Roadmap to bisexual inclusion

A guide for Scottish services

Equality Network

Scottish Trans

Contents

We would like to thank the bisexual people, the vast majority of whom do their work unfunded and unpaid, who wrote the resources that informed this work and those who provided their valuable input on the consultation drafts. Special thanks to Rowan Alison for editing. May all our efforts pave the way for more inclusive services that better recognise our diverse needs.

Authors
Sam Rankin, James Hiwatari

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Introduction

This booklet was developed specifically for public and voluntary sector services in Scotland. However, we hope that it will be of interest and use to services in other parts of the UK and beyond.

In 2015 YouGov found that on a seven point scale from completely heterosexual to completely homosexual, 72% of the British public place themselves at the completely heterosexual end of the scale, while 4% put themselves at the completely homosexual end. 19% say they are somewhere in between; which could be considered as under the bisexual umbrella. The results for 18-24 year-olds are particularly striking, as 43% place themselves in the bisexual area and only 46% say they are completely heterosexual and 6% completely homosexual. [1]
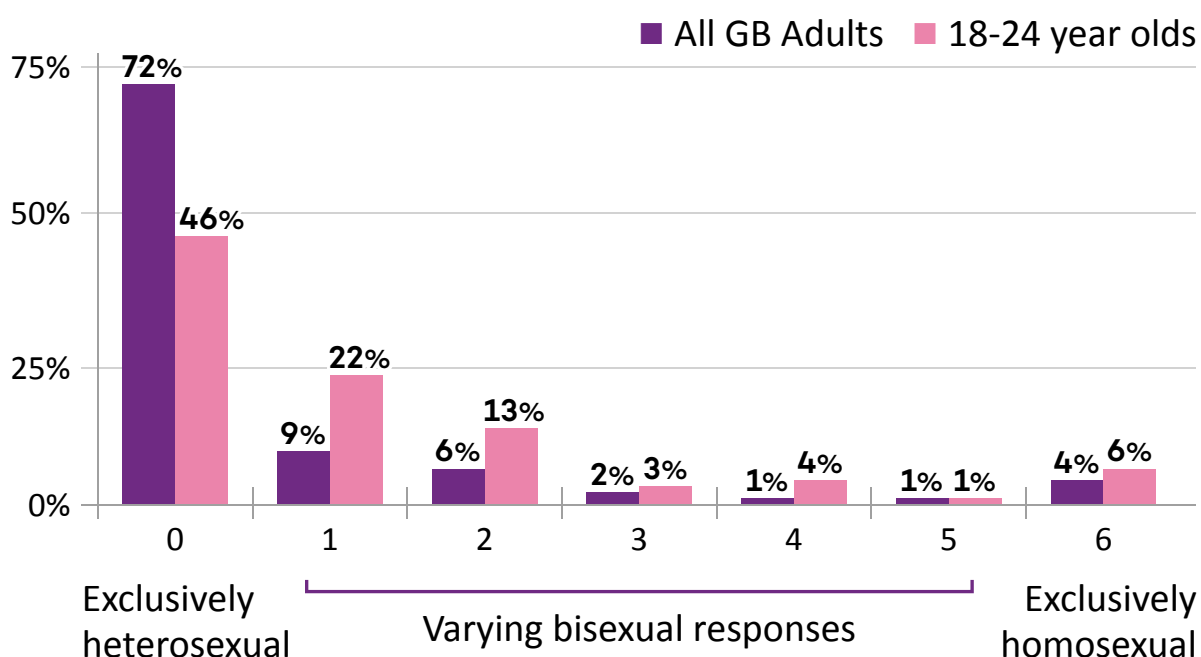
This means that service providers increasingly need to ensure that they are fully inclusive of bisexual people in order to meet the needs of younger generations. We hope this roadmap helps services to effect that change.

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[1] YouGov, 2015. "1 in 2 Young People Say They are not Heterosexual" (webpage) (See p38. for footnote web addresses.)

