

**Stonewall**

# ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

**This resource is produced by Stonewall, a UK-based charity that stands for the freedom, equity and potential of all lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace (LGBTQ+) people.**

At Stonewall, we imagine a world where LGBTQ+ people everywhere can live our lives to the full.

Founded in London in 1989, we now work in each nation of the UK and have established partnerships across the globe. Over the last three decades, we have created transformative change in the lives of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, helping win equal rights around marriage, having children and inclusive education.

Our campaigns drive positive change for our communities, and our sustained change and empowerment programmes ensure that LGBTQ+ people can thrive throughout our lives. We make sure that the world hears and learns from our communities, and our work is grounded in evidence and expertise.

To find out more about our work, visit us at [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)

**Registered Charity No 1101255 (England and Wales) and SC039681 (Scotland)**

Stonewall is proud to provide information, support and guidance on LGBTQ+ inclusion; working towards a world where we're all free to be. This does not constitute legal advice, and is not intended to be a substitute for legal counsel on any subject matter.





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# SAFE TRAVELS

GLOBAL MOBILITY  
FOR LGBT STAFF

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# SAFE TRAVELS

## GLOBAL MOBILITY FOR LGBT STAFF

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## FOREWORD

Stonewall is here to let all lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) people, here and abroad, know they're not alone. Our work with global employers is integral to this mission.

Employers working across the world can have an enormous impact on the well-being of their LGBT employees, including those on international assignments. For global organisations, being able to deploy the most talented people for the task wherever in the world they are needed most is vital. Many employees see international postings as central to their own career development. However, LGBT people can face additional challenges when working globally.

We have created this guide to highlight and address these challenges. It offers a clear, step-by-step roadmap to help LGBT staff and families make informed decisions about mobility, and to support them throughout the assignment. The guide also addresses the importance of educating non-LGBT employees to ensure they don't put their LGBT colleagues at risk when working internationally.

This resource has been developed as part of our Global Diversity Champions programme, which supports employers to create workplaces where LGBT people can flourish. We believe we're stronger united, and that partnering with organisations and sharing best practice helps us create real change for the better.

We would like to thank Barclays, BP, Citi, De Montfort University, EY, Procter & Gamble, Simmons & Simmons and Vodafone for sharing their experiences as case studies in this guide. We hope this resource enables more organisations to support their LGBT employees on international assignments, so that everyone has equal access to opportunities.

### **RUTH HUNT**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, STONEWALL



# INTRODUCTION

The ability to place talented staff where they are most needed forms an important part of successful global organisations. This comes with a responsibility to offer support and keep these staff safe during assignments.

International assignments may need more careful consideration for LGBT staff. In more than half the world, LGBT people may not be protected from discrimination by workplace law. Very few jurisdictions legally recognise the gender identity of trans people (see glossary for terms). Sexual acts between people of the same sex are criminalised in more than 70 countries and only a small minority of states recognise same-sex partnerships. LGBT people face discrimination in every country in the world.

This guide invites organisations to understand issues affecting LGBT staff working internationally and gives practical advice on how to offer tailored support before and during the assignment. It also explores the benefits of offering this support. Committed organisations share their best practice through comprehensive case studies, providing practical examples of how to succeed in supporting a diverse workforce to embark on international postings. A glossary on page 21 helps readers understand the LGBT-related terms used in this guide.







# CHAPTER 1: THE BUSINESS CASE

Proactively addressing LGBT issues in mobility policy and practice enables organisations to:

## DELIVER BETTER OUTCOMES

Global organisations can only be fully effective in delivering business outcomes if their staff can work internationally. Supporting LGBT employees in taking on international assignments means organisations benefit from having the best person for the job, wherever they are needed. It also ensures this person can perform at their best regardless of location.

## DEVELOP AND RETAIN TALENTED STAFF

Many employees see working abroad as an important aspect of their professional development. Supporting and encouraging LGBT staff to take advantage of these opportunities increases job satisfaction and talent engagement. Employees who don't feel supported in this way may seek opportunities elsewhere.

## DEMONSTRATE CREDIBLE GLOBAL VALUES

The credibility of a global organisation's commitment to LGBT equality is undermined if LGBT employees are only supported in some locations. Ensuring that organisational values are applied consistently demonstrates to employees, clients and service users that those values are taken seriously.

## IMPROVE REPUTATION

Organisations that go out of their way to support LGBT staff on overseas assignments demonstrate modern and dynamic ways of working. This earns organisations a reputation as an employer of choice among talented LGBT recruits and their allies.

## ENSURE COMPLIANCE

In many countries, workplace discrimination against LGBT people is illegal. Taking steps to ensure that employees can take advantage of, and are supported during, international postings can protect organisations from costly and damaging employment disputes. For example, discrimination or harassment in the workplace because of 'sexual orientation' and 'gender reassignment' (see glossary for terms) is unlawful under the UK's Equality Act 2010. British employers have a duty to protect their employees, regardless of where they are in the world.





## CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF LGBT PEOPLE

International assignments will hold different experiences for every individual. For LGBT employees, their sexual orientation and gender identity can significantly influence their experience working abroad.

