environment.

As regards the organisational work environment, the provisions cover terms and conditions related to, e.g. management and governance, communication, participation, room for manoeuvring, and distribution of tasks, as well as demands, resources and responsibilities. In this guide, a good work environment means developing leadership that is present, trusting, and committed to all employees, regardless of their background, sexual orientation, and gender expression. As for the social work environment, the OSA regulations cover terms and conditions for work tied to social interaction, cooperation and social support from managers and colleagues. Social support plays a major role in developing a good work environment. Research shows that a perceived lack of support constitutes a work environment problem for LGBTQI people.

According to the OSA regulations, employers are responsible for making it clear to their employees that victimisation is not accepted and for taking action to counteract work environment conditions that can lead to victimisation. According to the provisions, employers must also ensure that managers and supervisors know how to prevent and address victimisation. According to the provisions, managers and supervisory staff have a special responsibility to prevent, identify, and address victimisation. "Victimisation" is defined as offensive actions against employees that may lead to ill health or the employee's exclusion from the workplace community. "Bullying" is defined as a form of systematic victimisation, e.g. ignoring, ostracising, or speaking ill of someone.

As an employer representative, you should consult the full current provisions via www.av.se to ensure compliance with every part of the provisions.

Definition of discrimination

According to the Discrimination Act (2008:567), "discrimination" is when a person is treated disfavourably or when a person's dignity is violated. The disfavourable treatment or the violation of the person's dignity must have a connection to one of the seven grounds of discrimination: gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, and age. This means that if a person is treated disfavourably, if their dignity is violated, or if they are harassed or bullied because of their gender identity or sexual orientation, that is discrimination.

According to the Discrimination Act (2008:567), an employer has a responsibility to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities at work, regardless of any basis of discrimination. The law requires all employers to take active measures to prevent workplace discrimination. The Discrimination Act specifies the anti-discrimination requirements to which the employer is subject.

Employers who become aware that an employee considers themselves to have been subjected to harassment or sexual harassment in connection with work must investigate the circumstances of the alleged harassment and, where applicable, take such measures as may reasonably be required to prevent future harassment. According to the Discrimination Act, the employer must also have guidelines and procedures for the business aimed at preventing harassment, sexual harassment and reprisals, as well as documentation of the active measures it implements in this regard.

Guidance on all the details of the Discrimination Act that employers need to know and follow, including how you must work with active measures, can be found at www.do.se.

In the next part of the guide, we review key concepts with which it is useful to be familiar when you launch your efforts to create a good work environment for LGBTQI people.

Part 2.
Key concepts

This section of the guide contains various key concepts with which it is important to be familiar when working for an inclusive work environment. Read through the concepts and consider what you know about them. You can also reflect on the extent to which others in your workplace are familiar with these concepts.

LGBTQI and other concepts

Let's start with the concept mentioned with great regularity in the guide – "LGBTQI". LGBTQI is an acronym and a collective term for the different people and groups who violate norms of gender, gender identity and sexuality in one or more ways.

L and G = Lesbian and Gay

Being lesbian or gay means feeling romantic or sexual attraction to people with the same gender identity as yourself (in the case of the word "lesbian", both people have a female gender identity; "gay" can be used to describe people with any gender identity).

B = Bisexual

Being bisexual means feeling romantic or sexual attraction to other people, regardless of their gender identity.

T = Trans

Being a transgender person/trans person means breaking the norms of society related to gender, gender expression and/or gender identity. This can mean having a gender expression that violates the norms that regulate how a particular gender should be expressed through, e.g. clothing, or undergoing/having undergone gender-affirming care.

Q = Queer

Queer is a broad term that can be used to signal a deliberate choice to challenge gender, sexuality and relationship norms. This can mean identifying as gay, non-binary, polyamorous (i.e. able to fall in love and have relationships with several people at the same time), or challenging conventional norms surrounding gender, sexuality and relationships in other ways.

I = Intersex

Intersex people are born with an anatomy that is inconsistent with that of a "typical" female or male body. These variations can concern external anatomy, but other aspects, such as internal genetic or hormonal differences – they are not always visible from the outside.

Norm

The term "norm" comes up a lot in LGBTQI contexts. A norm can be described as an unwritten rule about how we must look and behave in order to be perceived as understandable by others – how to fit in and avoid questioning. For example, there are norms that regulate how a man should behave and what attributes a man should have in order to be seen as "manly". Those who violate such gender norms, including transgender people, risk being subjected to exclusion, questioning and discrimination. Norms also regulate sexuality. In our society, heterosexuality is the norm. Those who are not heterosexual, such as homosexual and bisexual people, tend to be perceived as deviant.

Gender identity

Gender identity is a person's self-perceived gender – the gender with which they identify. A transgender person has a gender identity that is not in line with the gender they were assigned at birth. A gender identity can be binary or non-binary.

Binary and non-binary gender identity

"Binary" means that something is divided into two, in this case that gender is traditionally divided into categories, male and female. A binary gender identity means identifying as either male or female. A non-binary person identifies as neither male nor female alone, but as a different gender. A non-binary person's gender identity can fall somewhere between or beyond the categories of male and female.

Cisgender

A so-called "cisgender" (commonly abbreviated to "cis") person identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth. However, many cis people do not identify themselves as cis. The term is used for the purpose of making visible differences in gender identity or to highlight the privileges that cis people may have, e.g. in working life.

i

In studies, many non-binary people report that those around them have difficulty accepting their non-binary gender identity. Frequently, this means that people do not use their chosen pronouns (e.g. they/them) Deliberately using the wrong pronouns can constitute discrimination.

Trans experience

"Trans experience" is an umbrella term that includes both people who identify as transgender and people who identify as male, female or non-binary, but who may have experience of undergoing gender-affirming care. For the latter, their trans experience is not part of their identity, but rather a life experience like many others.

Gender-affirming care and treatment

In gender-affirming care, a person's body is altered to be more consistent with their gender identity, for example through surgery, hormone therapy or voice training. Previously, this process was often called "gender correction" or "gender reassignment". Today, "gender-affirming care and treatment" is the preferred term, because the older ones are perceived as misleading.

Transition

In this guide, the word "transition" refers to the process a person undergoes when they start to live according to their gender identity. A transition also unfolds in the workplace. The specific implications vary from individual to individual, but may include arranging name changes in administrative systems or notifying other employees of the person's new pronouns. Someone who is transitioning may also need time off for healthcare appointments or temporary adjustments to physically demanding tasks during the healing process following surgical procedures.

Heterosexual

Being heterosexual means feeling romantic or sexual attraction to people who have a binary, opposite gender identity, such as a person who identifies as a woman being attracted to people who identify as men.

For more key concepts, see the RFSL's glossary on their website:
https://www.rfsl.se/en/lgbtq-facts/glossary/

Reflection exercise

This exercise can be done both individually and in groups.

- Did you know what LGBTQI stands for and what the key concepts mean?
- How well–informed is your organisation about the key concepts?
- Is there an understanding of different gender identities within your organisation? Is there openness and respect for different gender identities, for example if an employee identifies as non-binary?
- About which key term(s) do you and your coworkers need to increase your knowledge?
- What is the first step you could take to learn more about the concepts?

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term used to highlight how different conditions in society together contribute to influencing a person's life. In various contexts, members of under-represented groups, such as LGBTQI people, often find themselves in a negatively exceptional position.

The term "intersectionality" expresses the ways in which, e.g. members of the LGBTQI group have different statuses or different amounts of power in relation to each other. Among other things, these differences in status and power may be due to structural conditions based on the gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and socio-economic situations of these individuals. The categories into which someone falls is sometimes referred to as "layers of identity". For example, a person's layers of identity may consist of being white (ethnicity), middle-aged (age), female (gender) with trans experience (gender identity). The status and power attributed to a someone on the basis of their layers may vary, depending on where and in what context the person finds themselves – for example, in some situations, it could be beneficial to be a woman, while in another context, it may pose a risk. Similarly, the possibilities for a person to advance in a particular organisation may be greater if he is a man, but decrease if he belongs, for example, to an ethnic minority or is homosexual.

Research shows that multiple aspects of an LGBTQI person's identity interact in the shaping of their individual work environment – for example, their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, education level, and age may all play a role. Among other things, this means that the ethnicity of LGBTQI people plays a role in their chances of advancing their careers or how they are treated in the workplace.

## Individual reflection exercise: What are the layers of your identity?

Reflect on your layers of identity – such as your gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and age.

- Which aspects of your identity may have made life easier for you (in your education, profession, career, or in other contexts)?
- When have they made things harder for you?

Also consider the following questions:

- How have you been treated in various contexts? Could the treatment you experienced be tied to any of your layers of identity?
- Has the way people treat you changed over time?
- Do you think that your gender may have contributed to you gaining a certain position at work?
- Could your sexual orientation have affected the treatment you received from colleagues in the course of your working life?
- Why do you think it is important to be aware of how different layers of identity can affect a person's terms, conditions, and opportunities?

Research shows that several aspects of identity interact in the shaping of individual LGBTQI people's work environment – for example, their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, education level, and age.
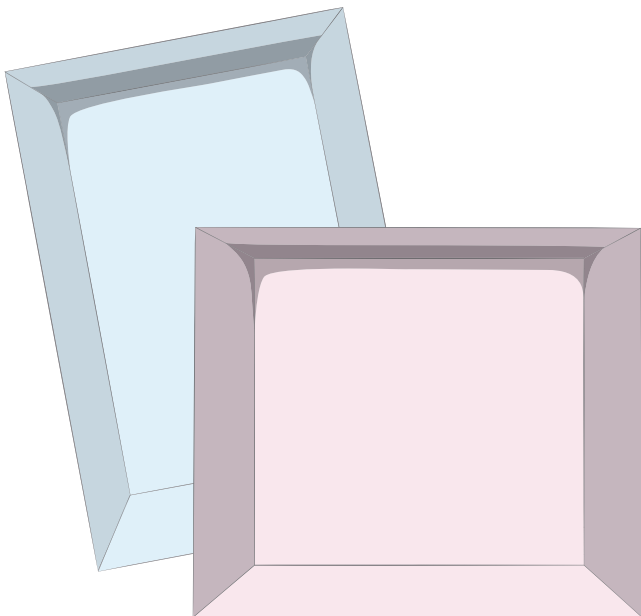
To achieve an inclusive work environment, it is important to have knowledge about the key concepts described in this section.
The next part of the guide is about how to combat discrimination and exclusion of LGBTQI people in the workplace.

Part 3.
Combatting discrimination and exclusion of LGBTQI people

This section of the guide is about how you can combat discrimination and exclusion of LGBTQI people in the workplace.