Roadmap
to
Bisexual Inclusion
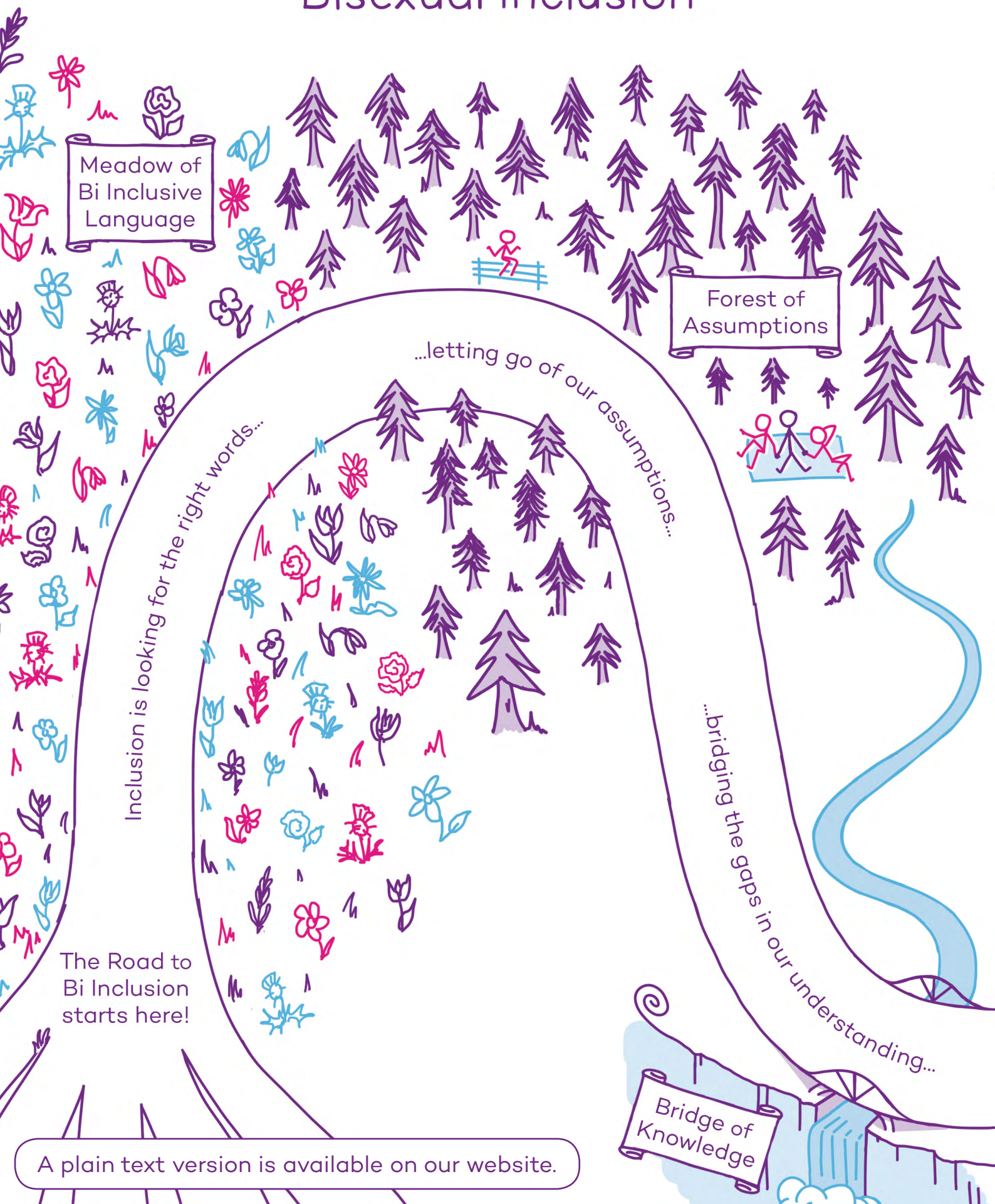
Meadow of
Bi Inclusive
Language

Forest of
Assumptions

...letting go of our assumptions...

Inclusion is looking for the right words...

...bridging the gaps in our understanding...

The Road to
Bi Inclusion
starts here!

Bridge of
Knowledge

A plain text version is available on our website.