Many LGBT employees have positive experiences and are happy to undertake international assignments. However, every location brings its own challenges specific to LGBT people who work or live there. It is important for mobility staff to understand factors that influence the experiences of LGBT people worldwide. This enables them to support mobile LGBT employees. It also allows them to empower non-LGBT staff to become better allies when working internationally.





## LEGAL FACTORS

The legal environment for LGBT people differs greatly around the world and sometimes even within countries. The following legal factors may pose challenges for LGBT people working internationally:

Legal factor	Examples of barriers	Examples of impact
<b>CRIMINALISATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sexual activities between people of the same sex are illegal and may be punishable with imprisonment, corporal punishment or death</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LGBT employees at risk of arrest and harassment by authorities</li> </ul>
<b>LACK OF PROTECTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LGBT people are not protected by anti-discrimination law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LGBT employees can be overlooked for promotion or fired for being who they are</li> <li>LGBT employees are refused accommodation or other services</li> </ul>
<b>LACK OF RECOGNITION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same-sex relationships are not recognised</li> <li>Parental rights of LGBT parents are not recognised</li> <li>A trans person's gender identity is not legally recognised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dependants are unable to relocate</li> <li>Trans employees are unable to obtain a national ID card reflecting their gender identity</li> </ul>
<b>LACK OF OTHER RIGHTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trans persons are banned from using gender-assigned facilities that correspond to their gender identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trans persons cannot use public bathrooms</li> <li>Trans persons face harassment when using public bathrooms</li> </ul>
<b>RESTRICTIONS OF RIGHTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is illegal to speak about LGBT-related topics in the presence of minors</li> <li>The rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly are restricted in regard to LGBT topics and/or people</li> <li>Gender recognition of trans persons is subject to strict requirements, such as surgical intervention and sterilisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LGBT employees at risk of arrest and harassment by authorities</li> <li>LGBT people cannot join local community or support groups</li> <li>Trans employees are not able to obtain a national ID card reflecting their gender identity unless they undergo medical intervention</li> </ul>

It is vital that global employers collect information on the above legal factors for all assignment locations. The best organisations also track legal developments and keep information up to date. This enables them to give appropriate support and accurate information about assignment destinations.

## Gender recognition: understanding the importance of the law

Gender recognition laws differ greatly between countries. In most countries, legal gender options are restricted to female and male and therefore exclude non-binary people (see glossary for term). In some countries trans people are not able to change their legal gender. In other countries, they are able to do so but only if certain requirements are met, such as medical interventions. There are also countries where legal gender change is not tied to any such conditions.

It is important to understand how the gender recognition laws of the sending country relate to that of the assignment country. It is also necessary to understand on a case-by-case basis what influence this may have on the individual.

ILGA World's 'Trans Legal Mapping Report' is a useful resource covering laws and legal procedures for trans people and gender recognition. It can be downloaded at [www.ilga.org](http://www.ilga.org)

## Keep informed

Stonewall offers a series of Global Workplace Briefings that can help inform employers and employees about specific locations. Each briefing outlines the legal, socio-cultural and workplace situation for LGBT people in the specified country. The briefings can be downloaded here: [www.stonewall.org.uk/briefings](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/briefings)

Members of Stonewall's Global Diversity Champions programme also receive global legal updates via our quarterly Global eBulletin. More information can be found on page 22.

For further country-specific legal information, visit [www.ilga.org](http://www.ilga.org) and [www.tgeu.org](http://www.tgeu.org).

**BP** The international mobility team works with local LGBT employee network chapters to learn about the situation for LGBT people in different countries. The LGBT network chapters provide information on the legal and social landscape and any potential issues that could have an impact on employee well-being and safety. This enables the mobility team to help LGBT staff make an informed decision about relocating. BP's mobility team also uses Stonewall's Global Workplace Briefings to inform themselves and to share with staff. If LGBT employees have any remaining questions about LGBT-specific laws in the concerned country, BP will offer specific legal advice.

**De Montfort University** De Montfort University has a dedicated webpage that provides information specific to mobile LGBT students. Student pre-departure sessions also include LGBT topics. Recognising the positive impact of these initiatives led the university to strengthen the support offered to mobile LGBT staff too. A travel project team was established with representatives from across the university, including health and safety, HR, faculty, student mobility and academic services. The group works to make sure all areas of staff mobility are inclusive of LGBT and other diversity considerations.



## NON-LEGAL FACTORS

Non-legal factors also have an impact on the everyday life of LGBT people on international assignments. For instance, experiences can be very different in a country with higher levels of acceptance towards LGBT people than in a country with lower levels.

Local and regional LGBT organisations as well as local LGBT staff networks are best positioned to provide information on non-legal factors. They may have resources available to help others understand the situation for LGBT people in the country. Where possible, organisations should collaborate with local and regional LGBT groups and keep up to date with developments.

