

Intersectionality

Promoting an intersectional approach to LGBTQIA+ inclusivity

This resource was developed by members of the LGBTQIA+ Collective Advocacy at CAPS Independent Advocacy. This group is made up of people who identify as LGBTQIA+ with lived experience of mental health issues, living in Edinburgh. Collective advocacy creates a safe space for people to get together, support each other to explore shared issues and to find common ground.

This resource was created to accompany the LGBT Mental Health Audit tool, which the group refreshed in 2021 to reflect current issues related to LGBT inclusion. The recommendations of this resource come from a lived experience perspective on how to be intersectional in your approach to LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in your organisation.

For more information about LGBTQIA+ Collective Advocacy, visit <https://capsadvocacy.org/collective-advocacy/lgbtqi/> or contact Mohasin Ahmed, mohasin@capsadvocacy.org



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What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality describes how different parts of our social identity interact and cause us to be more disadvantaged or privileged in the wider world.

The term was created in 1989 by American civil rights advocate and professor **Kimberlé Crenshaw** to explain how racism and sexism intersected for Black women in America. She argued that due to racial discrimination the experience of misogyny for Black women was different to that of White women, and so issues relating to discrimination had to be looked at through an intersectional lens – not through the lens of just race or gender.

For those who identify as LGBTQIA+, an example of how intersectionality would come into play can be thought of when comparing the experiences of two gay White men – one of whom is transgender, and the other cisgender. Although both men are gay and White, their experiences of discrimination are likely to be different due to other parts of their identity causing multiple levels of discrimination.



The Progress Pride flag

Discrimination and exclusion of certain groups also occurs within marginalised communities.

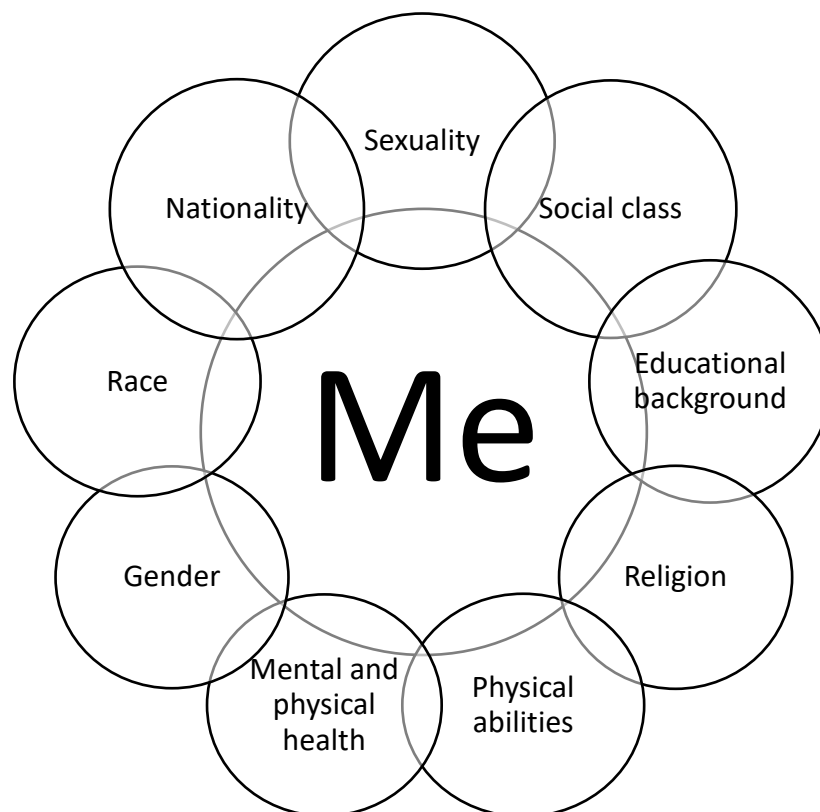
The Progress Pride flag was adapted from the original Pride flag to highlight groups which are often excluded and face discrimination within the LGBTQIA+ community.

The black and brown stripes represent LGBTQIA+ people of colour, the pink, blue and white stripes represent transgender people, and the yellow triangle and purple circle represent intersex

“Everyone is made up of different layers that make up a whole picture of who they are”

The Venn diagram below illustrates different aspects of our social identity which may cause us to face discrimination, or to have additional needs (*Please note this is not an exhaustive list*).

Our sexuality and gender only make up a portion of who we are and what our experiences may be.



Exercise

Write a list or draw a Venn diagram including the different social categories that you identify with.

Think about how parts of your identity might interact with each other and what parts of your identity might affect the way that others interact with you, or the way that you interact with others.