Lighthouse
of Visibility
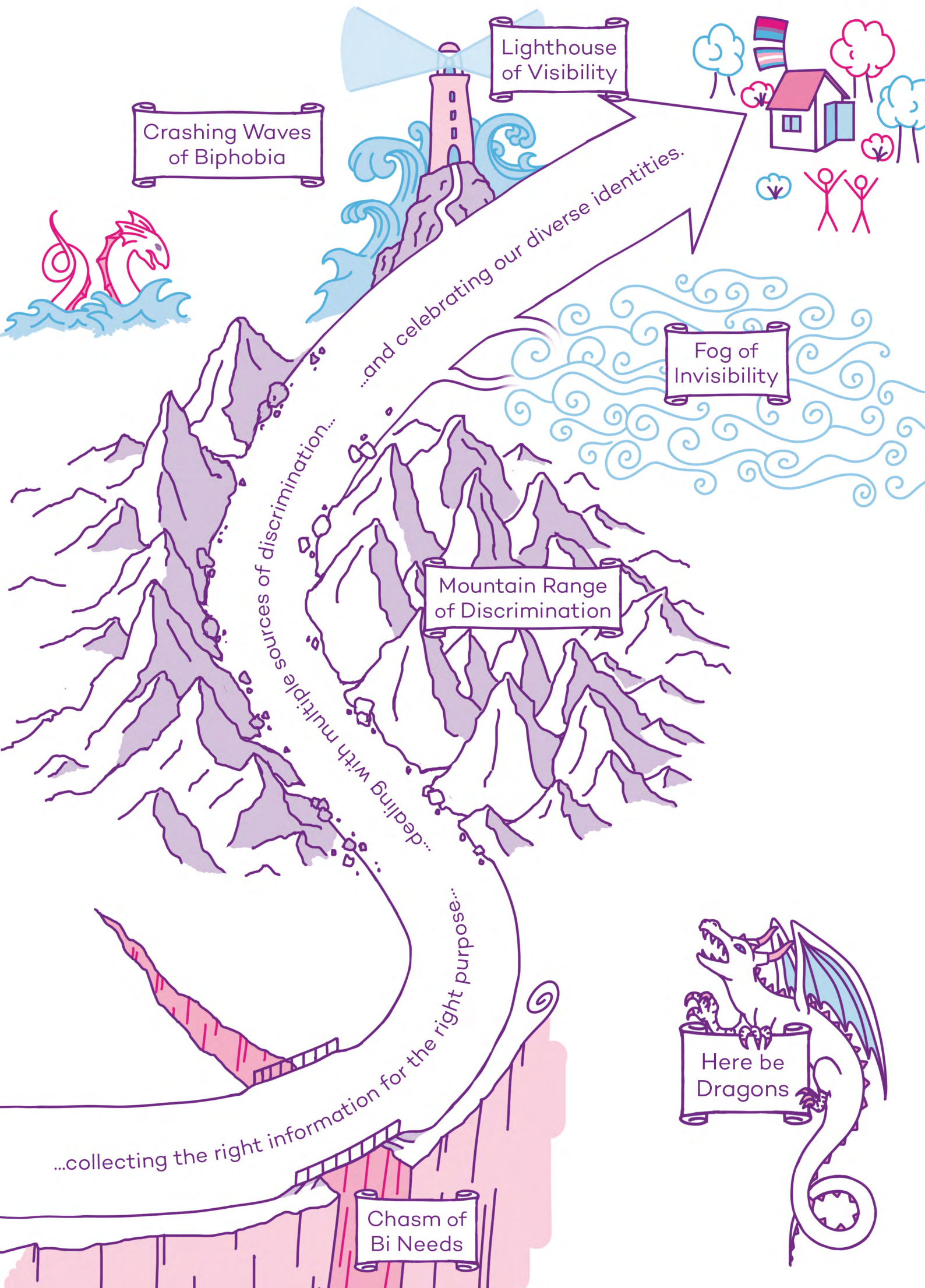
Crashing Waves
of Biphobia

Fog of
Invisibility

...and celebrating our diverse identities.

...dealing with multiple sources of discrimination...

Mountain Range
of Discrimination

...collecting the right information for the right purpose...

Here be
Dragons

Chasm of
Bi Needs

Using bi inclusive language

Equalities language is often in flux. As more people debate identity both online and in person, our concepts of who we are and the words we use to try to pin those concepts down grow and change. Bisexual specific language is no different. Here are some key points to keep in mind to avoid getting bogged down in language.