When collating this information, it is helpful to look out for the following:

Non-legal factor	Examples
<b>APPLICATION OF LGBT-RELATED LAW BY STATE AUTHORITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State officials have announced that the law criminalising same-sex sexual activity will not be applied in practice</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIETAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS LGBT PEOPLE AND TOPICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opinion polls show that the public generally supports same-sex marriage</li> <li>There have been recent protests against advancements in legal equality</li> </ul>
<b>LEVELS OF HATE CRIMES AGAINST LGBT PEOPLE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hate crime rates are high, particularly towards trans people</li> </ul>
<b>VISIBILITY OF LGBT PEOPLE IN PUBLIC LIFE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diverse LGBT people are not represented on TV and across public life</li> </ul>
<b>AVAILABLE COMMUNITY SUPPORT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various LGBT support groups and LGBT-friendly neighbourhoods exist</li> </ul>
<b>ACCESS TO LGBT-SPECIFIC SERVICES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long waiting lists exist for LGBT-inclusive healthcare providers</li> </ul>
<b>OVERLAPPING FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION IN THE COUNTRY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While white LGBT people are regularly represented on TV, LGBT people of colour are not</li> </ul>

## RISK ASSESSMENTS

Organisations often undertake or procure a security or risk assessment before deploying staff internationally. These should be LGBT-inclusive, assessing the specific issues that may affect LGBT staff.

### KEY ACTION POINTS TO KEEP INFORMED

- Do you understand what factors can influence the experiences of LGBT staff working internationally?
- Do you collect and keep up to date with legal and non-legal country information relevant to LGBT people?
- Do you carry out risk assessments and develop risk management plans that include LGBT issues?

## Spotlight on Vodafone

As a dynamic global organisation, Vodafone benefits greatly from a mobile workforce. They also have a global commitment to LGBT+ equality. This was the motivation for Vodafone to undertake a project to ensure mobility practices were expressly inclusive of LGBT+ employees.

The project was initiated after mobile LGBT+ employees contacted Vodafone's LGBT & Friends employee network. They voiced concerns about travelling and working internationally and asked about the specific support they would receive.

Vodafone collected these personal experiences of mobile LGBT+ employees. This helped the network to formalise a proposal to improve the experiences of those working and travelling internationally. They developed a thorough business case to enable them to engage the HR Leadership Team. Having received approval, the network worked closely with Stonewall to review policies and practices and develop robust support mechanisms for LGBT+ employees.

The project led to a wide range of initiatives being undertaken. Firstly, Vodafone updated the mobility policy to clearly and explicitly state the support LGBT+ employees and their families could expect during international assignments. For example, using gender-neutral language throughout the policy ensured that same-sex couples could access benefits in an equal way to their non-LGBT+ colleagues.

It was important to Vodafone that these updated policies led to tangible outcomes and an improved experience for LGBT+ employees. To bring the policy to life, a toolkit was produced which gave HR and line managers what they needed to support LGBT+ employees working and travelling internationally.

In addition to the toolkit, a video has been produced aimed at LGBT+ employees which outlines the support available when working internationally. It makes sure they know they are fully supported, can access country-specific information and connect with local LGBT+ networks. It also outlines the support available to reduce risks. This includes guidelines on how to use social media safely, as well as key contacts if the employee wishes to raise concerns. All employees travelling to higher-risk locations also receive specialised support, guidance and training that includes LGBT+ information.

Having this complementary information available for both HR and mobile employees ensures all parties are well equipped to have open conversations about mobility. This helps employees make informed decisions on whether they can accept assignments. It also lets them know explicitly that they will suffer no career detriment if they choose to decline. In such cases, alternative options will be sought, which could include an assignment to a different country where the employee faces less risk. Video conference technology can also be used as an alternative to short business trips.

Since these changes have been implemented, Vodafone has continued to make improvements to support mobile LGBT+ employees. Every operational country now has a named LGBT+ executive sponsor. They serve as an additional point of contact for mobile LGBT+ employees to voice concerns when working internationally. Mobile LGBT+ employees are also able to contact the Global Diversity & Inclusion lead, as an additional layer of support and reassurance.

LGBT+ employees are encouraged to share their experiences with the network. This is to support other LGBT+ employees who work internationally and to provide a mechanism to continually review the effectiveness of current practices.

### Vodafone's toolkit for HR and line managers

This resource outlines:

- the experiences of LGBT+ people working abroad
- why supporting LGBT+ employees is important to Vodafone
- Vodafone's inclusive policies
- how to support LGBT+ employees to make a decision about working abroad
- the support Vodafone offers to LGBT+ employees while working abroad
- country-specific information for LGBT+ employees
- top tips





## CHAPTER 3: GETTING YOUR POLICIES RIGHT

Inclusive global policies are the basis for ensuring LGBT employees are supported wherever they work.

### GLOBAL ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES

All global employers should have a comprehensive global policy that explicitly prohibits discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Having a global policy means the protection may exceed local legal standards in some countries. This ensures that LGBT employees, wherever they are in the world, are protected from workplace discrimination.

Approaches to anti-discrimination policies are explored further in Stonewall's Global Values guide: [www.stonewall.org.uk/globalvalues](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/globalvalues)

### MOBILITY POLICIES

Many organisations with a global reach have policies in place setting out how to manage international staff mobility. Inclusive policies specifically address issues affecting LGBT staff. They also set out how these issues are to be handled by managers or signpost LGBT mobility guidelines.

Inclusive mobility policies should generally cover international assignments of any duration, from short business trips to permanent postings. However, certain parts of the policies may only apply to specific types of assignments. For example, family relocation may only apply to longer-term assignments.

