

From: [Northern Ireland](#)
To: [Northern Ireland](#)
Cc: [Fergal McFerran](#)
Subject: End of year update from Stonewall
Date: 18 December 2020 15:21:31

Dear colleague,

As we approach the end of the year, I wanted to reflect on what has been a challenging year for us all and look forward to the new opportunities that 2021 brings us.

This year has been a difficult one for all of us and we know that marginalised communities have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. The [LGBT Foundation](#) has found that lesbian, gay, bi and trans people have faced some very specific challenges as a result of the pandemic, with issues including isolation, living with unaccepting family or flatmates, and trans people facing even more substantial delays to essential healthcare to name just a few.

With the challenges currently facing LGBT people across society it is more important than ever that we recommit to LGBT equality in our workplaces, and we want to thank you for your continued commitment towards LGBT inclusion. We've also been greatly encouraged by the innovative work that we have seen from our members to keep LGBT inclusion high on the agenda whilst our lives and working patterns have been so drastically altered.

At Stonewall, we have continued to work hard to ensure that all LGBT people are accepted without exception. This year we have launched [new digital empowerment workshops](#) and delivered an [online learning series](#) for workplaces. We've also continued to provide our Diversity Champions members with opportunities to come together and learn from one another through webinars and virtual roundtable events.

Despite the challenges we've all been facing, this year has seen some important and historic milestones of progress. In February, Sharni Edwards & Robyn Peoples made history, celebrating the first same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland and in the last few weeks we've seen both the first conversions from same-sex civil partnerships to marriages as well as the first same-sex religious marriage ceremony in Northern Ireland. The restoration of devolution at the beginning of the year has also finally allowed work to begin by the Department for Communities on [social inclusion strategies](#), including an LGBTQ+ strategy for Northern Ireland. Recent weeks have also seen the recommendations of Judge Desmond Marrinan's [independent review of hate crime legislation](#) in Northern Ireland published, which, if taken forward by the Northern Ireland Executive could see greater protection in law for LGBT people.

These are just some of the areas of progress we've been proud to see delivered through the hard work of our colleagues in the LGBT sector.

In June we welcomed our new [Chief Executive](#), Nancy Kelley, to Stonewall. Nancy joined us from the National Centre for Social Research and has already been busy meeting with key stakeholders from business, Parliament, and the third sector to advance LGBT equality. You can read Nancy's first interview as Stonewall's CEO [here](#). Nancy's appointment came shortly after we announced Sheldon Mills becoming the new Chair of Stonewall's Board of Trustees. You can read more about Sheldon [here](#) too.

Finally, we have pulled together lots of resources on our website to assist you with your work during these difficult times. You can view our [COVID-19 Support Hub](#) as well as information on our activities for [Black History Month](#), [Bi Visibility Day](#), [International Pronouns Day](#), [Ace Week](#) and [Disability History Month](#) on our website. New content is published regularly and we'd encourage you to visit our website and read our regular newsletter to keep up to date with.

Thank you from all of us for your continued commitment to LGBT inclusion in your workplace.

Looking forward to 2021

The new year brings a fresh opportunity to drive forward our work and commitment to LGBT inclusion, ensuring that equality and diversity is at the heart of the recovery from the pandemic. It is crucial that we ensure that our commitment to inclusion and our actions include those LGBT voices who are the most marginalised in our workplaces, networks, and communities. We will continue to collaborate with you to ensure we maximise the opportunities to learn from and listen to those underrepresented voices.

We encourage you to save the date – Wednesday 10th February – for our next Diversity Champions webinar, during which we'll explore how the laws impacting LGBT people in Northern Ireland have changed over the years as well as how the lives of LGBT people have changed with them. This event is free to our members and further details will be shared early in the New Year.

We are also delighted to announce the launch of a new Network Empowerment Series, delivered by my colleagues at Stonewall Scotland. During the week of 22 February 2021, our series of two digital sessions will give you the knowledge and tools you need to create inclusive LGBT network spaces. You can find out more about our workshops by [visiting our website](#).

Additionally, we will be here to support you as we look towards the launch of the Workplace Equality Index 2022 in the spring. Thank you to the organisations who have engaged with our [WEI Support Series](#) so far. As a reminder, we have launched our new criteria and [have introductory webinars](#) available on the website. We will be launching further support in the first quarter of 2021. If you would like any more information about how to get involved in the next WEI, please reach out to us.

Closure over Festive Break

I will be finishing up for the festive season on Tuesday 22nd December 2020 and will remain on leave until Monday 11th January 2021. If you have any urgent queries or need support while I'm unavailable, you can contact our central workplace team (who will be available again from Monday 4th January 2021) by emailing xxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx and a colleague will be in touch in my absence.

On behalf of myself and everyone at Stonewall I want to wish you a safe and restful break over the festive period and every good wish for the New Year. Thank you sincerely for your continued support of our work and I look forward to continuing to work with you in the new year.

Very best wishes,
Fergal

Fergal McFerran

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Pronouns: He / Him / His



Read one of our latest blogs, starting out in trans inclusion in your workplace [here](#).

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