Bisexual Umbrella

bisexual

pansexual

homoflexible

questioning

fluid

omnisexual

queer

bi-curious

heteroflexible

polysexual

lesbiflexible
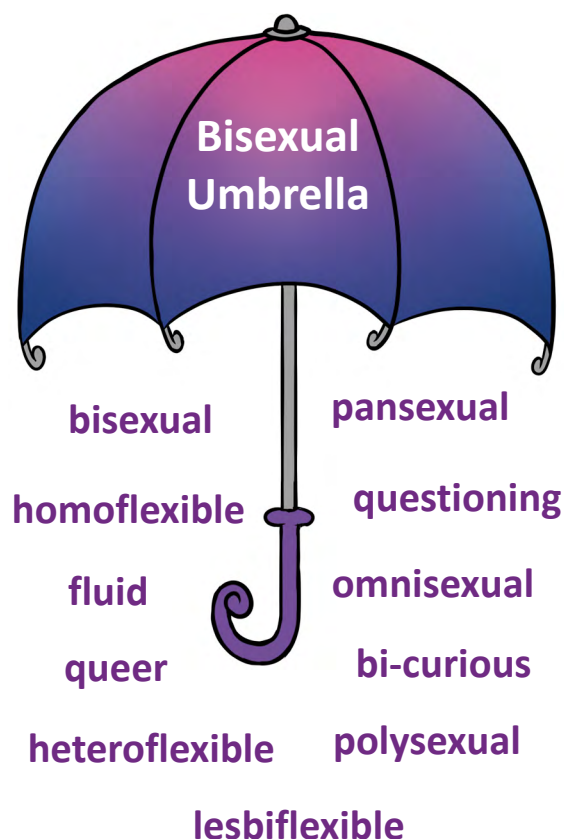
Bisexual

Bisexual and bi are umbrella terms used to refer to sexual orientations which express sexual and/or emotional attraction to more than one gender, or regardless of gender. However, many people who do not identify as gay or straight also do not identify as bisexual. Some use other terms, including pansexual and queer, to describe their identities.

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[2] Barker, M; Richards, C; Jones, R; Bowes-Catton, H; Plowman, T; Yockney, J and Morgan, M, 2012. "The Bisexuality Report: Bisexual Inclusion in LGBT Equality and Diversity", p12.

Bisexual terms, like all terminology, are constantly developing and changing. Service users may use a wide range of terms to describe themselves and define these terms in different ways. If you are in any doubt, ask for clarification without making value judgment, e.g. "what terms do you use to describe your sexual orientation?"

Sexuality or sexual orientation?

The term sexuality refers to the full range and diversity of intimate human relationships. Service providers do not need to understand the full complexity of each individual's sexuality in order to provide a good service. However, they do need to recognise that service users have diverse relationship and family models and be able to respond to and include these in order to provide equal access to all service users. When people identify as bisexual, they are sharing information about their sexual orientation. This does not automatically imply anything about any other aspect of their sexuality.

Some aspects of sexuality

Term	Explanation	Examples
Sexual orientation	Gender(s) one is attracted to	Gay, straight, bisexual, pansexual
Relationship style	Preferred structure of one's relationships	Monogamous, polyamorous, closed relationship, open relationship
Level of sexual attraction	Level of desire for partnered sexual activity	Asexual, demisexual, allosexual
Sexual practices	Kind of sexual activity one is drawn to	BDSM, group sex, fetishes, vanilla

Fixed or fluid?

Some people experience their sexual orientation as consistent and use the same words to describe it for their whole lives. Others experience their sexual orientation as evolving or fluid and may use different terms at different stages of their lives. This is one of the many reasons why some people change the terms they use to describe themselves. A service user's identity history may be irrelevant or unknown to a service provider. However, it is important to avoid implying that:

- a person's current or past identity is somehow inauthentic (e.g. avoid saying that someone "realised they were really lesbian")

- bisexuality is always synonymous with sexual fluidity

- bisexuality is any less real or valid as a sexual orientation.

Remember that whether people experience their sexual orientation, or sexuality in general, as fixed or fluid, few feel that their sexual orientation is a choice.

Biphobia and bi visibility

Biphobia is discriminatory or prejudiced actions relating to someone's actual or perceived bisexuality. In other words, discriminating against someone because they are, or are thought to be, bisexual. Biphobia can take many forms, including discriminatory comments about bisexuality, bisexual specific name calling, erasing bisexuality in LGBT histories and neglecting bisexual specific needs. You may come across additional terms such as bi erasure and bi visibility in discussions about different kinds of biphobia.

It is important to remember that anybody can experience biphobia regardless of their sexual orientation.

LGBT or gay?

When organisations use the term 'gay' as a shorthand for LGBT, it indicates a lack of awareness of, or even disregard for, the complexity and diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity. This makes it unclear which groups are being referred to, and erases specific needs of lesbian, bisexual, and trans people from consideration. It is particularly important to be clear which groups are being referred to when quoting statistics, as research consistently indicates higher prevalence of poor outcomes for transgender, bisexual, and lesbian people than for cis gay men. [3]

Using language to include bisexual people

It is better to…	than to…
…avoid phrases that refer to stereotypes of bisexuals, such as that someone "plays for both teams", "gets the best of both worlds" or "is on the fence"	…unintentionally hurt your service users. Phrases like these trivialise bisexuality and propagate biphobia, so many bisexual people have bad associations with them.
…avoid expressions such as "self-identified bisexual" or "currently identifies as bisexual"	…imply that bisexuality is a phase, something to be ashamed of or not as valid as other sexual orientations.
…remember that a person's sexual orientation is not defined by their relationships	…assume that a bisexual person who is in a monogamous relationship has 'chosen' an orientation or is now gay or straight by default.