#### Diverse families

International assignments not only affect your employees but may also affect their families. This is especially true for longer-term assignments. It is important to remember that LGBT families, like all families, are diverse. For instance, it may be the case that your employee is not LGBT but their partner or child is. In other cases, the legal parental relationships to a child might not be as clear as in non-LGBT families. Mobility policies or guidelines should acknowledge that all families, including LGBT families, are diverse and can expect equal and tailored support. They should also state that the organisation offers equal support, no matter whether the employee, their partner or their children identify as LGBT.

## Rejecting overseas assignments

Mobility policies or guidelines should state that employees' careers won't suffer if they decline a posting because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Other career development opportunities should be sought where an employee rejects an assignment on these grounds. The best policies or guidelines have the same approach for all identity characteristics, for example, disability or ethnicity.

## Immigration considerations

International assignments pose immigration considerations, such as the need for visas, for every mobile employee. For LGBT employees and families there may be additional barriers as discussed in Chapter 2.

The best mobility policies or guidelines therefore state that tailored immigration support will be provided on an individual basis. They also explicitly state that such support is inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity considerations.

Where relocation support is offered to family members, this should be clearly LGBT inclusive. Where dependant visas are not available to same-sex couples, the best organisations commit to finding alternative ways of relocation, if possible. The very best policies and guidelines state that additional travel expenses will be covered where family relocation isn't possible.

In committing to immigration support, policies or guidelines also need to be clear that there may be certain factors beyond the organisation's control.

## Healthcare

The level of healthcare available differs greatly around the world. Specialists who provide LGBT-inclusive healthcare may not be available in all locations. Overseas assignments should not have a detrimental effect on the healthcare available to assignees. This needs to be reflected in mobility policies or guidelines. Organisations can work with assignees to prepare them for the level of care available. This involves creating an action plan in case their needs can't be met locally. For example, the organisation could cover pre-travel assessment and planning, access to a global medical assistance service and regular visits to the sending country. LGBT staff may also need health insurance that enables them to be flown back home or to a third country for treatment in emergencies.

## Family benefits

Many organisations offer benefits associated with the assignment, such as language and cultural awareness training. Where this is offered to family members, it should be explicitly LGBT-inclusive. Offering these benefits to unmarried and unregistered couples further ensures they apply to couples even if marriage or civil partnerships are not available to them.

In some countries, different-sex couples are eligible for tax breaks unavailable to same-sex couples. Organisations can compensate for this by making up the difference in the employee's salary.

**P&G** P&G provides relocation support to partners of employees in an established relationship regardless of gender and marital status. Where it is legally impossible for the partner to obtain a visa, P&G's relocation policy provides for monthly family reunion trips.

**EY** EY makes provisions in its global mobility policy for dependants – spouses, partners and children – to accompany employees on international assignments. The policy explicitly defines a dependent spouse or partner as a 'legally recognised spouse or partner (including same-sex and co-habitation relationships as defined under home country laws), significant other (including same-sex partners) or fiancé(e)'.



