



LGBTQI+ Disabled People using Self-Directed Support

Key messages

- LGBTQI+ Disabled People have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to live our lives free from discrimination.
- We have the right to a personal and social life of our choice.
- Self-Directed Support can be a way for us to have more choice and control over the social care support we receive.
- It is our choice whether or not to be out about our gender identity and/or sexual orientation to our personal assistants (PAs) or support workers.
- Having more control over our support can help us connect with our friends and community.

Introduction

This briefing provides information for LGBTQI+ Disabled People who are or wish to be in charge of their social care support and who employ personal assistants (PAs) or support workers.

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.

‘Self-Directed Support can be a way for us to have more choice and control over the social care support we receive.’

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

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 our 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 our support. It means that we can use a Direct Payment, a Personal Budget or our own money to employ our 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 our own PAs and choose people we feel comfortable with.
- LGBTQI+ Disabled People can benefit from having more choice and control over the people who support us.



‘...I liked the idea of being able to control who came into my life...’

Our rights

- 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 our 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 our family life respected.
- We have the right to have our gender identity and sexual orientation respected by anyone who provides us with support.

‘ I have the right to be who I am in my own home, so I need people working for me who can see me for who I am.’

Being out to our PAs

- We have the right to be out to our PAs, support workers and social workers without fear of prejudice or discrimination.
- Our research found that not all LGBTQI+ Disabled People are out about their gender identity or sexual orientation to their support workers or PAs. For some people, this is due to a fear of prejudice and discrimination. Some people choose not to be out because they want their personal lives to remain private.
- LGBTQI+ Disabled People who were out to their support workers or PAs said that they felt more relaxed in their own homes and felt more able to ask for support to attend LGBTQI+ venues and activities.
- Some LGBTQI+ Disabled People prefer to have LGBTQI+ PAs or support workers.
- It is important to remember that it is our choice whether or not to be out to our PAs or support workers.
- There may be times when we are outed by accident or need to tell our PA urgently for practical reasons.

‘ PAs all know I’m gay and if they don’t like it, tough. It took a long time for me to come out of the closet and I think it’s very important that people’s sexual orientation should be accepted.’



Having a social life

- LGBTQI+ Disabled People can experience social isolation if we don't get enough support and/or live in an area where there are no accessible LGBTQI+ venues or activities.
- If we are out to our support workers or PAs (and have sufficient funding), then we can employ them to support us to attend LGBTQI+ venues and activities of our choice.

‘My PA was delighted to come on Pride with me... I'm very open with [my PAs] about my work, my lifestyle, about my orientation and about my gender. I need people to work with me that respect my independence and who are happy to see me participating in my community doing things that enrich me.’

- If we have funding for social activities, our PA must provide support for anything we choose to do unless it involves illegal activity.
- Some LGBTQI+ Disabled People get assistance from their PAs with organising dates, meeting and being with partners.



- If we want our (straight) PA or support worker to support us to attend LGBTQI+ activities and they do not feel confident about it, it's a good idea to talk to them beforehand about what to expect from the event or venue.
- Not everyone has the funding to pay for support with social activities, and not everyone wants their PA to support them with social activities.

‘One of my PAs helps me to set up my computer so that I can meet people online. It took a bit of time before we got to that stage but now we have a system, it's fairly straightforward and comfortable.’

‘Communication is very important. It's important to have a conversation before you leave for any date or any social event.’

Recruiting personal assistants (PAs)

Some ideas about recruiting PAs who will respect our sexual orientation and gender identity:

- Mention your sexual orientation or gender identity in your advert or in recruitment materials.
- Try advertising on LGBTQI+ websites and Facebook pages and other social media.
- Try advertising on local organisations' notice boards and publications.
- Approach local colleges or universities: they can be a good source of people training to work in health or social care.

‘Well, what I tend to do when I'm placing adverts is say, you know, ‘Disabled lesbian, dogs, cats’.’

Skills for Care has produced a toolkit to help us employ our own PAs. www.employingpersonalassistants.co.uk

Some tips for employing personal assistants and support workers:

- Always involve someone else in the recruitment process.
- Never meet applicants alone in your home.
- Ask a test question in interviews, for example: 'I like to go to Pride each year – are you confident you can support me at this type of event?'
- Having a work trial as a second stage of the recruitment process can be a good way of finding out if you can actually work with someone.
- Always take up references even if the applicants have been personally recommended.
- It is always a good idea to ask for a DBS check. This will tell you whether someone has been convicted of a criminal offence in the past.
- Ensure any contracts that you issue or sign have been checked.
- Include a four-week probationary period with a review, and extend it if you are not entirely happy.



Resources/further reading

SCIE At a glance 71

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

www.scie.org.uk/lgbtqi/disabled-people/personal-assistants/

Films to accompany this briefing

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

www.scie.org.uk/lgbtqi/disabled-people/self-directed/video

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

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

Organisations

Stonewall

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

www.stonewall.org.uk

Email: 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

BM Regard, London WC1N 3XX

Email: 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

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

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including checking people's criminal records.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service

Email: customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk

DBS helpline: 03000 200 190

Minicom: 03000 200 192



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info@scie.org.uk
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