[3] See glossary for definitions.

It is better to...	than to...
...use the words people use to describe themselves and ask open questions about identity, e.g. "how do you describe your sexual orientation?" rather than "are you gay?"	...impose labels on service users, as any term can be regarded in multiple ways, e.g. 'queer' is a word that has very negative connotations for some while others have reclaimed it with pride.
...be specific in the language you use so that it is clear what you mean and what you want	...incorrectly assume that gendered terms will be appropriate for all; e.g. if a service for gay and bisexual men wishes to invite partners to an event regardless of gender, inviting partners and friends rather than boyfriends is preferable. You do not need to include everyone all of the time, but you do need to be honest and clear about who your audience is and what you are providing.
...explicitly include biphobia when discussing homophobia and transphobia, e.g. by using the term HBTphobia which refers to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia	...imply they are the same, or that biphobia doesn't exist. Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are three distinct and different forms of discrimination. It is important to correctly recognise what forms of discrimination are taking place in order to deal with their impacts, and take steps to reduce future incidents.

It is better to…	than to…
…ask about someone's partner	…ask about a boyfriend or girlfriend when you don't know the gender of a partner.
…use the terms same sex or mixed sex couple	…erase the identities of bisexual people by referring to all couples as gay, lesbian, or straight couples or using the terms heterosexual and homosexual relationship. Relationships do not have sexual orientations, only people do.
…talk about equal marriage or same sex marriage	…say gay marriage. Gay people are not the only ones making use of equal marriage legislation; lesbian and bisexual people with same sex partners should be included too. Marriages do not have sexual orientations, only the people in them do.
…avoid using the word 'gay' as an umbrella term for the LGBT community	…contribute to erasing the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities that experience discrimination and work together to combat it.
…recognise the contribution that bisexual people have made in the LGBT community	…refer to bisexual people as 'allies' of the LGBT movement.

Avoiding assumptions

> **Many assumptions lie at the core of bisexual invisibility... Any long-term solutions must dispel these assumptions to make room for those whose lives exist beyond binaries.** [4]

The incorrect assumptions that people make about bisexuality form a major barrier to bisexual inclusion. When society constantly assumes a person is straight or gay the result is a message to bisexuals that our identities are invalid. This erodes self-esteem over time and leads to poorer health outcomes and integration. This can be avoided by service providers challenging the assumptions they make about bisexuality.

Remember the reality that...	Avoid assuming that...
...bisexuality is real and we are all equally entitled to describe ourselves in the ways that are most comfortable.	...bisexuality is not real, just a label used by people who are too scared to come out as gay.
...bisexuality is a sexual orientation like any other. There is no shame about it.	...bisexuality is something to be ashamed of.
...for many people bisexuality is a long term identity.	...bisexuality is a phase that people grow out of.

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[4] San Francisco Human Rights Commission – LGBT Advisory Committee, 2011. "Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations", p34.

Remember the reality that...	Avoid assuming that...
...a person's sexual orientation says nothing about their honesty or reliability.	...bisexual people are less honest or reliable than straight or gay people.
...bisexual people's experiences and needs are as diverse as anyone else's.	...that all bisexual people are similar and have similar needs and experiences.
...bisexuality covers a range of attractions. Some bisexuals are more attracted to one gender and others experience attraction as unrelated to gender.	...a person needs to be equally attracted to men and women in order to be bisexual.
...people won't necessarily tell you if they are in a same-sex relationship.	...all service users are in mixed sex relationships.
...just like many lesbian and gay people, bisexuals often go through a coming out process without having had sex with a particular gender of person.	...a person needs to have had sex with men and women in order to be bisexual.
...the term bisexual is now commonly used to mean "more than one" [5] rather than two genders.	...the word bisexual implies there are only two genders, so erases the identity of non-binary people, who don't identify as men or women.

[5] Barker, M et al. "The Bisexuality Report", p3.