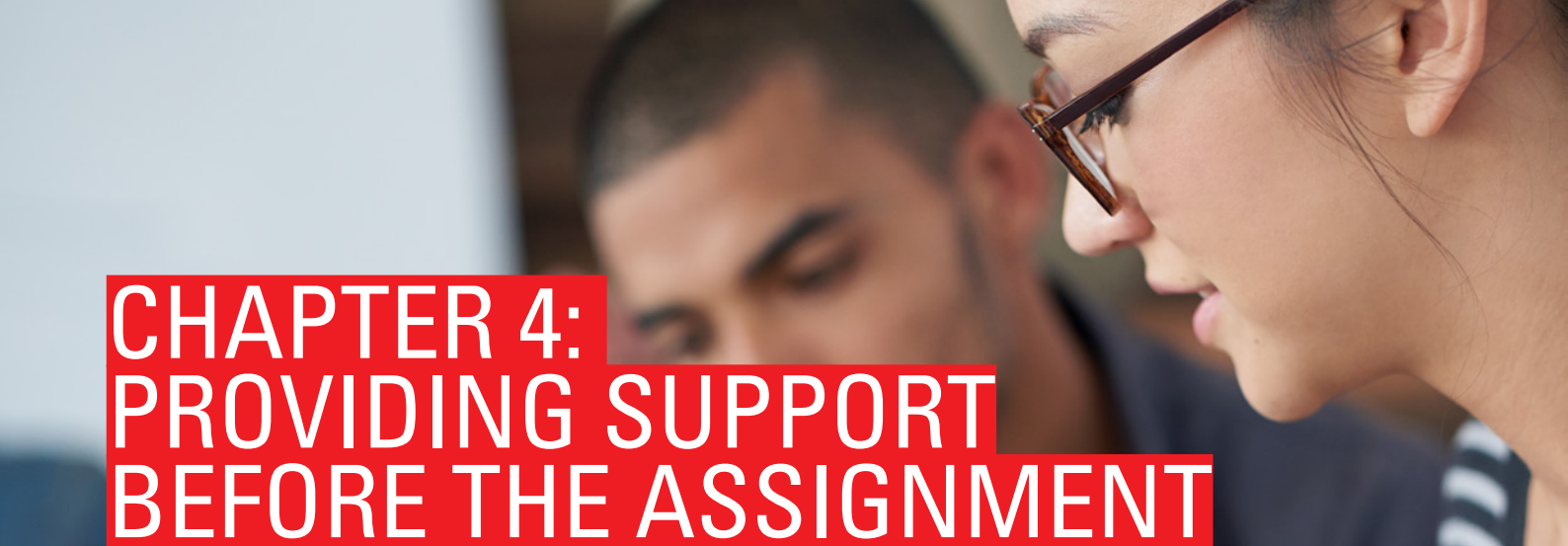
## BRINGING POLICIES TO LIFE

Line managers and staff responsible for employee mobility should receive training on how the mobility policy or guidelines apply to LGBT staff. The best training includes information on how to create environments where LGBT people feel comfortable to disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity in confidence. It can also include how to ask open-ended questions about any personal circumstances that may affect their decision.

**BP** Both international mobility staff and line managers at BP go through inclusive leadership training that includes LGBT-specific topics. By using practical case studies, the training gives managers the language and confidence to discuss LGBT-related issues. It helps line managers better support LGBT staff and have open conversations, including about relocation.

### KEY ACTION POINTS FOR INCLUSIVE POLICIES

- Do your global policies prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity?
- Do your mobility policies or guidelines set out:
  - that LGBT employees will not suffer a career detriment if they decline a posting?
  - that LGBT employees and families receive support with immigration considerations?
  - that international assignments should not have a negative impact on the healthcare available to LGBT staff?
  - that family benefits will apply equally regardless of gender?
- Are your mobility staff trained to support mobile LGBT staff?



# CHAPTER 4: PROVIDING SUPPORT BEFORE THE ASSIGNMENT

LGBT-inclusive pre-departure support allows LGBT staff and employees with LGBT family members to make an informed decision about international assignments. It also ensures non-LGBT staff understand how their actions may affect their LGBT colleagues. Thinking ahead will reduce risks and allow for meaningful support throughout the assignment.

## COUNTRY INFORMATION

Many organisations compile country information for staff going on international assignments. This should include information on the in-country situation for LGBT people as outlined in Chapter 2.

The information will help LGBT employees understand what to expect and how to prepare for the assignment. It is also vital for non-LGBT staff as they may have dependants who are LGBT. Education on the issue will also enable non-LGBT staff to adjust their behaviour during the assignment. For example, they need to know the risk of inadvertently disclosing a colleague's LGBT identity when travelling together.

Inclusive traveller security awareness training should also cover LGBT issues. For example, training can be provided on whether it is safe to talk openly about someone's sexual orientation or gender identity while travelling.

## ORGANISATION-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The best organisations provide information about their own LGBT diversity and inclusion initiatives taking place globally and in the assignment country. This can include information on anti-discrimination and harassment policies, LGBT-specific training, events, leadership engagement, allies programmes and LGBT employee networks.

The best organisations also collate insights from their LGBT staff in assignment countries. This gives candidates a more detailed account of what the experience has been for others abroad. However, it is important to acknowledge that individual experiences can differ greatly. When providing real-life insights, safety considerations should be of utmost importance. Where it is dangerous for an employee to be out (see glossary for term), real-life insights can be anonymised.

**Citi** Citi has a dedicated website to inform mobile staff and their families about assignment destinations. All country pages contain information on LGBT issues. This includes information on LGBT-specific laws, for instance whether same-sex partnerships are recognised and the visa options available to same-sex partners. It also covers non-legal information, such as societal levels of acceptance, crime rates against the LGBT community and information on LGBT groups and events. The LGBT-specific information is incorporated throughout the website to make sure it is available to all employees reading about a destination. Mobile staff are also informed about Citi's staff networks in assignment countries, including LGBT staff network chapters.

**Simmons & Simmons** Simmons & Simmons offers support to LGBT colleagues both before and during an international assignment or relocation. The Human Resources teams in the UK and the host country have access to the Stonewall Global Workplace Briefings. The UK team liaises with the host country to put in place support mechanisms for the assignment or relocation. This includes access to local area LGBT-friendly guides written by LGBT colleagues across the firm. Should an individual require emergency support while overseas, they are also given the personal contact details of the LGBT network partner co-chair.



## INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

The best organisations provide tailored support to individuals asked to go on an overseas assignment. When planning individual support, staff responsible for mobility should be mindful of the following:

### Facilitate open discussion

Sexual orientation and gender identity are often invisible diversity markers. Unless an LGBT person discloses this part of their identity and the specific barriers they face, organisations will not know what support is needed.

It is therefore important that mobility staff create an atmosphere where employees feel comfortable to speak about this part of themselves or their families. Employees need to be guaranteed full confidentiality. The best organisations train staff responsible for mobility on how to facilitate such discussions. Having LGBT allies merchandise on display, such as rainbow stickers or lanyards, or clearly displaying Stonewall resources, can also help.

If the conversations around overseas assignments are had with the employee's line manager, the employee should be given the option to raise additional concerns with someone else. This will especially benefit employees who are not out to their manager.

### Provide flexible support

The best organisations make sure mobility staff and the employee talk about the different stages of the assignment and discuss what support will be offered. LGBT-specific country information and LGBT-inclusive mobility policies can form the basis of such conversations. These topics are discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 respectively.