The section begins with a description of an exclusionary social work environment in which the social climate leaves room for hostility towards LGBTQI people. But even many workplaces that are not directly hostile can be exclusionary, if they have a so-called heteronormative climate that makes it harder for people to openly express their LGBTQI identity. This section therefore also describes what a heteronormative climate is and how it can negatively affect the work environment of LGBTQI people. If the climate of a workplace leaves room for stereotypical and negative perceptions of LGBTQI people, it can become a breeding ground for discrimination, bullying and harassment of LGBTQI people. Therefore, this section also addresses the importance of stereotypical perceptions of LGBTQI people and reflections on how you can counteract any own stereotypical perceptions.

The section also describes specific forms of discrimination, violations of dignity, and exclusion and how they can be combatted. Finally, the employer's legally required responsibilities for combatting discrimination are described.
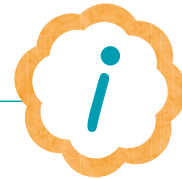
Research shows that LGBTQ people who are subjected to discrimination, harassment and bullying risk:

- experiencing higher levels of stress and burnout
- suffering from ill health, including suicidal thoughts
- having lower self-esteem and reduced well-being
- having a lower work ability and being more likely to quit their job.

Although not all workplaces discriminate against LGBTQI people, many feel that they may be socially excluded at their workplaces because of their LGBTQI identity. This points to the prevalence of an exclusionary social work environment.

An exclusionary social work environment

Social support from colleagues and a strong sense of community in the workplace is generally an important factor for employee well-being and job satisfaction. There is an increased risk that LGBTQI people will be excluded from the social community at their workplace, in various ways. LGBTQI individuals may be subjected to bullying or various types of violations of dignity due to their specific gender identity or sexual orientation; for example,

colleagues may avoid interacting with them or make derogatory statements or different types of threats. Violations of dignity can also take the form of general condescending statements about LGBTQI people that are not directed specifically at individuals. Research shows that transgender people and bisexuals in particular are at risk of discrimination, harassment and bullying.

A woman talks about how tough it is when colleagues freeze her out, talk behind her back, and make fun at her expense. She describes how it increases her feelings of loneliness and vulnerability and how difficult it makes it to step into a role at work in which she feels satisfied with herself. She points out that she thinks everyone wants to be liked by their coworkers.

The above description is a summary of the content of an interview conducted within a study involving transgender people. The study was conducted as part of the report on which this guide is based.

A heteronormative climate is exclusionary

In a heteronormative workplace climate, there are specific, gender-based expectations about how employees should behave and live their lives. For example, this may mean that it is taken for granted that all the employees are heterosexual. It can also entail an expectation that in order for someone to be considered to have a "successful" life, they must follow a certain timeline of steps – such as starting a family according to traditional norms. This climate is often not a conscious choice, but has arisen because Swedish society is generally characterised by heteronormativity. Importantly, such heteronormative structures are not exclusive to Sweden but are observable across a wide range of societal and cultural contexts.
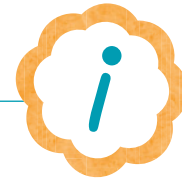
Example of a heteronormative conversation climate in the break room

- Conversations revolve narrowly around family life. This can easily lead those who do not have a traditional family life or who have a norm-breaking gender identity, to feel alienated. LGBTQI people who have children may also be exposed by colleagues to unwelcome opinions or questions about how they have built their family or parent their kids.
- Employees make individual negative comments about LGBTQI people who appear in the media or share opinions such as "All children actually have a mum and a dad, and feel best when they grow up that way" when they see a news story about same-sex parents.
- More subtle comments and behaviours. Perhaps colleagues automatically assume that a person's partner is of a different gender than the person themselves, or that the person has a certain gender identity. Or perhaps the conversation is based on an ideal in which children and grandchildren are central to an individual's private life.

The examples above can cause LGBTQI people to hesitate to share their own private lives and to feel uncertain about how colleagues would react if they were open about their sexual orientation, gender identity or trans experience.

More groups are excluded

A heteronormative work environment is not only exclusionary to LGBTQI people; it may also exclude heterosexual men and women who violate traditional relationship and gender norms. In a heteronormative climate, there are expectations that men and women should look and behave in a certain way. Men may be expected to be masculine and able to lift heavy objects. There may also be expectations that a female employee will want to take most of the parental leave allotted for being shared between her and her partner.

In the worst cases, heteronormative starting points can lead to direct discrimination against people who do not live up to expectations. But

they can also convey a general sense that they are different and excluded from the social community.

In a heteronormative climate, some people may genuinely mean well, but still signal in various ways that LGBTQI people are different and one-sided. For example, a colleague might exclaim," "Oh, how exciting that you're bisexual! That must make dating a lot easier!" "I'm glad to have a trans person like you start working here, because we've actually recently learnt more about people like you."

Heteronormative and gender-normative assumptions can contribute to discrimination and exclusion. Here are some examples of how:

- Colleagues automatically assume that everyone is heterosexual.
- It is taken for granted that everyone identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth.
- People are expected to conform to stereotypical gender norms.

A heteronormative climate makes it difficult to be open

Expectations have consequences for how people who deviate from the heterosexual norm are perceived by others and how they perceive themselves. A heteronormative climate in which heterosexuality or traditional gender expressions are taken for granted can, for example, either cast an unwelcome spotlight on LGBTQI people or those with LGBTQI relatives, or render them invisible. Such climates are not uncommon. Both international and Swedish research shows that LGBTQI people must navigate a heteronormative climate in their workplaces. As a result, LGBTQI people often need to decide if and when they can be open about their LGBTQI identity, and they may feel uncomfortable or excluded in various contexts. The problem arises when people who are not heterosexual or cisgender are treated disfavourably or feel excluded from the social community precisely because of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

It is important to emphasise that being heterosexual or cisgender is not a problem. The problem arises when people who are not heterosexual or cisgender are treated disfavourably or feel excluded from the social community precisely because of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

26

More specifically, it can mean that homosexual or bisexual people feel uncomfortable bringing their partner to social events at work, or that an intersex or non-binary person may feel uncomfortable when employees are divided into groups based on a binary view of gender.

Research also shows that it can be harder for bisexual individuals to open up about their sexual orientation than it is for homosexual people. This, in turn, can make it harder for them to "bring their whole self" with them to work and share personal things about their lives with their colleagues.

According to the research, people who are not open at work about their sexual orientation, gender identity, or trans experience have a lower degree of:

- » affinity with their colleagues
- » job satisfaction
- » work engagement
- » prosperity.

HOW MUCH DARE I TELL ABOUT MYSELF?
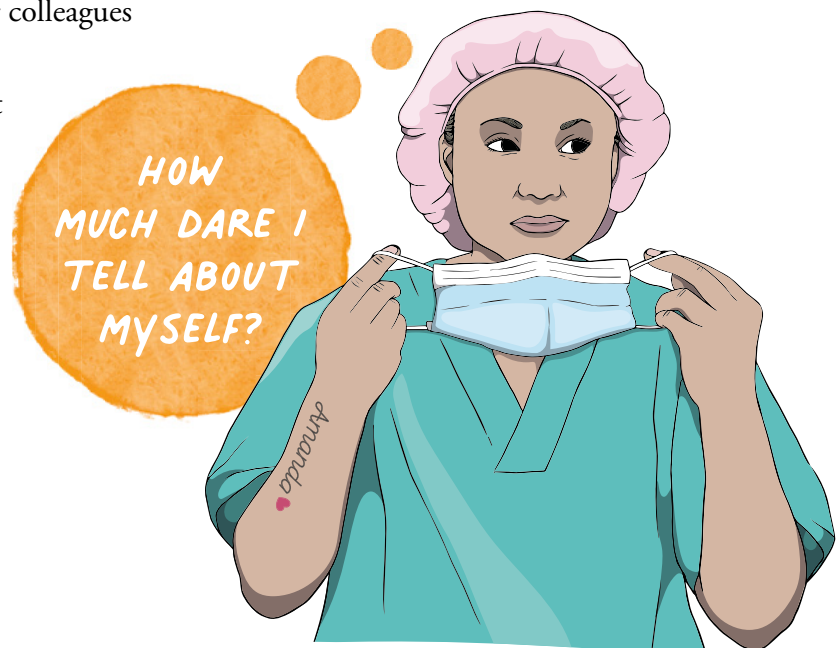
Reflection exercise: The conversation climate in our workplace

This exercise can be done both individually and in groups.

- What do we want the conversation climate in our workplace to be like? How can we achieve this goal?
- How do we talk about our partners (if we have them), and what assumptions do we make about the gender identity and family life of others in our work group, for example in the lunch room?
- Do we make any recurrent heteronormative assumptions? What makes them noticeable?
- How can I help ensure that no one feels excluded from the workplace community because of their gender identity, trans experience or sexual orientation?
- What about the way I communicate or converse can I change, in order to contribute to a social climate that is not founded on heteronormativity?
- What is the best way for me to (re)act if someone else tells me I have violated or offended them?

Example of mental goal setting for the social climate at your workplace

You should be able to talk openly about what you did with your partner over the weekend without focusing on your partner's gender.

Tips for helping to create an inclusive conversation climate

- Don't assume that a person has a certain gender identity or that the person identifies with the gender identity that they were assigned at birth.
- Don't assume that your colleague is heterosexual and/or prefers to live in monogamous relationships – they could just as easily be homosexual, bisexual, asexual (for example, not interested in having sex), polyamorous (want to have multiple steady relationships), or be unsure of their sexual orientation.
- Also, don't assume that everyone feels comfortable or wants to talk about their gender identity or sexual orientation – remember that it should be up to everyone to decide how open they want to be. Keep in mind that it can have negative consequences for a person to be involuntarily "outed".
- Always accept a person's self-described gender identity or sexual orientation as accurate. Do not question the words the person uses to describe themselves. However, if you are unsure of what a term means, you can ask if they want to explain what it means.
- Keep in mind that your colleague may also have relatives (such as children) who are LGBTQI.

Stereotypical perceptions of LGBTQI people

A stereotype is a simplified picture of someone or something. For example, it is a stereotype that women are caring, or that gay men are feminine. All people have deeply engrained stereotypical perceptions; stereotypes are one of the ways in which we make sense of and categorise the world around us, with all its countless impressions and individuals. But stereotypical perceptions can have negative consequences. For example, we often have beliefs (subconscious as they might be) about what a "good leader" is like. These are largely based on what we consider to be a suitable personality type, based on the notions we have about leadership. Such stereotypical perceptions of how a leader – or, in the working world, a manager – should look and behave are often gender-specific.

This type of stereotypical perception of who is suitable for a certain type of work puts people who fall outside its scope at risk of being deprived of the same opportunities in their professional lives. For example, a LGBTQI person may not even be considered for managerial position, simply because they are not perceived to be a "manager type".

Research shows that notions of how a good boss acts and looks negatively affect the chances for gay men to advance in their careers. In studies, trans women also report that their career advancement ground to a halt after they underwent gender-affirming care. This may be due to prejudice against trans women, but also to the fact that women are generally at risk of being discriminated against in their careers.