Remember the reality that...	Avoid assuming that...
...many bisexual people have been at the heart of LGBT movements, but their sexual orientations have often been erased from history. Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, the minority ethnic bisexual trans women who started the Stonewall Inn protests were replaced by a fictional white gay cisgender man in a recent film.	...bisexual people are less committed to the LGBT movement.
...the terms people use to describe their identities do not always correlate with their sexual histories or current behaviour. Be specific with the questions you ask to get the correct information.	...asking about a person's sexual orientation provides information about their sexual history or sexual behaviour.
...not everyone comes out as bisexual or uses the term bisexual to describe their sexual orientation. Bisexual people are even less likely than gay people to come out to services.	...bisexual people are not accessing your services if few people come out to you as bisexual.
...mainstream services might be better placed to deal with some needs, e.g. in some cases of domestic abuse. Mainstream services should not automatically refer all bisexual service users to LGBT services but should work on their bisexual inclusion even if there are good LGBT services in their areas.	...bisexual service users should just be signposted to LGBT services rather than accessing mainstream services.

Understanding bisexuality

> **" Do not take bi inclusion for granted just because the B letter is in the title. [6] "**

Now that research [7] suggests an increased number of people are coming out and identifying as bisexual, services will likely come across many more bisexual service users or members of staff. Understanding bisexuality and the issues faced by bisexual people is vital to ensure that service providers will be able to see the whole picture and thus deal with service user's issues more quickly and efficiently. It will also help your staff feel included at their workplace and therefore more able to give their best performances.

Encourage positive discussion of bisexuality

When discussing sexuality with staff, volunteers or service users, ensure that all sexual orientations are included without value judgments. E.g. when working with children and young people, "provide age-appropriate education that acknowledges the diversity of sexual orientation, explicitly talks about bisexuality, and helps children and youth understand how to build healthy relationships regardless of the gender of the people they are attracted to." [8]

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[6] Bisexual Resource Centre, 2016. "Ten Tips on How to be Bi-Inclusive in Your Programmes and Services for LGBTQ Elders", p2.

[7] YouGov. "1 in 2 Young People Say They are not Heterosexual" (webpage)

[8] Unitarian Universalist Association, 2014. "Bisexuality 101: Identity, Inclusion, and Resources" (webpage)

Increase support for bisexual staff and volunteers

- Recognise that your staff and volunteer groups are likely to already include people with lived experience of being attracted to people of more than one gender, or regardless of gender

- Consult staff and volunteers on plans for increasing bisexual inclusion and visibility

- Support bisexual specific groups at work by "providing free space and support for bisexual peer-led groups" [9]

- Encourage LGBT staff networks to be inclusive by accessing bisexual specific training and inviting bisexual speakers to their events

Engage with your bisexual service users

> **If you want to make sure you are reaching the full spectrum of the LGBT community, reach out to the bi community and ask them to help to reach their population.** [10]

It is important to recognise that your service users will be best placed to provide much of the information you will need about what is working well and what most needs to be improved within your organisation.

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[9] Rankin, S; Morton, J and Bell, M, 2015. "Complicated? – Bisexual People's Experiences of and Ideas for Improving Services", p53.

[10] Bisexual Resource Centre. "Ten Tips", p2.

However:

- Understand that your bisexual service users may have particular issues with isolation. Public awareness of bisexual issues is not widespread. There are also fewer bisexual specific support groups and spaces in which to build our confidence. Bisexual people may therefore need bisexual specific support to engage with services

- It is important to improve your own knowledge of bisexual issues, which you can do with some simple online research. This will put you in a better position to understand the basics before engaging with service users who won't have endless capacity to educate you

- Avoid using service users' appointment time as an opportunity to learn about bisexuality. Instead, clearly advertise opportunities for service users to engage with the service provider through a variety of methods such as online surveys, focus groups, and engagement meetings

- When recruiting people to engage with, it may be helpful to highlight how the engagement will benefit them, e.g. by providing an opportunity to meet and discuss with other bisexual service users

- Include questions with text answer boxes as well as tick box questions in your questionnaires and engage with people through interviews and focus groups when possible to better understand the experiences behind the statistics. For more information, please see BiUK's guidelines on researching bisexuality

If you are looking for further help in how to engage with your bisexual service users, bisexual groups and LGBT organisations may be able to assist service providers in the following ways:

- Helping with understanding the full range of bisexual experiences and needs

- Providing advice on the accessibility of your service to bisexual people

- Helping shape strategies for dealing with difficult situations

- Helping services with explicitly including bisexuality in their agendas for training days and equality-focused events

- Inviting bisexual people to speak on relevant panels and serve on committees

The importance of trans equality to bisexual equality

Gender identity is about our internal sense of who we are, and how we see ourselves in regards to being a man, a woman, or somewhere in between or beyond these categories. We all have a relationship with gender. For some of us, our gender identity matches with the gender we were assigned at birth and we may therefore not think much about it. However, for others, our gender identities do not match with the gender we were assigned at birth. Such people are referred to as trans or transgender. Some trans people experience their gender as binary (they are men or women) while others have non-binary gender identities (between or beyond).

