



## Working with LGBTQI+ Disabled People: top tips for personal assistants and support workers

### Key messages

- LGBTQI+ Disabled People have the right to be treated with respect, and without discrimination.
- LGBTQI+ Disabled People who use self-directed social care enjoy having choice and control over their support.
- Supporting any disabled person means working with the whole person.
- Many LGBTQI+ Disabled People would like to be out about their sexual orientation or gender identity to the person supporting them.
- Not everyone will want to talk about their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- It is important to work with each person as an individual and find out how they want to work with you.
- It is essential to treat the person with respect and build a relationship based on trust.

### Introduction

This briefing provides information for personal assistants (PAs), support workers, social workers and other social care staff working with LGBTQI+ Disabled People.

It is based on research in England carried out by a partnership of the University of Bristol, Regard (the national LGBTQI+ Disabled People's organisation), the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and Stonewall. The research was funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) School for Social Care Research.

‘If you listen to their needs and respect their needs, then it’s a great job to have. It’s a very rewarding job.’

Personal assistant

The quotations used in this document are from people who took part in the research. This briefing is accompanied by a briefing for LGBTQI+ Disabled People and two films, one for PAs and support workers and one for LGBTQI+ Disabled People.

## LGBTQI+ means:

People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex or who hold identities such as non-binary. LGBTQI+ Disabled People may have physical or sensory impairments, learning difficulties, long-term health conditions and/or mental health difficulties, and come from all age groups, religions and cultural backgrounds. Our identities reflect the challenges and discrimination that we face because of our gender, religion, age and cultural backgrounds, in addition to gender and sexual orientation. Disabled People are as likely to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex or non-binary as non-disabled people.



## What is Self-Directed Support?

- Self-Directed Support is a way of having more choice and control over support. It means that LGBTQI+ Disabled People can use a Direct Payment, a Personal Budget or their own money to employ their own support workers or PAs.
- A Personal Budget is an amount of money allocated to a disabled person by the local authority following an assessment of care and support needs. This money may be paid directly into a bank account in the form of a Direct Payment.
- Under Self-Directed Support, Disabled People can recruit their own PAs and choose people they feel comfortable with.
- LGBTQI+ Disabled People can benefit from having more choice and control over the people who support them.

‘Employing PAs anyway is a brilliant thing. The fact that we can do that now, ... it’s so important, such a good thing.’

LGBTQI+ disabled person

## The rights of LGBTQI+ Disabled People

- Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics'.
- The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender including gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.
- Disabled People also have their rights protected by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006). This includes, for example, the right to be free from discrimination and to have their family life respected.



## Working with LGBTQI+ Disabled People

- Like anyone else, LGBTQI+ Disabled People have the right to feel safe and comfortable in their own home and to live the life they want to live.
- LGBTQI+ Disabled People have the right to be treated with respect and without prejudice or discrimination.
- LGBTQI+ Disabled People can experience social isolation if they don't get enough support and/or live in an area where there are no accessible LGBTQI+ venues or activities.
- For many LGBTQI+ Disabled People, it can be important to be out about their sexual orientation or gender identity to their PAs and support workers, so that they can get the support they need.

‘When she (my employer) knew it was OK for me to know, she just told me. It’s been great since then because she feels completely comfortable with me.’

Personal assistant



- However, one size does not fit all: not everyone will want to talk about their sexual orientation or gender identity. There may be times though when a disabled person is outed by accident or needs to tell you urgently for practical reasons.
- Most LGBTQI+ Disabled People will want support to attend LGBTQI+ venues and activities as a way of helping them to connect with their friends and community. It is fine to ask questions about doing this – talk to the person you are supporting and make sure you understand what is expected of you.
- Building trust and mutual respect may take time – particularly if someone has experienced discrimination from a PA or support worker in the past – but is essential to a successful working relationship.
- PAs and support workers must always respect their client's confidentiality.
- A good relationship with a PA or support worker can transform the lives of LGBTQI+ Disabled People.

‘If you are supporting someone, their sexuality will matter a lot... It's not just feed someone or help them get into bed. Emotionally we're there to support them.’

Personal assistant



‘Being able to access things and meet up with people, it’s opened up more than one aspect of my world and that has been fantastic. That freedom means more to me than I can possibly say, to be honest.’

LGBTQI+ disabled person



## Resources/further reading

### SCIE At a glance 70

- LGBTQI+ Disabled People using Self-Directed Support

[www.scie.org.uk/lgbtqi/disabled-people/self-directed/](http://www.scie.org.uk/lgbtqi/disabled-people/self-directed/)

### Films to accompany this briefing

- Understanding Self-Directed Support: a film for LGBTQI+ Disabled People

[www.scie.org.uk/lgbtqi/disabled-people/self-directed/video](http://www.scie.org.uk/lgbtqi/disabled-people/self-directed/video)

- Understanding Self-Directed Support for LGBTQI+ Disabled People: a film for personal assistants and support workers

[www.scie.org.uk/lgbtqi/disabled-people/personal-assistants/video](http://www.scie.org.uk/lgbtqi/disabled-people/personal-assistants/video)

### Information and research

- LGBTQI+ Disabled People, self-directed social care support, PAs and support workers

[www.sscr.nihr.ac.uk/PDF/Findings/RF77.pdf](http://www.sscr.nihr.ac.uk/PDF/Findings/RF77.pdf)

### Other

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: What does it mean for you? (United Nations, 2006)

[www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html)

## Organisations

### Stonewall

Britain's leading LGBT charity which campaigns for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans equality in Britain and abroad.

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

Email: [info@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:info@stonewall.org.uk)

Information Line 08000 50 20 20

open Monday to Friday, 9.30 – 5.30pm

### Regard

National LGBTQI+ Disabled People's organisation; associate membership for allies and organisations is also available.

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

BM Regard, London WC1N 3XX

Email: [secretary@regard.org.uk](mailto:secretary@regard.org.uk)

### Equality and Human Rights Commission

Independent statutory body with responsibility to encourage equality and diversity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and protect and promote the human rights of everyone in Britain.

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

### Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS)

Offers expert information, advice and support on discrimination and human rights issues and the law.

FREEPOST EASS HELPLINE

FPN6521

Tel: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084

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

‘I don't think you necessarily get it right all the time, but I think that doesn't matter; it's about learning from that as well.’

LGBTQI+ disabled person



This briefing was based on research in England carried out by a partnership of the University of Bristol, Regard (the national LGBTQI+ Disabled People's organisation), the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and Stonewall.



This briefing presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research School for Social Care Research (NIHR SSCR).

The views expressed are not necessarily those of NIHR SSCR, the Department of Health, or the NHS.

**School for  
Social Care Research**



**The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)** improves the lives of people who use care services by sharing knowledge about what works.

We are a leading improvement support agency and an independent charity working with adults', families' and children's care and support services across the UK. We also work closely with related services such as health care and housing.

**Social Care Institute for Excellence**

[info@scie.org.uk](mailto:info@scie.org.uk)  
[www.scie.org.uk](http://www.scie.org.uk)

Registered charity no. 1092778  
Company registration no. 4289790