Individual reflection exercise: Your own stereotypical perceptions

Think about the images of people that come to mind when you hear the following occupations:

Physician	Assistant nurse	Pilot	Hairdresser
Firefighter	Economist	Preschool teacher	Librarian

- What do the first people to come to mind look like? What is their gender? How are they dressed?
- If your image of what someone in a particular profession looks like is stereotypical – where do you think that association came from?
- How can stereotypical images affect the person who chooses a particular profession?
- What can you do to counteract your own stereotypical notions?
- How can you ensure that you don't judge or succumb to preconceptions about someone who violates certain norms regarding, e.g., clothing, appearance or identity?

The above reflection exercise is best done individually. This will help you to avoid reinforcing stereotypical perceptions that may exist within the group and prevent group members from being exposed to the stereotypical perceptions of others.

Different types of stereotypical perceptions

Stereotypical perceptions are also visible in more everyday professional contexts. For example, colleagues' commonplace ideas about how LGBTQI people live their lives can lead to a very unwelcome focus on their personal lives, forcing them to field intimate questions from colleagues about their bodies and sexuality that a heterosexual cis person would never have been asked. The relatively few studies in which bisexual experiences have been investigated show that bisexual individuals are often forced to cope with more violations of dignity and discrimination than homosexual people. For example, bisexual women are more likely to be subjected to sexual harassment than both lesbian and heterosexual women.

Minorities' increased risk of being exposed to stereotypical perceptions

It is not only notions of gender and sexual orientation that are vulnerable to stereotypical perceptions. Members of various types of minority groups, such as ethnic or religious minorities, are often subjected to preconceptions by those around them. Such prejudices may lead someone who belongs to one or more minority groups to be deprived of the same opportunities in terms of their career and wages/salary.

People may also harbour stereotypical beliefs that someone from a particular religious or cultural background "can't" be LGBTQI. But although their rights and visibility vary around the world, LGBTQI people are everywhere.

A Swedish research study with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender participants revealed that they had been forced to confront prejudice and stereotypical notions in the labour market. During an interview, one of the research participants shared her thoughs on the risks of not getting a job because of her identity:

"If you're at a job interview, for example, or are trying out for a job, it comes at the getting-to-know-you stage; you're asked questions, personal questions. Actually, you can probably get around those questions so it doesn't make a difference: you might be afraid that they won't hire you because of that kind of prejudice, while at the same time you might feel that you wouldn't want to work there if that's what it's like, but then again perhaps you might need the work."

(Giritli Nygren, Öhman and Olofsson, 2016, p. 51)

Reflection exercise for employer representatives

- Is there a risk that stereotypical perceptions may unconsciously affect who you see as suitable for certain tasks or for a certain position at your workplace?
- What can your work organisation do to prevent stereotypical perceptions from steering the distribution of work or appointment to positions? Can you review your procedures and policies about career paths and internal and external recruitment?
- How do you assess suitability and competence? Do you place greater emphasis on social aspects, such as the person's assumed ability to fit in, compared to assessing their ability to handle work responsibilities?
- As part of your work with active measures to combat discrimination, how do you implement suitability and competence assessments?

Source: Giritli Nygren, K., Öhman, S., Olofsson, A (2016) p. 51. "Everyday places, heterosexist spaces and risk in contemporary Sweden". Culture, Health & Sexuality, 18, pp. 45–57.

Microaggressions and minority stress

Microaggressions are subtle questions and comments directed at minorities. They constitute a form of violation of dignity (i.e. the subjection of an individual to derogatory words or actions) that may be more difficult to address or report, as the questions or comments are discreet and often conveyed as, e.g. a joke or question. Sometimes even those who subject others to microaggressions may be unaware that they are doing so.

ARE YOU A BOY OR A GIRL?!

In several studies, both Swedish and international, LGBTQ people report that they have been exposed to microaggressions at their workplaces – especially from colleagues.

Examples of violations of dignity and microaggressions

» The non-heterosexuality of an employee is disclosed without their consent.

» Someone at the workplace speaks negatively about LGBTQI people, in general terms.

» Someone is asked unwelcome questions about their personal life or body, because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

» Colleagues avoid greeting or talking to a person because they are LGBTQI.

» Homosexual people are asked who is "the man" or "the woman" in the relationship.

» Comments disguised as harmless questions or compliments. For example, "You must be good at home deco, because gay dudes have such good taste."

Individual reflection exercise

• Might you yourself have subjected someone to violations of dignity or microaggressions, consciously or unconsciously?

• Reflect on the provided examples of violations of dignity and microaggressions. As a colleague, have you witnessed or experienced any situation in which violations of dignity or microaggressions occurred, for example because of an employee's gender or sexual orientation? If so, where and when are these situations likely to occur?

The *Communication and language* section contains more in-depth information about what you (both as an individual colleague and as a work group) can do to support someone in the event that they are exposed to violations of dignity and condescending comments at your workplace.

Research shows that LGBTQI people who are exposed or at risk of being exposed to violations of dignity and microaggressions may experience so-called "minority stress". This is a form of stress that affects minorities of various kinds, such as LGBTQI people. It arises as a consequence of constantly having to be vigilant about one's own behaviour and that of others, as well as being or expecting to be subjected to poor treatment, harassment and discrimination. Minority stress negatively affects a person's well-being and health. Not all LGBTQI people may experience minority stress, but the risk of being exposed to microaggressions can still affect their workplace well-being.

Reflection exercise for managers and HR roles

- Are there environments or situations at your workplace or in your work organisation where violations of dignity and microaggressions could occur?
- As a manager or HR manager, how can you become more aware of violations of dignity or microaggressions?

The section entitled *The employer's responsibility to prevent and combat discrimination* provides more in-depth information about the employer's role in preventing various forms of discrimination.

LGBTQI people opt out of non-inclusive workplaces

LGBTQI people's career choices, choice of industry, and choice to be open at their workplace are partly governed by the risk that a particular workplace could be discriminatory. In a more macho-oriented work culture, there may be more stereotypical notions of how men and women should behave. This can create a breeding ground for discrimination. Stereotypically male behaviour may vary depending on the workplace. However, it may include not showing feelings or joking in derogatory ways about situations that are not perceived as "manly". LGBTQI people sometimes opt out of workplaces or industries that are perceived to have a macho culture.

This type of professional "sorting" can also occur in workplaces that do not actively strive to be inclusive. They may be perceived as hostile or unsafe work environments for LGBTQI people, who may thus opt out of working in such places. Discrimination can occur in all types of workplaces. A major risk factor is the lack of a supportive climate for LGBTQI people in the workplace – for example, if managers and colleagues remain silent and fail to act to address a negative social climate for LGBTQI people.
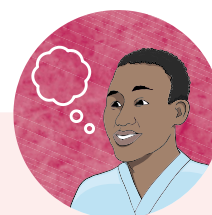
Individual reflection exercise

Everyone in a workplace should be treated with respect – regardless of their background or identity. What are things like at your workplace? Is everyone respected? Does anyone speak ill of any group, such as people with a certain sexual orientation or people who break norms related to gender, gender expression or gender identity?

The sections *A supportive work climate and Communication and language*, as well as the last part of the guide, Exercises and checklists, include specific reflection exercises in which individuals or work groups can practice offering support and speaking up, for example when someone uses offensive language.

MACHO CULTURE

Harassment and discrimination from customers, clients, pupils or patients

Harassment and discrimination can also come from, e.g. customers, users, clients or pupils. In several studies, LGBTQ people report that they have been subjected to attacks, threats and harassment by customers and clients. This may have involved being subjected to homo- or transphobic attacks by customers or clients. Sometimes there can be a grey area between behaviours that constitutes harassment and other situations that are unpleasant and create a sense of insecurity.

The work environment of employees who are harassed by customers or similar people is significantly improved if they receive direct support from colleagues, managers or HR.

Reflection exercise

This exercise can be done both individually and in groups.

- Have you witnessed or otherwise experienced harassment from customers, clients, pupils or patients based on the sexual orientation or gender of the victim? Where and when did this happen? Are there ways to avoid these situations?
- As a colleague, what can you do to support a colleague who is being harassed by a customer, client, pupil or patient?

Feel free to discuss the above issues together in the work group. Provide suggestions for concrete ways to better manage situations in which there is a risk of harassment and discrimination from, e.g. customers, users or pupils.

Reflection exercise for managers and HR roles

- Identify environments or situations in which harassment by a third party – that is, customers, clients, pupils and so on – is a risk factor for your employees.
- As a manager/HR manager, how can you shape these environments and situations to avoid harassment by third parties?
- As a manager/HR manager, how can you support an employee who has been subjected to harassment from customers, clients, pupils or patients?
- Are there procedures, guidelines and policies in the organisation regarding the handling of harassment and discrimination from third parties? Are people aware of these guidelines? Are they followed up?

Roles of employers, trade unions and the Discrimination Ombudsman in the event of discrimination

In the event of workplace discrimination, different people have different roles and responsibilities. Examples of discrimination include an employee being passed over for a promotion to a managerial position because the employer believes that a homosexual person is not a good fit for the role, or that an employee does not get a certain assignment due to their gender identity.

The role of the employer

Under the Discrimination Act, the employer is responsible for preventing discrimination and promoting equal rights and opportunities at work, regardless of any basis of discrimination. According to Swedish work environment legislation, the employer is also responsible for making it clear that victimisation is not accepted and for implementing measures to counteract work environment conditions that can lead to victimisation. Under the Discrimination Act, an employer who becomes aware that an employee considers themselves to have been subjected to harassment or sexual harassment in connection with their job must investigate the issue and, where applicable, take the measures that may reasonably be required to prevent future harassment.

According to the Discrimination Act, the employer must have guidelines and procedures for preventing harassment, sexual harassment, and reprisals, and must document the work organisation's efforts to implement active measures every year. According to the OSA provisions (work environment legislation), the employer must also have procedures for how they handle victimisation, and all employees must be made aware of them. According to the OSA provisions, the employer must also annually document risk assessments. Pursuant to the same provisions, the employer must also have procedures for how they handle victimisation, and all employees must be made aware of them.

The responsibilities of the employer

In the event of threats and violence in the work environment, employers must comply with the provisions of the Swedish Work Environment Authority (AFS 2023:1 and AFS 2023:2). The Discrimination Act does not cover work situations in which employees are subjected to discrimination by, e.g. customers, clients, pupils or patients. However, it is the employer's responsibility under the Work Environment Act to prevent risks of harassment and violence in the workplace and handle situations in which they may arise, for example at customer meetings. This may involve directly backing up an employee (offering verbal or even physical support) in situations in which a customer behaves threateningly.
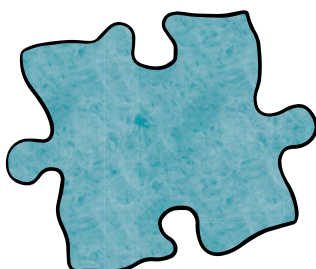
The role of trade unions

Trade unions support and represent their members in cases involving, e.g. discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation. Anyone who is a member of a trade union and feels that they have been subjected to such mistreatment must contact their union, so that it can serve as their primary representative in the matter. In the event that the trade union later chooses not to represent its member, the member can instead turn to the Discrimination Ombudsman.