It is important to remember that being trans is not a sexual orientation. However, transgender inclusion does play a vital role in bisexual inclusion.

Trans people are particularly likely to identify as bisexual [11], including non-binary trans people [12]. An increasing number of people are identifying as non-binary. Young people in particular are more likely to identify as trans and/or non-binary and/or bisexual. However, not all non-binary people identify as trans. Services need to be aware of this large intersection between sexual orientation and gender identity. For more information on this point please refer to the Scottish Trans Alliance website [13].

Given this, it is not surprising that many bisexual and trans activists are themselves both bisexual and trans, and that these equality movements have often influenced and supported each other. Historically, bisexual inclusion within LGBT movements has often followed trans inclusion. It may be that once our understanding of gender develops, we also develop our understanding of how attraction works between, beyond, and in spite of gender. Therefore, while trans equality should of course be pursued for its own sake, it should also be appreciated as an important step on the road to bisexual inclusion.

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[11] McNeil, J, Bailey, L, Ellis, S, Morton, J, and Regan, M, 2012. "Trans Mental Health Study 2012", p9.

[12] Valentine, V, 2016. "Non-binary People's Experiences in the UK", p19.

[13] See Useful links page for website address.

Addressing bi specific needs when collecting data

> " **Address the mental health experiences of bisexual people in research, policy and practice. Increase awareness among practitioners of specific issues faced by bisexual people.** [14] "

Bisexual people can have specific needs that should be addressed by service providers. Examples of key areas of concern highlighted in bi specific resources include mental health support, sexual health information, young people, immigration, addiction, and lower rates of breast and cervical screenings. In all these areas, the most common call for action is for services to support bi inclusive and bi specific research so that they can be more comprehensively understood and addressed. Therefore it is vital that service providers ensure that bisexuality is comprehensively included in their research surveys and general data collection.

Diversity monitoring

Only ask for diversity monitoring information when you are clear about what you need the information for and how you are going to use it. Make this clear to the people you are asking the information from. Asking staff or service users for personal, and sometimes sensitive, information can make people nervous. This affects the response rates from bisexual and other groups of people and in turn the accuracy of the data collected. Therefore diversity monitoring should not be the only tool used to identify specific areas of need. Consider including questions about experiences, needs and quality of service to better understand service development needs.

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[14] Barker, M et al. "The Bisexuality Report", p8.

Diversity monitoring should always be done anonymously and processed separately to satisfaction surveys or applications for employment or volunteering. Make it clear on diversity monitoring forms that they will be processed separately.

Do not ask about sexual orientation and gender identity in the same question, e.g. "Are you straight, gay, lesbian or trans?" Gender, gender identity and sexual orientation should all be asked as separate questions as they are all different protected characteristics and aspects of identity. Combining them into one question will make it difficult to analyse results accurately.

Allow participants various options to describe their sexual orientation, preferably using their own words if possible. At the very least include a bisexual category. Never assign respondents sexual orientations based on answers to questions about the gender of a current partner or current sexual activity. Analysing results based only on current relationships will not be able to distinguish between gay, lesbian and bisexual experiences and needs.

General research and surveys

Analysis of data according to gender is often very useful. However, LGBT data requires analysis filtered by both sexual orientation and gender identity in order to see what variables are most affecting different results. E.g. prevalence of poor mental health outcomes for LGBT people vary depending on sexual orientation and gender identity more than according to gender in most studies. [15] Also there may be greater difference between bisexual and other respondents or trans and cis respondents than there are between men and women.

When reporting results that are filtered by sexual orientation, ensure that bisexual data is reported separately when statistically relevant. "The research studies that differentiate bi data from gay and lesbian data help to expose the particular vulnerabilities within the bi community so they can be addressed." [16] E.g. conflating lesbian and bisexual women into one category would not identify the different rates of uptake of cancer screening between lesbian and bisexual women.