Think about any extra needs you may have, or difficulties you may experience due to an aspect of your identity.

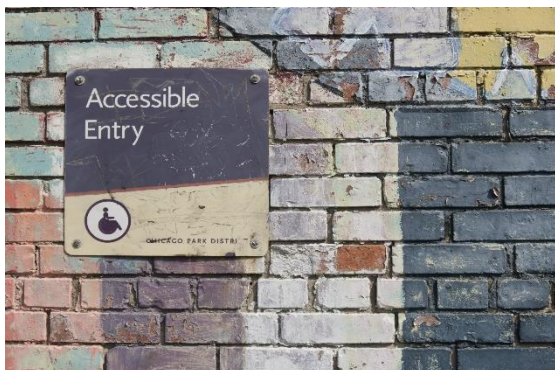
How to be intersectional in your service



A family with two fathers in a kitchen with their child.



An older man wearing red sunglasses, a red shirt and red hat.



A brick wall with a sign with the image of a wheelchair and text reading "Accessible Entry".



Two Black women smiling with their arms around each other's shoulders.

Remember that everyone has their own individual needs – **do not use a 'one-size fits all' approach to inclusivity**. LGBTQIA+ people can be parents, we can be elderly, we can have disabilities, we can be refugees, we can be neurodivergent, we can be African, Asian, Eastern European or from anywhere else.

As we are all different, and have had different experiences, it is important that we do not rely on one person from a community to be a spokesperson for all voices in that group. To be truly inclusive we must listen to individuals and **take a person-centred approach to support**.

When bringing a wider community together – i.e., the LGBTQIA+ community - **be aware of any conflicts and power dynamics** that may exist between groups and have safeguards in place to ensure equality. Often it is expected that everyone within a certain community will be accepting of each other and get along however, discrimination exists even within the LGBTQIA+ community.

The most heard voices within the LGBTQIA+ community would be that of White gay cisgender men as they have been the more prominent figures in mainstream media and LGBT inclusivity. Just as within other communities, transphobia, racism, biphobia, sexism and acephobia etc. can be perpetuated by other LGBTQIA+ people.

Real-world examples of discrimination within the community:

- Anti-transgender marches at Pride.
- The dismissal of bisexual people and their experiences because they can be in a heterosexual relationship.
- Misogyny against lesbian and bisexual women.
- Racism against gay Black and Asian men on gay dating apps.
- Exclusion of asexual people in LGBTQIA+ representation and support.

To be inclusive there must be consideration of these issues, and support for more marginalised communities.

For example, ensuring that staff are educated on a wide range of LGBTQIA+ identities and providing support for those who are usually under-represented. Services should also emphasise that support is open to everyone in the community by catering for different needs and displaying physical signs of acceptance of multiple identities (i.e., displaying the Progress Pride flag, images of gender non-conforming people and LGBTQIA+ people with different ethnicities other than White).

Increase accessibility

Remember that people who identify as LGBTQIA+ can also have additional needs relating to language support, wheelchair access, cultural sensitivity etc. Therefore, when creating services specifically for the LGBTQIA+ community, **you should also consider the additional needs** that individuals wishing to access this service may have.



A drawing of two people holding hands, one of whom is in a wheelchair, in front of a set of steps leading to an LGBT Parents support group.

Examples of ways to improve accessibility:

- Be honest and communicate any existing access barriers that may be present so that people interested in accessing your services can make an informed decision about what is best for them.
- Cater for people from multiple backgrounds, with multiple needs. Be consistent with inclusion of all protected characteristics.
- Improve accessibility by fostering joint working with other specialist organisations and services.
- Employ a diverse workforce and employ staff members who belong to multiple underrepresented communities, e.g., therapists who are from an ethnic minority background and who identify as LGBTQIA+.
- Understand that the terminology used by individuals for LGBTQIA+ identities may differ and what one person is comfortable with may not work for someone else.
- Offer a range of activities to cater for different age groups, abilities, and preferences.
- Be aware and cater for any physical, mental, or financial barriers people may have.

In summary **inclusivity is about recognising that people can have different experiences based on different parts of their identity** and thus, have different needs when accessing services. LGBTQIA+ people can come from anywhere and can belong to various other communities.

This document is an introduction in how to be more inclusive in your organisation. You should evaluate your current practice against the recommendations of this resource and **remember that being inclusive is an ongoing process**. Continuous evaluation is needed, and you should work with those who access your service to find out areas for improvement.

CAPS



LGBTQI+ Advocacy

Celebrate, promote and showcase your good practice!

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