The role of the Discrimination Ombudsman

If you have experienced discrimination, you can report it to the Discrimination Ombudsman (DO). You can also file a report with the DO if your employer fails to fulfil legislative requirements regarding active measures to prevent discrimination.

The Discrimination Ombudsman's website, www.do.se, features checklists and tips, examples and guides, fact sheets and e-learning courses to help prevent discrimination.

The Swedish Work Environment Authority's website, www.av.se, has guides, brochures, e-learning courses and tools to support efforts to engage in work environment management that complies with the legislation.
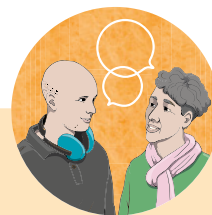
**Reflection exercise for managers and HR managers:
How do we avoid discrimination and victimisation?**

- Do we work systematically to prevent discrimination and victimisation?
- What tools and methods can we start using to identify and prevent discrimination and victimisation?

Fight silence and be prepared to act!

In a workplace that has a heteronormative climate, there may be a perceived "silence" about LGBTQI issues, i.e. people may not talk about issues related to LGBTQI people. This can create uncertainty about what other employees think about LGBTQI people. This, in turn, can cause LGBTQI employees to choose not to be open about their sexual orientation, gender identity or trans experience.

One form of silence may also be that managers and colleagues do not speak up if someone, for example, speaks negatively about LGBTQI people. A lack of visible support or inaction on the part of managers can leave room for microaggressions and discrimination. There can be a variety of reasons for this type of silence. For example, managers and colleagues may lack knowledge or understanding of LGBTQI issues, or might not believe that a fellow employee is affected by negative statements or behaviours.

The importance of daring to talk about things

"'That overwhelming silence is the biggest form of discrimination. I noticed it myself when I came out. It's almost like it's still a disease,' he says and continues, 'Occasional events and attacks can become big deals and attract attention, which of course is good, but otherwise that overwhelming silence is the biggest form of discrimination, as I see it.'"

From an interview by journalist Ola Liljedahl for the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise.

How we can counteract "silence" about LGBTQI issues at our workplace

» Dare to talk about LGBTQI issues in the workplace.

» Show active support for LGBTQI people by always reacting to and taking a stand against offensive language, prejudiced comments and discrimination, with or without knowing if there is LGBTQI person in the workplace.

» Strive for a climate in which anyone who wants to can be open about their sexual orientation, gender identity or trans experience. Openness shouldn't be a requirement, but everyone should feel safe being open if they want to be.

Reflection exercise:
Do we take action when discrimination and violations of dignity occur?

This exercise can be done both individually and in groups.

- Does everyone at our workplace know what action to take if we notice that someone is being discriminated against, that their dignity is being violated, or that they are being harassed, bullied, excluded, or sexually harassed?As a manager, do I know what to do and the proper way to react? Who do I turn to within my organisation for support in dealing with discrimination-related matters?

- As a safety representative or union representative, what role can I play in supporting LGBTQI colleagues who feel they are being subjected to mistreatment?

- What can I do as a colleague? How do I react? Do I know who within my work organisation to contact to report the event or events?

Legally speaking, a work organisation's management team bears ultimate responsibility for efforts to prevent discrimination and harassment against LGBTQI people. The next part of the guide is about how you can create an inclusive workplace for LGBTQI people.

Part 4.
Creating an inclusive workplace

This section of the guide describes what an inclusive workplace is and various aspects of how an inclusive workplace can be created. An inclusive workplace for LGBTQI people can be said to be a workplace permeated by an inclusive approach that is actively followed by everyone. This approach extends from the formal positions of management to how the work group talks with each other in the break room.

Research indicates that being open about one's sexual orientation, gender identity, or trans experiences has a positive effect on LGBTQ people's health and well-being. This section therefore begins by examining how you can make it easier for employees to be open at the workplace about their sexual orientation, gender identity and trans experience.

When a work organisation seems to be supportive and committed about LGBTQI issues, this is an important factor in creating an inclusive workplace climate. Research focused on LGBTQ people shows that a workplace climate that is perceived to be supportive in various ways also contributes to job satisfaction, health, and a willingness to keep working at the workplace in question.

This part of the guide also describes how, based on your role in the work organisation (as a member of a work group, manager, senior management, safety representative, or union representative, HR staff member, or other key function) you can help create a supportive work environment for LGBTQI people.

Furthermore, this part covers specific aspects of an inclusive workplace, such as communication and language, issues relating to restrooms, changing rooms and work clothes, access to LGBTQI networks, and transition action plans (i.e. an action plan for how it should be handled in the workplace if an employee, e.g. undergoes gender-affirming care).

Finally, we discuss the work organisation's systematic work with policies and action plans that promote and ensure equal rights and opportunities. These are also part of the development of an inclusive workplace. It is important that the work organisation can systematically map work environment problems and the inclusivity of the workplace.
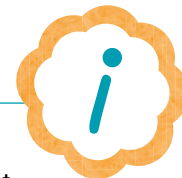
The mere existence of policies and action plans for an inclusive workplace is not enough to meet the requirements of the Discrimination Act. The employer needs to ensure that risks of discrimination and obstacles to equal rights and opportunities are investigated, that there is documentation of active measures, and that guidelines and procedures for efforts to combat sexual harassment, harassment and reprisals are in place.

According to research, an inclusive workplace for LGBTQ people is also characterised by a generally good work environment that fosters participation, equality and diversity (for example, a workplace where it is appreciated and valued that there are employees with different backgrounds and experiences). In short, a work climate where diversity is seen as positive and where you can feel accepted for who you are and also be treated as one among others.

This means that the focus is on one's professional work, skills and contributions to the work organisation, rather than one's sexual orientation, gender identity or trans experience.
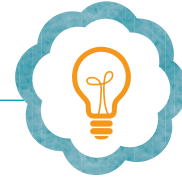
Facilitate openness

Research shows that it is important that there is an opportunity for LGBTQI people to be open about their sexual orientation, gender identity or trans experience at work. However, it is important to keep in mind that it is up to each person whether they want to be open about their LGBTQI identity or experiences. Some people don't want or dare to be open, and that must also be respected. If your workplace's climate is generally supportive of LGBTQI people, it can still be perceived as a safe environment, both for those who choose to be open and those who choose not to be.
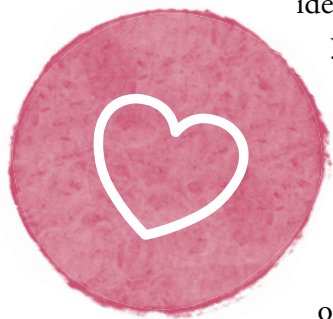
For a workplace to be truly inclusive, both openly expressed and hidden identities must be taken into account. This means that at a workplace, you should never assume that someone has a certain sexual orientation or gender identity. It should be every LGBTQI person's decision whether they want to share this aspect of their lives with their colleagues. Thus, an organisational climate that gives the individual the hoice "to be themselves", including control over their degree of openness, can be seen as a key factor in an inclusive workplace. In such a climate, for example, it is accepted to be open about one's orientation, identity, and experience and to advocate for LGBTQI issues, but at the same time, no employee feels pressure from management or colleagues to act as a representative on LGBTQI issues.

It may be easier to be open if LGBTQI issues are discussed in the workplace. The fact that there are others who are open with their sexual orientation, gender identity, or trans experience can also make it feel safer or easier to be open. When we never take it for granted that someone has a certain gender identity or sexual orientation, it also makes it easier for the person in question to share more about themselves and be open about private matters related to identity and orientation.

Concrete tips for facilitating openness in the workplace!

- Don't take other employees' sexual identity, gender identity, and gender expression for granted; that is, don't assume that everyone is a heterosexual, cis person living a heteronormative life.
- Express and show general, open support towards LGBTQI people, to help make it easier for a colleague to feel that they can be open about their LGBTQI identity, if they would like to be.
- Respect and show consideration for the fact that there may be LGBTQI people who are either unable or unwilling to be open, for various reasons.
- Beware of making openness a requirement or a "brave" thing to do, as there may be risks or dangers to being open. This decision can also boil down to the issue of privacy and the right to privacy: not everyone wants to share, and no one should be pushed into it.
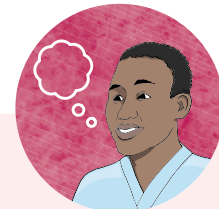
Individual reflection exercise

- Reflect on the above tips – what are some concrete ways that you can you make it easier for LGBTQI people at your workplace to open up?

A supportive work climate

How colleagues and the work group can be supportive

Research shows that it is of great importance for LGBTQ people to experience good support from their colleagues. One way to show active support for LGBTQI people is to always take a stand against offensive language, prejudiced comments and other signs of discrimination.

An effective way to show support and create a safe climate is to calmly and directly confront people at the workplace who, for example, make stereotypical or condescending comments about LGBTQI issues or people.

WILL YOUR GIRLFRIEND JOIN US FOR DRINKS ON FRIDAY?

yes!
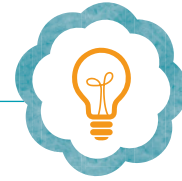
Tips for exercises!

- The *Communication and language* section contains tips on ways to work inclusively with the language used at your workplace, both as a colleague and as a manager.
- In the final section, *Training and checklists*, there is a reflection exercise on how members of your work group can support each other in your efforts to use more inclusive language. It also gives you the chance to practice speaking up when others express themselves in a discriminatory way.
- The final section also includes a checklist listing things colleagues can keep in mind in their efforts to create an inclusive work climate.

How an LGBTQI person's immediate manager can be supportive

Their immediate manager or supervisor plays a major role in the work environment of LGBTQI people. They do so by showing support to individual employees, by combatting and preventing discrimination and victimisation of LGBTQI people, and by working towards a generally supportive work climate. An immediate manager can play an important role by showing emotional support and being the one to whom LGBTQI employees can turn in the event of work environment problems.

As a manager, it is important to possess competence on LGBTQI issues, in order to provide the right support to employees and ensure that individual LGBTQI people do not have to educate their colleagues and manager and explain issues such as language use or gender-affirming care.
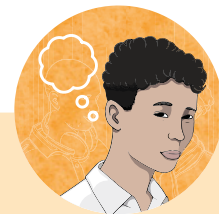
Reflection exercise for managers

- As an immediate manager, how can I contribute to a supportive climate at my workplace?
- Do I have enough competence regarding LGBTQI issues to be an inclusive leader?
- In my leadership, do I take into account the fact that there may be both open and hidden identities at my workplace?

The final section provides a checklist outlining what immediate managers and supervisors with direct personnel responsibility need to consider in order to develop more inclusive leadership.

