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**LGBT staff and friends forum**

**Forum details**

The council recognises that a workplace that is inclusive and accepting of all people is crucial to creating a happy and positive workplace. The LGBT staff and friends forum allows staff to give their voice on the council's strategic direction through interaction with the forum's CMT senior champions.

‘Friend’ is a term used to describe our heterosexual staffe who  
believe that lesbian, gay and bisexual people should experience full  
equality in the workplace. Staff who are identify as a straight friend or ally are welcome to join the forum and work with LGBT staff in their efforts to create an inclusive workplace.

Over the year the forum will be holding Question and Answer session with our senior champion; networking opportunities and speakers sessions and engaging with HR on employee issues.

If you're interested in joining the forum, either as an LGBT members of staff or a straight 'friend', please email [LGBTStaff.Forum@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:LGBTStaff.Forum@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

**Chair**

The chair of the forum is Leo Nicholas. If you would like to join the forum mailing list, attend meetings or have any suggestions you can contact him on ext: 6277, [Leo.Nicholas@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:leo.nicholas@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or [LGBTStaff.Forum@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:LGBTStaff.Forum@towerhamlets.gov.uk).

**LGBT senior champion**

Zena Cooke, Corporate Director for Resources, is taking forward the council's work on sexual orientation as the LGBT senior champion. Zena's role is to ensure that equality for LGBT staff is embedded into the core priorities for the council as an employer.

**Mentoring**

There is an opportunity for LGBT staff and managers to take part in the council's Mentorwise  programme. Mentoring provides several benefits and LGBT staff are actively encouraged by the council to get involved. Benefits include:

**For mentors**

* opportunity to reflect on own practice
* enhances job satisfaction
* develops professional relationships
* enhances peer recognition
* it uses your experience, making it available to a new person
* it widens your understanding of the organisation and the way it works
* it enables you to practice interpersonal skills
* it provides personal satisfaction through supporting the development of others

**For mentees**

* provides impartial advice and encouragement
* develops a supportive relationship
* assists with problem solving
* improves self-confidence
* offers professional development
* encourages reflection on practice

More details can be found on the [council's Mentorwise page.](http://towernet/staff_services/hr_workforce_development/learning_development/ent/mentor_wise/)

**LGBT staff support**

**Staff benefits**

LBTH ensures that all employee benefits are inclusive of LGBT staff, please [click here](http://towernet/document_library/human_resources/administering_employees/Employee_Handbook_Amended_April_2015.doc) for more information contained in the Employee Handbook. Benefits include:

* Maternity, paternity and parental leave
* Adoption leave
* Flexible working
* Part-time working
* Working from home

**Bullying and harrassment**

If you wish to report any homophobic and biphobic bullying and harassment incidents, please visit the [grievance and chad page.](http://towernet/staff_services/hr_workforce_development/people_management/grievance_and_chad/)

In the first instance, staff are advised to discuss with their line manager any incidents of bullying or harassment. Support is also available through HR as well as the forum itself. The latter is an anonymous route for reporting any LGBT related issues, including incidents of LGBT related bullying.

**Counselling**

The council, via Occupational Health, offers a counselling service which is open to all staff. More information on the service can be found on the [counselling service's intranet page](http://towernet/staff_services/hr_workforce_development/health_and_wellbeing/occupational_health/staff_counselling/).

**Unison representation and support**

UNISON represents and acts for members working in Tower Hamlets Council and represents the a large proportion of the council's workforce. They are a point of contact for any staff member who is facing bullying and harassment (including incidents related to sexual orientation). There is currently a vacancy for the Unison LGBT officer but staff are encouraged to email [Jacqueline.Durand@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:Jacqueline.Durand@towerhamlets.gov.uk) if they require Union support.

Additionally, if you would like to stand as LGBT offier please email Jacqueline.

**Confidential email service**

The forum recognises that not everyone wants to express their concerns in a meeting setting or in a way that could link the concerns to them. Therefore, the forum has a generic email [LGBTStaff.Forum@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:LGBTStaff.Forum@towerhamlets.gov.uk).

This generic inbox is designed for the use of staff who are concerned about bullying or harassment based on sexual orientation (perceived or not perceived) and/or gender identity. It is completely confidential, allowing staff members to contact the Forum about anything, in a safe and anonymous way.

**No Place for Hate Forum**

Tackling all forms of hate crime is key to the borough's vision of creating One Tower Hamlets. "Hate Crime" is any criminal offence where anyone believes the victim has been targeted because of their gender/gender identity, race/ethnicity, religion/belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or any other actual or perceived difference.

"Hate incidents" are incidents that do not constitute a criminal offence but cause alarm, distress or harassment where anyone believes the victim has been targeted because of their gender/gender identity, race/ethnicity, religion/belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or any other actual or perceived difference. Hate crime can range from verbal abuse, threatening behaviour to malicious communications.

In 2008, the council launched the Tower Hamlets No Place for Hate Crime campaign, which allows the community, local businesses and organisations to publicly condemn all forms of hatred by pledging their support. Since its launch, the campaign has received sign-ups from 1,221 individuals and 105 organisations. For more information on the campaign and how to report hate crime visit [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/hatecrime](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/hatecrime).

**Resources**

There are many resources promoting LGBT equality available to staff including Stonewall guides, equality and diversity training material, minutes for previous LGBT Staff Forum meetings as well as links to LGBT organisations - both local and national. The council's libraries also contain literature relating to LGBT people and issues.

**Helpful documents**

* [Training: educating staff about lesbian, gay and bisexual equality](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/training_guide__final_pdf.pdf)
* [The Double Glazed Glass Ceiling: Lesbians in the Workplace](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/training_guide__final_pdf.pdf)
* [Bisexual People in the Workplace](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/training_guide__final_pdf.pdf)
* [Role Models: Sexual Orientation and the Workplace](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/training_guide__final_pdf.pdf)
* [Sexual Orientation: The Equality Act Made Simple](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/training_guide__final_pdf.pdf)
* [How to engage gay people in your work](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/training_guide__final_pdf.pdf)
* [Peak Performance: Gay People and Productivity](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/training_guide__final_pdf.pdf)
* [Using Monitoring Data: Making the most of sexual orientation data collection](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/training_guide__final_pdf.pdf)
* [Procurement: Embedding lesbian, gay and bisexual equality in the supply chain](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/training_guide__final_pdf.pdf)
* [Religion and Sexual Orientation: how to manage relations in the workplace](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/training_guide__final_pdf.pdf)

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