It should be made clear that staff responsible for mobility need to be prepared to answer any LGBT-related questions. They can work with the organisation's diversity and inclusion team or LGBT employee networks to provide detailed information and answer specific questions.

Where a trans employee is transitioning or undergoing medical treatments at the time of the assignment, planning and providing flexible support are especially important. This involves carefully thinking about how transitioning will affect the person's ID cards and passports, need for health care, safety and security.

Staff responsible for mobility should be honest with employees and manage their expectations about what they can expect from them and from international postings. Employers are not above national laws and may therefore not be able to secure equal treatment in every circumstance.

**BP** When an employee is asked to go on an overseas assignment, they are assigned an international mobility adviser. The adviser briefs the individual on BP's relocation policy and provides individual support with the relocation. This includes relocation of same-sex partners where legally possible. Where a same-sex partner is not legally able to obtain a visa to live in-country, the mobility adviser and employee work together to find alternative solutions. This may involve frequent flights home or meet ups in a third location. Where a local LGBT network exists, the individual may also be linked to members of that network. Network members are able to provide real-life insights and answer further questions to help the employee make a decision.

**Barclays** Barclays employs a tailored support approach for employees who go on international assignments. The bank has a global mobility team to support staff who transfer from one country to another. Once an employee has been selected to go on an international assignment, they are allocated a case manager, who will be the point of contact for the individual throughout their assignment. The employee and case manager have an open discussion on the support the employee and their family will need before and during the assignment. Unconscious bias training equips case managers to lead an open conversation where employees feel comfortable to discuss their sexual orientation and gender identity. Support may include advice on safe housing and the provision of financial allowances for flights where a same-sex partner visa cannot be obtained. Case managers can also contact Barclays' diversity and inclusion team for LGBT-specific considerations in the assignment country.

## Develop a personal plan and risk strategy

Mobility staff should be able to confidently handle conversations about safety risks related to the employee's sexual orientation and gender identity. After receiving LGBT-specific country information, employees need to be given space to address safety concerns they may have. A personal plan should then be developed to mitigate safety risks during the assignment.

For certain assignments LGBT employees may be concerned that being out will pose a risk to their safety and security. They may therefore not want to be open about their sexual orientation and gender identity during the assignment. Similarly, they may only wish to be out to certain individuals. In such cases, organisations need to work with the employee to mitigate the risk of accidental 'outing' (see glossary for term). This may include informing colleagues and editing online profiles or anonymising subscriptions to LGBT network lists.

Some employees who choose not to be out may be concerned about the visibility of their LGBT identity. For example, this may be the case where a person's gender expression (see glossary for term) is non-binary or where a trans employee is transitioning at the time of the assignment. Others may simply be concerned that people will make assumptions about their sexual orientation and gender identity. Where an employee expresses such concerns, it is important to take them seriously. It can be discussed whether and how the employer can control the environment to mitigate any related safety and security risks.

For example, it is helpful to visualise the workplace environment and explain who has access to the worksite. Safe housing options can also be discussed at this stage. This helps the employee gain a sense of how safe they would feel.

It should also be discussed whether a person feels safe to be out in regard to the provision of healthcare. Where it would be unsafe for a person to be out to healthcare professionals, alternative options should be sought. For example, this could include additional confidential medical assistance calls with medical professionals trained on LGBT issues.

Challenges could also arise when entering the country. For example, where a trans person's gender expression does not match the gender marker on their identification documents, officials at border and immigration control may harass the person or deny entry. Some countries also allow their citizens to have a gender-neutral gender marker on their passport. When travelling internationally with such documentation, problems could arise when trying to enter a country that does not accept this.

Addressing such issues early on and trying to find practical solutions is important in order not to put the employee at risk at a later stage. Again, organisations need to be clear on the support that the organisation can reasonably and realistically offer.

The best organisations also provide clear advice to LGBT staff about the use of social media while abroad, since some employees may be out on their online profiles. Thoughtful advice will be particularly important for localities where communications may be monitored by state authorities.

### BEING 'OUT' AT WORK

Expecting somebody to hide their sexual orientation and gender identity during international assignments is not a small ask. When LGBT people cannot be open about this aspect of their identity, it can make them feel isolated and negatively affect their mental health and well-being. It can also cause them to feel disconnected from their work and affect their relationships with colleagues and clients. LGBT employees who can bring their authentic selves to work often feel more positive about the workplace and can perform better. Mobility staff need to be sensitive to this when discussing whether it would be safer for an LGBT employee not to be out during the assignment.

## SUITABLE ALTERNATIVES

After a full and frank discussion with the employer, many LGBT employees will feel comfortable taking on international assignments. However, there may be cases where employees decide a posting is unsuitable for them because they are LGBT.

As discussed in Chapter 3, employers should make sure this will not have a negative impact on the employee's career development.

In some cases, it may be possible to offer an alternative means of accepting the assignment, such as working remotely. In other cases, the organisation can offer career development opportunities of equivalent merit.

Some employees are not comfortable with other people knowing their reason for declining an assignment. It is important for managers to ask employees if that is the case and to respect their decision.

Where the declined offer poses difficulties to a team, managers should firmly but sensitively handle any negative reactions from colleagues.