How senior management can be supportive

Support from senior management plays a major role in creating the conditions for an inclusive workplace. Important conditions include efforts to prevent victimisation and discrimination. It is also important that senior management is aware that developing an inclusive workplace for LGBTQI people is a work environment issue.

Another important management responsibility is the development of guidelines and policies for inclusion and to ensure that these are followed up. For example, they should ensure that there is competence on LGBTQI issues within the work organisation, for example by covering "norm-conscious" leadership in leadership training. It is also important that senior management demonstrate that they stand up for an inclusive workplace and support the policies. Last but not least, senior management needs to ensure that active work is carried out to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, as required by the Discrimination Act.

Examples of how senior management within a work organisation can show support for LGBTQI issues

» Ensure that active measures to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities cover all the bases for discrimination, including sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

» Encourage employees to continuously learn about LGBTQI issues.

» March in a pride parade and post about it on the work organisation's social media.

» Fly or display pride flags, trans flags or other LGBTQI flags.

» However, also ensure that flags and engagement do not become mere decoration or a marketing strategy. For example, you can do this by calling for active measures to ensure equal rights and opportunities.

» Promote the work organisation through its active efforts on LGBTQI issues.
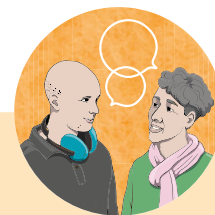
Reflection exercise for senior management

• As members of senior management, how can we create the conditions for an inclusive workplace? What specific actions can we take as a first step?

• How can we develop short-term and long-term action plans?

• What can we do to contribute to a supportive climate? How can we be inclusive in our leadership?

See also the section *Systematic efforts to develop an inclusive workplace,* as well as the checklist in the final section for how senior management can work to become more inclusive.

How HR or other key functions in a work organisation can be supportive

HR and other key functions involved in such issues as work environment management and equal rights and opportunities play an important role in supporting and driving the development of an inclusive workplace. For example, HR may suggest that the employer investigate risks of victimisation of LGBTQI people as part of its systematic work environment management and support the employer in this undertaking. HR also provides important support for employers in discrimination cases.

HR personnel therefore need to have knowledge about discrimination and about the organisation's work with active measures to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities, in keeping with the stipulations of the Discrimination Act.

HR and other key functions could also be more proactive leaders in the development of a more inclusive workplace, for example by highlighting it as a work environment issue, suggesting initiatives to raise competence on LGBTQI issues, and supporting managers in practicing inclusive leadership.

Reflection exercise for HR roles

• As an HR manager or other key function, what could be my first step in developing a more inclusive workplace?

• What are the most urgent issues to address in my work organisation?

• As an HR manager or other support function, how can I best support managers in their efforts to be inclusive leaders?

• Do I know what the Discrimination Act requires of our work organisation, in terms of active measures to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities, regardless of sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression?

In the final section, *Exercises and checklists,* there is a checklist for how HR managers or other key functions within a work organisation can help to create an inclusive workplace.

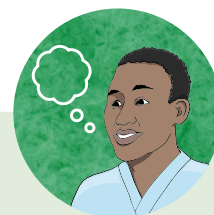### How union representatives and safety representatives can be supportive

Union representatives and safety representatives should strive to ensure a good work environment for everyone and represent individuals when needed. To this end, both safety representatives and union representatives should have knowledge of LGBTQI issues tied to the work environment.

Possible ways for safety representatives and union representatives to show support:

» Suggest measures and raise work environment issues that can contribute to an inclusive workplace.

» Suggest measures that can contribute to the training and competence of the organisation and its managers, as regards LGBTQI issues.

» Be the person to which LGBTQI employees feel they can turn in the event of work environment problems.

Recommendations for trade unions

» Trade unions should review their competence on work environment-related LGBTQI issues, in order to provide support and drive these issues in the best possible way.

» Trade unions need to have knowledge about discrimination and about efforts to implement active measures to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities, pursuant to the Discrimination Act.

» Safety representatives and union representatives should be offered training on LGBTQI issues and inclusive work environments.

Reflection exercise for safety representatives and union representatives

• As a safety representative or union representative, what can I do to counteract work environment problems for LGBTQI people?

• What can be my first step in fostering a more inclusive workplace?

In the final section, *Exercises and checklists,* there is a checklist for what safety representatives or union representatives can do to contribute to an inclusive workplace.

Communication and language

A work organisation's communication should be as free as possible from assumptions about gender and sexual orientation. For example, in invitations to social events, employees should be invited to bring their partner, not their "wife" or "husband".

Traditionally, social events are designed based on a binary view of gender, for example by planning the seating arrangement at a table so that guests are flanked by members of the "opposite" gender (i.e., based on the idea that they can only be male or female).

In surveys and the like, it is important that there is always an "other" option for questions regarding gender identity, as there may be employees who are, e.g. non-binary or intersex.
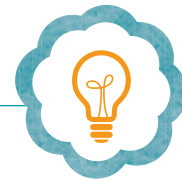
Tip!

Examine the language used in your organisation. This can be a great way to increase your competence and knowledge about inclusivity in the workplace.

Speaking up when someone is being offensive

Sometimes, someone may make stereotypical or condescending comments about LGBTQI issues or people inadvertently. For this reason, it is good to have a climate in the work group where it is allowed to make mistakes in how you express yourselves. The key here is to be prepared to apologise if you say something hurtful, and to be open and listen to other people's views about what can be hurtful, condescending or discriminatory.

Speaking up kindly but firmly if someone else has used offensive language has proven to be an effective way to reduce the incidence of discrimination. In your work group, discuss and practice different ways you can speak up when someone makes stereotypical or condescending comments about LGBTQI issues or LGBTQI people!

Practice tip!

In the final part of the guide, there is a reflection exercise about how a work group can create a culture in which you help each other to speak up when someone says something offensive.

Inclusive language

An important strategy for becoming an inclusive work environment is to use inclusive language in the organisation and between colleagues. One way to be inclusive in your language is to say "partner" instead of "husband" or "wife" and "parental" leave instead of "maternity" or "paternity" leave. It is also important to respect everyone's chosen pronouns and use them correctly. Some people, especially non-binary individuals, want to be referred to using gender-neutral pronouns.

However, using inclusive language does not mean that you must always express yourself in a gender-neutral fashion. If a female colleague has said that she has a wife and colleagues consistently call her wife her partner, this could be perceived as questioning her identity/lifestyle or rendering it invisible.

Individual reflection exercise

- Think about how you express yourself in everyday life – could the way you talk be perceived as non-inclusive, offensive or condescending to LGBTQI people?
- How can you express yourself more inclusively?
- What can you do yourself if you notice offensive statements or prejudices occurring in your workplace?
- What are some good ways you can speak up?

Some advice for inclusive language:

» Listen to other people's experiences of words they find offensive or consider to have a negative tone. Don't just assume that what you feel or think is right.

» Stop using – and insisting on continuing to use – terms that create exclusion, are perceived to have a negative connotation, or which offend people.

» Respect and use people's preferred pronouns.

» Don't claim that you are free from prejudice and see the individual instead of their gender or gender identity. This may be perceived as minimising your colleagues' experiences of victimisation or as an unwillingness to acknowledge the existence of structural discrimination.

» Always assume that all possible gender identities and sexual orientations are represented in the room. This often makes it easier to maintain respectful and inclusive language use.

In the interview study with transgender participants that was conducted as part of the work of the report on the work environment of LGBTQ people, one non-binary interviewee talked about how they would prefer to be treated in a new workplace:

"Be explicit about it, and talk to the group before I arrive. Like this: 'Our new colleague will soon be joining us. They're good at this and that, and we've chosen to recruit them to do this and that. [...] It's important that you know that this person uses they/them pronouns. It's everyone's responsibility to make sure you use them, and you should feel free to correct each other. We're going to start talking about this person already, long before their first day of work, so take the opportunity to practice using their pronouns now.'"

Respecting a person's pronouns is of great importance to the vast majority of people, but is perhaps especially important if the person in question uses pronouns that are rarely respected or often used incorrectly. There are several ways in which you can raise the issue of different pronouns in the workplace, and tips on concrete ways to handle pronouns in the workplace can be found at the end of the guide.

However, keep in mind that openness about pronouns is not always what creates the greatest sense of security. Reflect on the contexts in which it is relevant to know people's pronouns. However, when it comes to individual colleagues who have been open about their preferred pronouns, it is important that other employees step in and correct someone who refers to them incorrectly. In the event of repeated misuse of a colleague's pronouns, it may be wise for their manager to have a conversation with the person who keeps misspeaking. Deliberately using the wrong pronouns can constitute harassment.

Restrooms, changing rooms and work clothes

An important part of creating an inclusive workplace is reviewing spaces and other physical aspects of the workplace. Below is a reflection exercise covering some aspects that may be particularly important to consider.

Reflection exercise: Identify and develop

This exercise can be done both individually and in groups.

- Do you have gendered restrooms at your workplace? If you do, could you designate all or some of them as gender-neutral?
- If there are changing rooms at your workplace, are they divided by gender? Is it possible for individuals to change and shower in privacy, without raising attention or questions?
- Do you use work uniforms? If so, are they gendered? Is it possible to make them more gender-neutral?

Access to LGBTQI networks

Research shows that the existence of LGBTQ networks is an inclusive factor in workplaces. Networks can strengthen the community of LGBTQ people and also be used as a resource to create an inclusive environment. In addition, these networks can support LGBTQ people in their careers. Unfortunately, many workplaces lack such networks.

In an LGBTQI network, employees can:

» support each other

» organise meetings with guests lecturers

» discuss what issues are important to address in order to combat discrimination and create an inclusive workplace, and present these to management.

Reflection exercise: Identify and develop

**This exercise can be done both individually and in groups.**

• Is there a network for LGBTQI people at your workplace? Is there a need for an LGBTQI network?

• Can management or HR help employees develop such a network?

• How can you create a supportive network?

Transition preparedness and support

Research shows that it is important that employers are prepared to capture an employee's needs when they come out as transgender and start living according to their gender identity. The employer may need to establish a plan for the various steps to be taken in the workplace to facilitate and support the employee.

A transition often involves a new name and new pronouns, as well as some contact with health and medical services. Many people (but far from all) undergo various health and medical care treatments. Such gender-affirming care takes different lengths of time, based on the needs of the individual. Depending on the need for treatment (surgery and/or hormones), it can be 7 or 8 years – sometimes more, sometimes less – before the person feels that their transition is complete. Gender-affirming treatment can affect an individual in different ways. For example, hormone therapy can affect their energy, productivity and well-being. Surgical procedures may require rehabilitation. According to the provisions of the Swedish Work Environment Authority (AFS 2023:2), the employer has obligations to make adjustments to the work duties of someone who is transitioning.
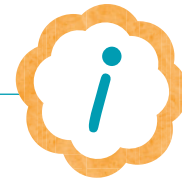
These Swedish websites provide more information about gender-affirming care and other aspects of transitioning:

RFSL: Trans Health Care:
https://www.rfsl.se/en/organisation/vard-for-transpersoner/transvaard/

Transammans: "Könsbekräftande vård" [Gender-affirming care]
www.transammans.se/vad-ar-trans/konsbekraftande-vard/ (in Swedish only)

Transammans: Bemötande [Treatment/Reception]:
www.transammans.se/vad-ar-trans/bemotande/ (in Swedish only)

RFSL Ungdom: "Tranformering": www.transformering.se/
(information for young people; in Swedish with limited info in English)

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT YOU HERE AT WORK?

Transition procedures may include, e.g. entering an employee's new name in administrative systems, providing information about someone's new pronouns and ensuring they are used, granting time off for care appointments, and temporary adjustments to the physical demands of an employee's job following surgical procedures. Larger workplaces should have such a list of measures in place before any employee has even come out as trans, and it should cover both administrative and HR support functions.

As a manager, it is important to know that the risk of harassment and discrimination increases during transition. Keep a close eye on how the employee is faring and being treated by their colleagues, both during and after their transition. It is also a good idea to book several follow-up conversations at which you can discuss the employee's work environment.
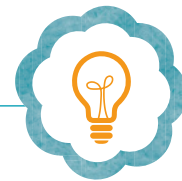
Guidance for navigating an employee's transition

The final part of the guide includes suggestions about how employer representatives can develop a plan on which you base your efforts to support transitioning employees and make matters easier for them.

Refection exercise: Transition preparedness

This exercise can be done both individually and in groups.

Is your workplace/organisation prepared for a colleague's transition? Have you created guidelines for handling such a situation?

If yes: What are the concrete items in these guidelines? Are there areas that could be developed? Responsibilities that need to be concretised or clarified?

If no: What aspects are important to include in such guidelines for your specific workplace? What should be a first step when an employee tells you that they are going through a transition? Who needs to be involved?
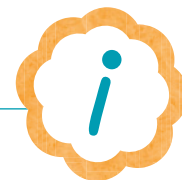
Not all transgender people undergo gender-affirming care.
For some, gender-affirming care is not necessary, while others do not receive subsidised treatment through the public healthcare system. Non-binary people may also need gender-affirming care.

Systematic efforts to develop and inclusive workplace

Clear policies and guidelines play an important role in developing an inclusive workplace. However, it is equally important that the work organisation actively follows up and ensures that policies are followed. Research points to the importance that a work organisation's senior management creates the conditions for compliance with policies. They also need to create conditions for a work culture in which lower-level managers are more likely to take action and provide support to LGBTQ people.

Tips to ensure compliance with policies

» Formulate clear organisational goals and indicators tied to diversity and continuously follow them up.

» Have an action plan for how managers should develop competence in the areas of norm awareness and inclusive leadership.

» Follow up managers' competence on LGBTQI issues, whether they work to combat discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities, and how they practice inclusive leadership.

» Review how you work with core values issues within the work organisation and ensure that the issue of an inclusive workplace is included in that work.

» Review how LGBTQI issues are included in the organisation's work to ensure equal rights and opportunities.

» Review how risks of discrimination against LGBTQI people are investigated. This must be done on an annual basis, and that the work to counteract identified risks must be documented.

Further reading with more proposals for concrete measures and policy compliance indicators

Based on the experience of hundreds of companies in a range of sectors and industries, the UN has developed a guide that addresses how companies can support LGBTQI people in various ways and provides many concrete tips on what companies can do to combat discrimination and become more inclusive.
Tackling Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, & Intersex People

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has also developed a number of indicators to measure the inclusion of LGBTQI people.
A set of proposed indicators for the LGBTI Index

The World Economic Forum has assembled a "toolkit" of technical solutions that a work organisation can use to monitor diversity, equity and inclusion.
www.weforum.org/publications/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-4-0-a-toolkit-for-leaders-to-accelerate-social-progress-in-the-future-of-work/

Policy development

Specific policies related to LGBTQI issues are important markers for ensuring zero tolerance for discrimination within the work organisation. They can also be important for LGBTQI people and help them feel safe to open up about their identities, orientations, or experiences, as well as to dare to report discrimination and harassment. In policies, it is important not to lump together different groups within the LGBTQI spectrum. For example, research shows that bisexual experiences become invisible when they are merged with those of homosexual people in company policies.

Examples of policy content

» Everyone must be treated with respect, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

» Managers must possess competence about inclusion in the workplace.

» Employees must have the competence to treat customers with respect, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Policy checklist

☐ Are different sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions specifically mentioned in the policies?

☐ Do the policies systematically cover recruitment, day-to-day treatment, promotion and staff turnover?

☐ Is there an action plan/activity plan in place for how the objectives of the policies are to be achieved? Are the plans and effects of activities followed up (For example, the activity plan can include a plan for training initiatives.)?

☐ Do senior management and managers demonstrate in various ways that they stand for the policies of the work organisation and actively work to implement them?

Reflection exercise for HR roles, senior management, and key people responsible for ensuring equal rights and opportunities

• Review the work organisation's current policies using the Policy Checklist. How can you further develop their content and work with them?

• Read the tips on how to ensure compliance with policies. Which item or items most urgently require action on your part? What concrete activities can you undertake as a first step in increasing policy compliance?

The importance of systematically mapping the inclusivity of a workplace

To know which work environment problems for LGBTQI people exist within a work organisation, mapping of the work environment needs to take place. Such mapping can be done through, e.g. employee surveys.

The EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) allows an employer to ask employees about their gender identity or sexual orientation, as long as the answers are voluntary and anonymous. Respondents must feel confident that their personal data are collected, stored, and handled in ways that will not disclose their identity.

LEGISLATION
WORK ENVIRONMENT
MANAGEMENT
PREVENT

Reflection exercise for HR roles, senior management, and other key people

- Are discrimination and victimisation in the workplace noticed and addressed? How?
- How can we investigate issues related to LGBTQI people's work environment?
- How can we explore the inclusivity of our workplace?
- How can we capture individuals' experiences in different ways? For example, during performance reviews, can we include questions about whether the employee feels respected at their workplace?

Question tips!

The final section of the guide provides tips about questions to ask employees about discrimination and whether their workplace climate fosters diversity.

Shaping an inclusive workplace for LGBTQI people means working actively and proactively to create a good work environment for everyone there. In the next part of the guide, you will find more exercises and checklists that you can use in your efforts to create such a work environment.

Part 5.
Exercises and checklists
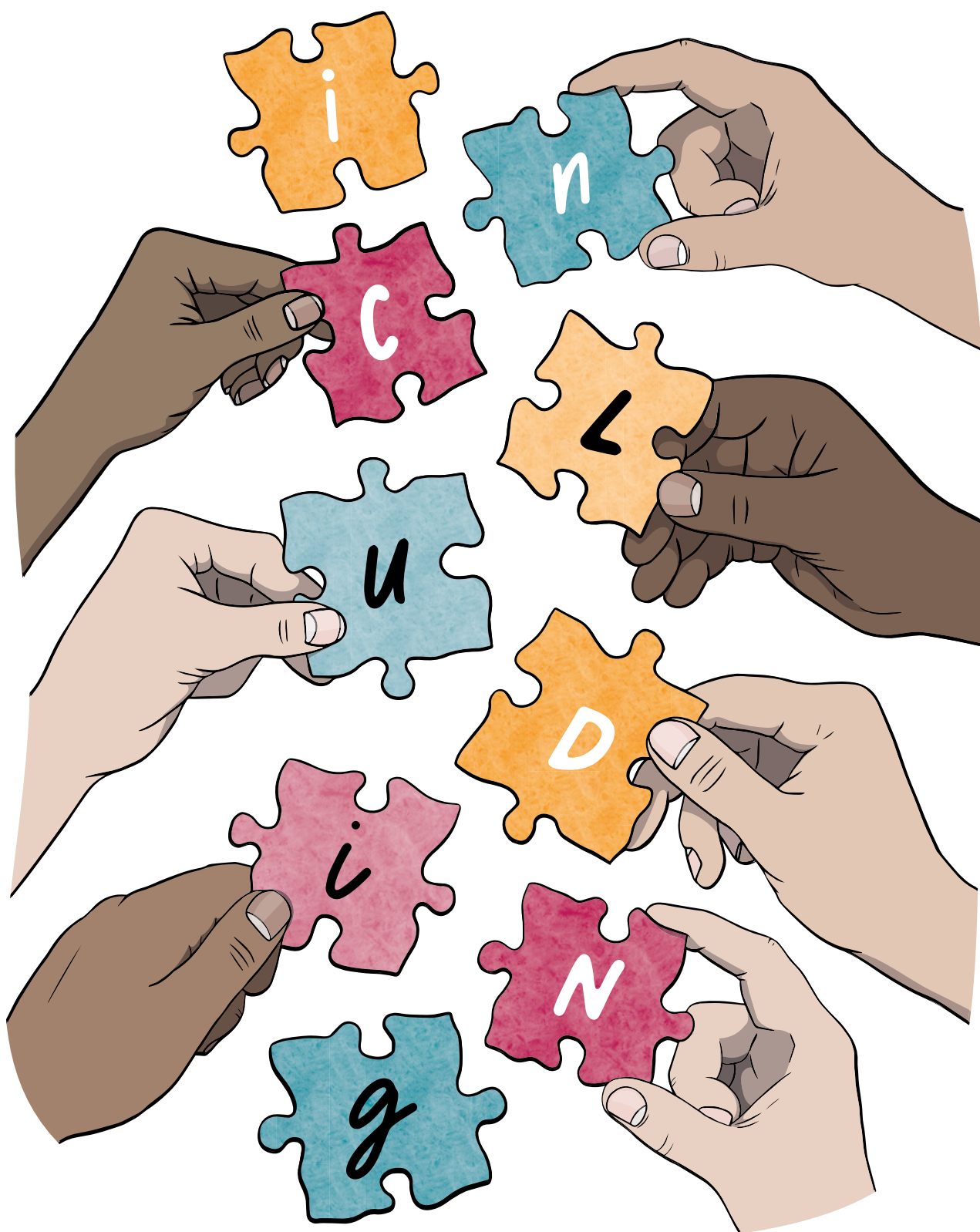
The final section starts with overall and closing reflection exercises. These are following by complementary exercises and examples. The section ends with some checklists that are intended to be used to determine the issues with which it is important that you continue working once you're done with the guide.

Closing reflections – Combatting discrimination and exclusion

Reflection exercise: Combatting discrimination and exclusion

This exercise can be done both individually and in groups.

Reflect on the content of Part 3, which deals with combating discrimination and exclusion of LGBTQI people.

- What work environment problems and risks of discrimination are important to continue addressing at your workplace?
- Based on your position within the work organisation, what is your role in combatting discrimination and exclusion?
- What approaches and measures are most urgently needed in your workplace?

WHICH WORK ENVIRONMENT PROBLEMS OR CHALLENGES CAN BE FOUND AT YOUR WORKPLACE?