Where the assignment is critical to an individual's role, it may not be possible for employers to offer suitable alternatives. Employers need to be clear about the support they can offer LGBT employees where this arises. Including essential travel destinations in job descriptions can help avoid such situations.

### KEY ACTION POINTS FOR SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS

- ☑ Do you provide all mobile staff with information on the situation and employer initiatives for LGBT people in the assignment country?
- ☑ Do you plan tailored and realistic mobility support that takes into account the individual needs of LGBT staff and families?
- ☑ Do you develop personal risk strategies with mobile LGBT employees to keep them safe during the assignment?
- ☑ Do you offer career development alternatives if an LGBT employee declines the assignment?





# CHAPTER 5: PROVIDING SUPPORT DURING THE ASSIGNMENT

It is important for LGBT employees to have access to support throughout the assignment. This includes delivering the tailored support agreed during the previous stage. It also includes having in place general support mechanisms for LGBT employees.

## IN-COUNTRY MANAGERS

In-country managers play an important role in supporting LGBT staff who join them on international postings. The best organisations implement LGBT-specific training for managers in assignment countries, outlining why it's important to support LGBT colleagues. All LGBT employees, local and mobile, will benefit from this.

## EMPLOYEE NETWORK GROUPS

Sometimes working overseas is an isolating experience. This may be especially true for LGBT people if they are not free to be themselves in the hosting country. Becoming part of, or maintaining contact with, LGBT employee network groups can help employees feel included. Often such groups are open to both LGBT employees and allies. This means that LGBT employees don't have to be out to be a member.

Many organisations facilitate online networking, make it possible for staff to dial into network meetings from abroad and even fund their travel to important network events. Again, it is important to provide advice on how to stay anonymous in locations where being outed may pose a risk.

**Barclays** Barclays' LGBT employee network, Spectrum, has local chapters across many of the organisation's operational countries. This allows LGBT employees to join network chapters during their overseas assignments. Where no local chapter exists, Spectrum makes sure employees can connect to the global network or other chapters. This is done through distributing information using social media and through video conferencing at network events and discussions. LGBT employees can also contact their HR business partners in the hosting and sending countries for support or to voice concern. All of Barclays' HR business partners globally are trained on issues affecting LGBT employees.

**EY** EY's global LGBT and ally employee 'network-of-networks', Unity, has 4,500 members spread across 77 countries. Many of these members are part of local Unity networks, but some are located in areas that do not yet have an active Unity network. EY encourages the use of technology to provide virtual communities to connect those networks together more effectively. This is to better facilitate the sharing of information between active networks. It also helps those individual members in locations that do not currently have local networks connect with the wider global LGBT community within the firm. These efforts bring together LGBT staff to share best practice, successes and ideas, highlight role models and build a stronger sense of community globally.

## HANDLING PROBLEMS

Even where organisations offer the best possible support to their LGBT employees, problems can arise. This may range from harassment in the workplace, to problems with integration or even threats to personal safety. At a minimum, these issues can cause feelings of isolation and impact work performance.

The best organisations offer staff access to advice and support from sources other than their line manager. Some organisations arrange regular conversations with mobility staff or a mentor. Additionally, organisations may provide employees access to a service with specialists in medical and travel security. This gives staff on international postings an opportunity to resolve concerns as and when they arise. In every case, these points of contact should be trained on issues affecting mobile LGBT staff.

Organisations should put in place monitoring of social and political developments in assignment countries and provide alerts to employees. This should include LGBT-specific developments.

In cases where the safety of LGBT employees or families is severely compromised, the organisation should support them to return home quickly. Inclusive emergency procedures to evacuate staff if necessary should therefore clearly cover instances in which LGBT people specifically are affected.

**BP** Employees on international assignments can seek support from local HR and mobility advisors on issues relating to their sexual orientation and gender identity. Where it would be unsafe to talk about someone's sexual orientation and gender identity in a specific location, this will be addressed before the assignment starts. It will then be made sure that the employee will have an alternative point of contact. This could involve additional support from the global HR and mobility teams.

## ASSIGNMENT CONCLUSION AND REPATRIATION

LGBT staff may also need support for the stages of assignment conclusion and repatriation. This can be especially important where an LGBT employee concludes an assignment in a location with higher acceptance rates than the sending country. Here it is helpful to revisit the 'Individual support' section in Chapter 4 to plan support and design a risk strategy.

## EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

The best organisations evaluate actual and declined international assignments to find out whether LGBT staff and families are satisfied with the support they've been offered. Both positive and negative feedback can help shape future support and processes.

### KEY ACTION POINTS FOR SUPPORT DURING THE ASSIGNMENT

- Do you train in-country line managers on LGBT topics?
- Do mobile LGBT employees have safe access to LGBT staff networks?
- Can mobile LGBT staff access advice from someone other than their line manager?
- Do you have mechanisms in place that allow LGBT employees to return home quickly in cases of emergency?
- Do you offer support to make sure LGBT employees can return home safely once the assignment ends?
- Do you seek feedback to evaluate the experiences of your mobile LGBT staff?