PRESENCE OF HOMOPHOBIA

PATRONISING JARGON TOWARDS LGBTQI PERSONS

NO GENDER NEUTRAL CLOTHING ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE

STEREOTYPICAL VIEWS ABOUT LGBTQI PERSONS

MANAGERS WITH A LACK OF COMPETENCE ON LGBTQI

MACHO CULTURE

MANAGERS NOT CARING ABOUT LGBTQI ISSUES

COLLEAGUES THAT HAVE DIFFICULTIES WITH NONBINARY GENDER PRONOUNS

EVERYONE ARE PRESUMED TO BE STRAIGHT

Closing reflections – An inclusive workplace

Reflection exercise: An inclusive workplace

This exercise can be done both individually and in groups.

Reflect on the content of Part 4, which dealt with creating an inclusive workplace:

- Do you perceive your work organisation or workplace as inclusive, exclusionary, or neutral?
- Give examples of a policy, action, characteristic of a particular social climate or leadership approach, or anything else that makes you feel that your organisation or workplace is inclusive, exclusionary, or neutral.
- If you are uncertain about whether your work organisation or workplace is inclusive – why might that be?
- What are the key issues you need to address to make the work organisation or workplace more inclusive?

HOW CAN
WE SUPPORT YOU
HERE AT WORK?
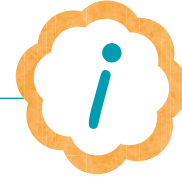
Temperature gauge for an inclusive workplace

- Are sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity specifically mentioned in our work organisation policies?
- Do we systematically work to be inclusive and give everyone equal rights and opportunities in terms of recruitment, day-to-day treatment, promotion and staff turnover?
- Do our managers have knowledge of LGBTQI issues and inclusive leadership?
- Are we developing our competence on LGBTQI issues?
- Does our senior management show that they take LGBTQI issues into account in their efforts to create a good working environment and promote equal rights and opportunities?
- In their day-to-day work, do our managers actively strive to be more inclusive?
- Do we have a work climate in our work groups in which everyone feels respected, regardless of gender identity, trans experience or sexual orientation?

To what extent is your workplace inclusive of LGBTQI people?

Reflect on each item in the temperature gauge above, and rate them according to the scale:
- To a great extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent/Not at all

What can your work organisation do to move one step up the scale?
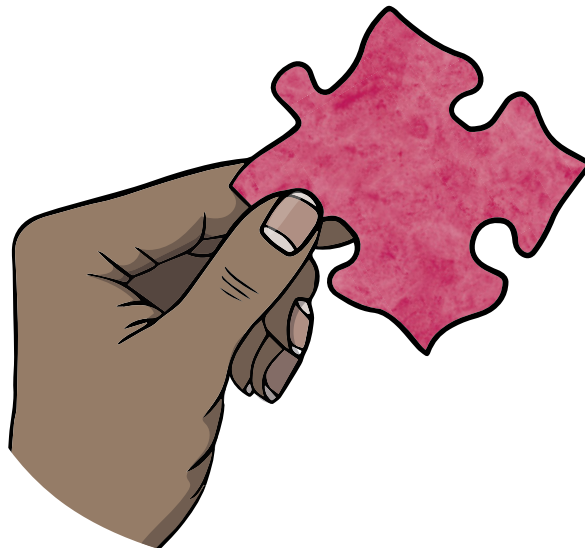
Tip!

The checklists and reflection exercises in this section can also serve as starting points for working with the guide. They can help you to determine how far you have come in your work to combat discrimination and develop an inclusive workplace.

Complementary exercise – Speaking up when someone is being offensive

This exercise is intended for completion by a work group but can also serve as an individual reflection exercise.

Reflection exercise for your work group

Discuss ways you can speak up when someone makes stereotypical, discriminatory, or condescending comments about LGBTQI issues or people. Practice calm and friendly ways to speak up.

Below we have listed some examples of how you can speak up in the event of phobic comments, offensive jokes and insolent or intrusive questions. However, these examples should not be seen as a template – there are no "right" or "wrong" ways to stand up to people who express themselves offensively or make individuals uncomfortable because of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

EXAMPLE: A colleague expresses a homo-, bi- or transphobic opinion.

RESPONSE: Here you need to take a position.

One way to respond to homo-, bi- or transphobic comments is to ask counterquestions, such as:
"What do you mean when you say that?"

"What makes you think that?"

"What are you basing that opinion on?"

However, sometimes such questions can lead to unproductive conversations, especially if they are perceived as confrontational. Another way to take a stand may be to repeat the person's homo-, bi- or transphobic statement, but rephrase it as a question.

It is also good to point out to the person that it is not actually acceptable workplace behaviour to express yourself in a homo-, bi- or transphobic way. If it turns out that someone's comments are based on problematic viewpoints, it is important to question these views. For example, you can do this by asking the offending individual not to express that kind of viewpoint in the workplace, because it is offensive and creates a less welcoming work climate.

Calling their views into question will hopefully cause the person to stop expressing such opinions, but above all, you will be expressing your support for those who feel offended by what they said.

Continuation of complementary exercise – Speaking up when someone is being offensive

EXAMPLE: A colleague makes a joke about gay people and expects everyone to find it funny. Most people in the break room laugh at the joke, but some are more restrained than others.

RESPONSE: You can also take a stand by deciding not to laugh. Make a point of not laughing at the joke. Keep in mind that someone else in the room – other than or in addition to you – may be LGBTQI and will appreciate you taking a stand.

Comment on the joke, for example by saying that it wasn't funny at all, and that's never amusing to make jokes at someone else's expense. You can also ask the person to explain the joke. What about it is supposed to be funny? This usually makes it clear that the "humorous" point is based on a stereotype.

But: Some jokes are based on a someone's personal understanding or experience. It is not uncommon for people belonging to a minority group to joke about themselves, and this often "lands" differently than when some outsider jokes disparagingly about an entire group.

Humour is a tightrope: If a joke evokes discomfort or other negative emotions, that's a problem, no matter who makes the joke.

EXAMPLE: Someone asks a new colleague who identifies as LGBTQI questions about their private life during a break. Since the colleague is new to the group, they politely answer the questions, but you sense that they are uncomfortable talking about these topics.

RESPONSE: Here you can be the one who takes a stand for your new colleague, by asking the group to stop asking such private questions. For example, ask how they would feel if someone asked them similar questions.

NB! Grossly discriminatory statements should be reported to a manager or to HR, and managers should clearly and firmly express that they will not be tolerated.

Guidance for navigating an employee's transition

Here we describe how you can develop a plan to support transitioning employees and make matters easier for them. In summary, the work takes place in three parts:

1 Have an individual conversation with the employee, centred on their own needs. The employee, their manager, and possibly an HR representative should participate in that meeting.

2 Develop a plan based on what has emerged in the individual conversation. The plan should outline which steps are to be implemented and who is responsible for them.

3 Implementation of the plan.

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT YOU HERE AT WORK?

Below is more in-depth information on how you can complete the three steps mentioned above.

1 Individual conversation

Between the transitioning employee, their manager, and possibly an HR representative. In this conversation, the focus should be on the transitioning person's own needs.

Examples of topics to address during the conversation:

- How does the employee want the workplace-based aspects of their transition to take place? What are the needs of the employee right now, and how might their work situation change?
- How open does the employee want to be about the fact that they are transitioning? Should their team be informed? If so, how will they be informed?
- Have the employee's pronouns and/or name changed? How do they want information about this to reach the other people in the workplace?
- Will the employee's legal gender change? Does their employment contract need to be updated?
- Is there anything to consider in contact with customers/pupils/patients, for example?
- Does the transition involve any kind of physical or mental aspects that need to be considered?
- Do the employee's work tasks need to be adapted? (AFS 2023:2).
- Does the transition involve gender-affirming care that requires the employee to be absent from work? Does the employee need support in planning the work leading up to this leave of absence?
- As a manager or member of HR, how can I provide the best possible support during the employee's transition?

Examples of questions to ask to provide support:

– As a member of HR, I'd like to have an individual meeting with your manager to talk about the action plan we come up with. Would you like to attend that meeting?

– As your immediate manager, I'd be happy to have a meeting with HR to talk about the action plan we come up with. Would you like to attend that meeting?

Also inform the employee about where to turn if they experience harassment or discrimination at the workplace. Be clear that as a manager, you are aware that a transition can be stressful and associated with many different emotions (both positive and negative), and that you will support the person during and after their transition.

② Develop a plan

The conversation should result in a plan that makes it clear who is responsible for the various steps, e.g. who will inform the employee's colleagues about their new pronouns or who will implement name changes in the work organisation's IT systems.

Good items to include in a plan:

- Change the person's name in the workplace's IT systems. If the person has a new personal identity number or account number, update the information in the payroll system.
- Update the employment contract, if necessary. Also specify who is responsible for name changes and new employment contracts.
- Change the person's name on the organisation's websites. Start a dialogue about how to deal with any old photos on websites or in similar publications. Decide who is responsible for making the changes.
- Inform the team/others at the workplace about the person's new pronouns. Specify who is responsible for making this information available to others in the workplace.
- **If necessary:** Inform the team/others at the workplace that the person will use the restrooms and changing rooms intended for people with their gender identity. Check whether signs on restrooms need to be changed to unisex.
- **If necessary:** Arrange for a new work uniform, if the person in question wants one. This item also applies to non-binary employees.
- Formulate guidelines for how the manager and HR can support the employee during their transition.
- **Procedures for addressing harassment and discrimination:** Clarify where the person should turn if they are subjected to harassment or discrimination in the workplace.

③ Implementation of the plan

After some time, the manager and/or HR should have an evaluative conversation with the employee, to ensure that their needs have been met and that their work environment has not deteriorated.

Complementary examples – Pronouns

Here's how you can raise the issue of various pronouns at your workplace:

- **Pronouns round.** During a pronouns round, everyone in the work group gets the opportunity to introduce themselves using their preferred names and pronouns. It's useful to mention something more about yourself during your introduction, such as a personal interest. Anyone who is not comfortable sharing their pronouns can skip their turn. The person presiding over the round should start by introducing themselves. For example, they might say: "Hello, my name is Kim, my pronouns are she/her, and I like to ski in winter." Also explain what pronouns are, and that you are doing a pronouns round because it is not always possible to tell just by looking at people which pronouns they use.

- **Email signatures.** Add pronouns to your email signatures. This should be voluntary, because employees (mainly transgender ones) may otherwise feel singled out or pressured to be open with people with whom they don't feel comfortable sharing this information.

- **Name badges.** If you wear name badges at your workplace, you can print your pronouns on them, too. This should also be voluntary.

Complementary examples – Survey questions

Examples of questions about discrimination and the work climate that you can ask, e.g. in surveys.