# TOP 10 TIPS FOR SUPPORTING LGBT STAFF

## 1. UNDERSTAND CHALLENGES

**LGBT PEOPLE FACE** when working internationally and keep up to date with current developments.

**2. AFFORD EQUAL TREATMENT** by creating a global policy that prohibits discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

**3. INCLUDE LGBT-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS IN YOUR MOBILITY POLICIES** to ensure your employees receive the support they need.

**4. TRAIN MANAGERS AND MOBILITY STAFF GLOBALLY** on your inclusive policies and other LGBT-related topics.

**5. INFORM LGBT AND NON-LGBT EMPLOYEES** of the situation for LGBT people in the assignment country before they take on the assignment.

**6. PLAN TAILORED, REALISTIC AND LGBT-INCLUSIVE SUPPORT** with employees before they need to make a decision about the assignment.

**7. OFFER EQUIVALENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES** if the employee cannot take on the assignment because they are LGBT.

**8. PROVIDE AN LGBT-TRAINED POINT OF CONTACT** for mobile staff to raise concerns with during the assignment. This should be in addition to the employee's line manager.

**9. BE PREPARED TO EVACUATE STAFF** in emergency situations that affect your LGBT employees.

**10. SEEK FEEDBACK** from LGBT staff and families to review and improve the support you offer.



# GLOSSARY

**BI/BISEXUAL** a person who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards more than one gender.

**COMING OUT** when a person first tells someone/ others about their identity as lesbian, gay, bi, trans.

**GAY** a man who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards men. Also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality. Some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian.

**GENDER EXPRESSION** an individual's external gender-related appearance (including clothing) and behaviour (including interests and mannerisms). A person may have masculine, feminine or androgynous aspects of their appearance or behaviour.

**GENDER IDENTITY** a person's internal sense of their own gender, whether male, female, non-binary, or something else.

**GENDER REASSIGNMENT** this is another way of describing a person's transition. To undergo gender reassignment usually means to undergo some sort of medical intervention, but it can also mean changing names, pronouns, dressing differently and living in your self-identified gender. Gender reassignment is a characteristic that is protected in the UK Equality Act 2010.

**LESBIAN** a woman who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards women.

**LGBT** the acronym for lesbian, gay, bi and trans.

**NON-BINARY** an umbrella term for a person who does not identify as male or female.

**OUT** when an LGBT person is generally open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. This can be in regard to a specific time or space.

**OUTED** when a lesbian, gay, bi or trans person's sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed to someone else without their consent.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION** a person's emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to another person.

**TRANS** an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, cross dresser, non-binary, gender queer.

# STONEWALL PROGRAMMES AND RESOURCES

## STONEWALL GLOBAL DIVERSITY CHAMPIONS

Worldwide, the legislative and social landscape is ever changing for LGBT people. The Global Diversity Champions programme provides expertise and a network to keep international organisations informed of changes and the implications for their staff, wherever they are in the world. It gives you the tools you need to take a strategic and structured approach to LGBT equality initiatives globally. For more information about joining Stonewall's Global Diversity Champions programme visit [www.stonewall.org.uk/GlobalDC](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/GlobalDC)

## GLOBAL WORKPLACE EQUALITY INDEX

The Global Workplace Equality Index is Stonewall's comprehensive annual benchmarking exercise. For your opportunity to be profiled as a Stonewall Top Global Employer, visit [www.stonewall.org.uk/gwei](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/gwei)

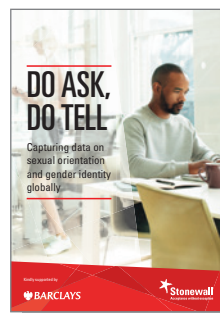
## PROUD EMPLOYERS

Proud Employers is Stonewall's jobsite featuring hundreds of UK and global positions. If you're looking to recruit the best people across diverse talent pools, and make sure your organisation is recognised as an employer of choice, visit [www.proudemployers.org.uk](http://www.proudemployers.org.uk)

## FURTHER RESOURCES

This guide is part of a series of Stonewall resources to help you create an inclusive workplace for your LGBT staff globally.

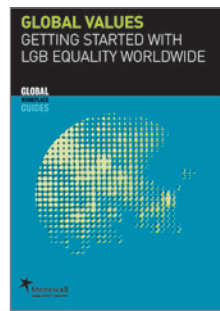
Also in the series:



**DO ASK, DO TELL:**  
Capturing data on sexual orientation and gender identity globally



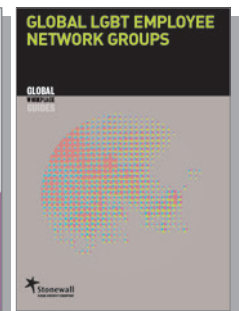
**GLOBAL WORKPLACE BRIEFINGS**  
Country-specific guidance on how to support LGBT staff through a mixture of legal, cultural and workplace best practice information



**GLOBAL VALUES:**  
Getting started with LGBT equality worldwide



**GLOBAL ALLIES:**  
Engage, educate, empower



**GLOBAL LGBT EMPLOYEE NETWORK GROUPS**

To download your copies, visit

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

More international resources can be found at

[www.stonewall.org.uk/our-work/international/international-resources](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/our-work/international/international-resources)

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# SAFE TRAVELS

GLOBAL MOBILITY  
FOR LGBT STAFF

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