COLLEAGUES HAVING PROBLEMS WITH NONBINARY GENDER PRONOUNS

Questions about discrimination:

- Have you experienced discrimination related to your gender identity or expression?
- Have you experienced discrimination related to your sexual orientation?
- Do you feel that you can be open about your sexual orientation at your workplace?
- Do you feel there are people at your workplace who are subjected to discrimination?

Questions you can ask if your work climate is generally pro-diversity:

- To what extent do you feel respected and accepted at your workplace?
- Are there guidelines and activities that promote diversity at your workplace?
- To what extent does your immediate manager think it is important to have employees with different backgrounds?

The questions about a generally pro-diversity work climate are taken from the following article, which also contains more examples of questions you can ask: Choi, S. & Rainey, H. (2010) Managing diversity in US federal agencies: Effects of diversity and diversity management on employee perceptions of organisational performance. Public Administration Review, 70(1), pp. 109–121.

Checklists

Go through the checklists that suit you best, based on your role within your work organisation. What are the most urgent matters to address?

Checklist for individuals – regardless of their role

☐ I talk about LGBTQI issues in a respectful way.

☐ I act in an inclusive manner.

☐ I make sure not to assume that someone has a certain sexual orientation or gender identity.

☐ I use inclusive language.

☐ I speak up against the use of negative and condescending jargon about LGBTQI people.

☐ I request training or opportunities to reflect on how the organisation can work to become more inclusive.

Checklist for managers or supervisors with direct personnel responsibility

☐ I am aware of work environment problems and work environment challenges that may exist for LGBTQI people in the organisation.

☐ I implement measures to prevent harassment, victimisation and discrimination.

☐ I am aware of and counteract any of my own prejudices and stereotypical perceptions, for example about who is suitable to perform specific work tasks.

☐ I actively work to ensure equal rights and opportunities for the career development of all employees.

☐ I react and always stand up to discrimination and offensive or victimisation.

☐ I take early action in response to signs of an exclusionary social climate, such as treatment based on heteronormative assumptions.

☐ I work proactively to develop an inclusive social climate at my workplace, for example through the language we use.

☐ I educate and inform myself about LGBTQI issues, including potential work environment problems for LGBTQI people.

☐ I dare to talk about LGBTQI issues at the workplace.

☐ I act as a role model by showing in various ways that I stand up for LGBTQI issues.

Checklist for key roles and management functions

This is a checklist for the work organisation's overall efforts to develop a good work environment for LGBTQI people. It is suitable for management functions, HR, and other key functions that work with issues related to work environment and equal treatment.

- ☐ We are aware of work environment problems and work environment challenges that may exist for LGBTQI people in the organisation.
- ☐ We ensure that the organisation's managers are competent and prepared to address LGBTQI issues, so that it is not up to LGBTQI people to advocate for themselves.
- ☐ We work actively to develop an inclusive workplace, for example through training initiatives.
- ☐ We cover the importance of norm-conscious leadership in leadership training and leadership development programmes.
- ☐ We include aspects of subtle and unconscious actions (based, e.g. on heteronormative assumptions) in our development of an inclusive workplace.
- ☐ We engage in extensive efforts to create a climate in which all employees can choose to be private or open about their sexual orientation and gender identity.
- ☐ We include intersectional perspectives in our work to promote equal rights and opportunities, for example by highlighting various identity factors (such as professional role/position, gender, ethnicity and age) that can affect an individual's work environment.
- ☐ We engage in ongoing efforts to implement active measures to prevent harassment, victimisation and discrimination.
- ☐ We clearly communicate to employees who in the work organisation they can contact to talk about discrimination and harassment.
- ☐ We have strategies for dealing with violations of dignity and discrimination from clients, customers, users, pupils, patients or other people that LGBTQI people encounter in their work.
- ☐ We include issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and trans experience in our work with equal rights and opportunities.
- ☐ In our efforts to ensure equal rights and opportunities, we address bisexuality separately. We do not lump it together with homosexuality or other LGBTQI issues.
- ☐ We cover the specific challenges that transgender people face in their work situation in our work with equal rights and opportunities.
- ☐ We include the work environment situation of non-binary individuals in our work with equal rights and opportunities.
- ☐ We have administrative procedures and HR measures in place to support transgender people during transition, such as name change procedures.
- ☐ We are sensitive to the types of support transgender people need during transition and adapt our support according to where the transitioning person is in their unique process.
- ☐ We have gender-neutral changing rooms and restrooms. It is possible to change (and shower, if relevant) individually.
- ☐ If we have specific dress codes or work uniforms at our workplace, employees can choose their uniforms freely, regardless of gender.

Checklist for members of senior management

☐ We are aware that ensuring an inclusive workplace for LGBTQI people is a work environment issue.

☐ We investigate and follow up the work environment for LGBTQI people.

☐ In accordance with the Discrimination Act, we implement active measures to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities for LGBTQI people.

☐ Our work organisation values and considers the insights and experiences of LGBTQI people.

☐ We have policies for inclusive workplaces in which different identities and experiences across the LGBTQI spectrum are specifically addressed.

☐ We have specific policies and guidelines for language use within the organisation.

☐ We work actively to ensure compliance with policies and guidelines.

☐ We provide employees with the opportunity for both formal and informal learning, for example through managerial training or discussion forums that address how the work organisation can work with LGBTQI issues.

☐ We create conditions for support in the form of, e.g. opportunities to network with other LGBTQI people during working hours.

☐ We have guidelines and follow-up to counter stereotypical perceptions and prejudices, both in recruitment and in connection with employee career development.

☐ I act as a personal role model by taking a stand against discrimination and victimisation.

☐ I show in various ways that I stand up for LGBTQI issues – both through symbolic acts (such as participating in Pride Month) and by implementing active measures to promote equal rights and opportunities.

Checklist for union representatives and safety representatives

Do you include and demand the following approaches and perspectives in your work environment or union work:

☐ I work to ensure that creating an inclusive workplace for LGBTQI people is seen as a work environment issue.

☐ I work to ensure that work environment issues related to LGBTQI people are included in our work environment management (for example, in employee surveys or safety inspections).

☐ I demand competence on LGBTQI issues from managers and HR.

☐ I demand training and workshops on LGBTQI issues.

☐ I am the person to whom colleagues in matters relating to a negative work climate or condescending treatment of LGBTQI people.

☐ I raise issues related to, e.g. bullying or a negative work climate for LGBTQI people with managers and with my trade union.

☐ I offer suggestions on how we can use more inclusive language within the work organisation or at the workplace.

About the development of this guide

This guide was compiled on behalf of the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise. The work of securing support for, discussing and writing the guide began in spring 2023 and ended in June 2024.

During this period, the project team was supported by various experts, advisers, and organisations. The knowledge and experience gained through these interactions has greatly benefited the work of creating this guide. The project team wishes to express our gratitude for the valuable insights and input we received during the development of the guide.

Authors and participants in the project team

Andrea Eriksson (author), Professor at the School of Engineering Sciences in Chemistry, Biotechnology and Health's Department of Ergonomics, KTH Royal Institute of Technology.

Sara Andersson (author), PhD, Senior Lecturer, University West.

Carin Hellström (particpating in leading the pilot tests) PhD student at the School of Engineering Sciences in Chemistry, Biotechnology and Health's Department of Ergonomics, KTH Royal Institute of Technology.

Camilla Wengelin, (process manager and communicator), the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise.

Sanny Shamoun, (process manager until 1 November 2023), the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise.

Cecilia Birgerson Nordling (illustrator)

Work process

1. On 30 June 2022, the original Swedish version of the report "The Organisational and Social Work Environment of LGBTQ People – A Systematic Literature Review" was submitted to the Swedish Government. This guide is based on and summarises the most important aspects of that report.
2. To get support in developing useful material, a reference group was set up. Initially, this group contributed experience and knowledge of the guide's target groups.
3. The authors drafted the layout and content of the guide. The reference group then commented on this material.
4. Following the comments of the reference group, the material was revised.
5. Parts of the guide refer to the perspectives of the Swedish Work Environment Authority and the Discrimination Ombudsman, and the guide was reviewed by these authorities. Revision of the guide following review.
6. The guide was reviewed from an LGBTQI perspective, with a focus on terminology and concepts. Revision of the guide following review.
7. The guide was reviewed and revised from the perspectives of safety representatives/union representatives.
8. The guide was pilot-tested by members of its target groups.
9. The guide was revised based on the results of the pilot tests.
10. A language review was conducted.
11. Throughout the work, the authors collaborated with an illustrator to produce illustrations adapted to the content of the guide.
12. Design of the guide.

Dialogue with the Swedish Work Environment Authority
Ulrich Stoetzer, an expert on organisational and social work environment issues at the Swedish Work Environment Authority, reviewed the guide from the perspective of that authority.

Dialogue with the Discrimination Ombudsman (DO)
Magdalena Sievers, an investigator for the Discrimination Ombudsman, reviewed the guide from the perspective of the DO.

Dialogue with the organisation Transammans
Edward Summanen, a project manager at Transammans, reviewed the guide from an LGBTQI perspective, with a focus on terminology and concepts.

Dialogue from a trade union perspective
Daniel Hjalmarsson of Union for Professionals (SSR) reviewed the guide from the perspective of safety representatives and trade union representatives.

Dialogue with the Reference Group
The Reference Group has contributed experiences and perspectives based on the participants' roles and organisation. Proposals regarding the layout and content of the guide, as well as the project's orientation, have been discussed between the reference group and the project group. Prior to its completion, the Reference Group was given the opportunity to read the guide and provide feedback on its content.

Andreas Parkås, IF Metall; Anna Nellberg, the Swedish Police Union; Bengt Eriksson, IF Metall; Carlos Diaz, RFSL; Cecilia Andersson, the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise; Daniel Hjalmarsson, the Union for Professionals (SSR); Edward Summanen, Transammans; Elin Engström, Nordic Information on Gender (NIKK); Fredrik Ostrozanszky, Unionen; Johan Torstensson Aas, Byggnads; Johanna Flanke, Secretary-General of the Swedish Association of Human Resources Management; Karin Fristedt, the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO) Marcus Törnkrantz, Akademiska Hus; Marie Boström, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation; Olof Ambjörn, Vision; Susanna Young Håkansson, Nordic Information on Gender (NIKK); Theres Andersson, Implenia (construction and real estate services); Ulrika Dolietis, Hålla Nollan (member organisation for safety at construction sites); Åke Lundström, Kommunal, the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union.

Dialogue with groups that conducted testing of the material
With the help of Carin Hellström, authors Andrea Eriksson and Sara Andersson conducted pilot tests of the research-based guide with some of the target groups. The tests involved participants from different parts of the country, from the public and private sectors, and with varying levels of knowledge about the work environment of LGBTQI people.

The groups consisted of employees, managers, safety representatives, union representatives and HR representatives, who were divided into five groups. Each pilot test was conducted over a half day for each group.

The tests took place in January and February 2024, and a total of 61 people participated.

Swedish Agency for Work
Environment Expertise