It is important to ensure when filtering and analysing results based on sexual orientation, that we don't accidentally conflate sexual orientation with gender. Sometimes research is reported using separate categories for gay, lesbian and bisexual people. However this inadvertently separates the lesbian and gay data by gender without doing the same with the bisexual data. This makes it hard to differentiate whether different responses correlate with sexual orientation, gender or both. Results should be reported consistently for bisexual and for gay/lesbian people.

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[15] Barker, M et al. "The Bisexuality Report", p26-27.

[16] Bisexual Resource Centre. "Ten Tips", p2.

LGBT specific data

How you phrase your questions clearly indicates to respondents whether their identities or needs have been considered or not.

When asking LGBT-specific questions, consider how you are including bisexual and trans issues and how their phrasing will read to bisexual and trans respondents. E.g. "have you received negative comments about having a same sex partner?" is a good question to ask. However, bisexual and trans people can experience LGBT related negative comments about partners in other ways that should also be asked about. Questions such as "have you received negative comments about having had partners of different genders?" and "have you received negative comments about having a trans partner?" provide a more complete picture of negative comments about partners.
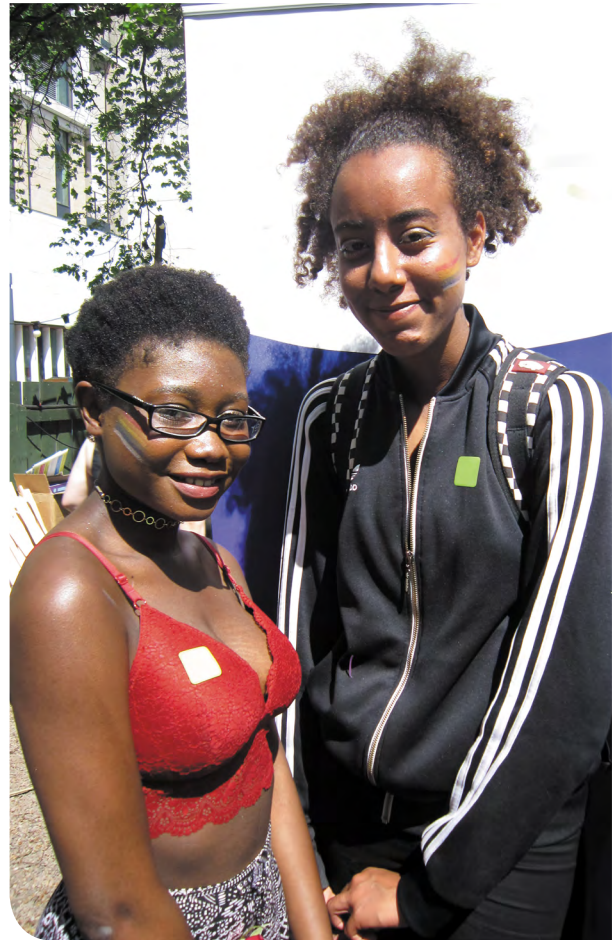
Be very clear about how you are defining LGBT terms and how you have cleaned your data. E.g. in 'Complicated?', while respondents were asked diversity monitoring questions, data was cleaned according the question "do you experience emotional or sexual attraction to people of more than one gender?". This was necessary to include people who do not use the bisexual label but do experience attraction to more than one gender or regardless of gender.

Recognising the complexity of discrimination

> **" Bisexual people can face prejudice from lesbian and gay people as well as from heterosexual people, such as being refused entry to LGBT spaces or inappropriate treatment by LGBT services. Lesbians and gay men working as service providers can also sometimes oppose bisexual inclusion. This means bisexual people can feel pressured to pass as a gay man or lesbian to avoid biphobia when accessing an LGBT-related service. Those who do come out as bisexual can face assumptions, inappropriate questions and stereotyping. It is therefore important for LGBT services to do specific work toward understanding and welcoming this large section of their community. [17] "**

It is important to recognise biphobia as a distinct form of prejudice in order to identify it, protect against it, and challenge it within our services. E.g. a nurse was heard saying "I refuse to treat her, she's not normal and just a greedy bitch, she needs to decide what gender she loves, it's unnatural to love both". [18] The issue this nurse had was with bisexuality specifically, not with same-sex attraction in general.

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[17] Galop and BiUK, 2016. "Tackling Biphobia: a Guide for Safety Services", p3.

[18] Rankin, S et al. "Complicated?", p62.

Biphobia is as real, unlawful and damaging as other types of discrimination

It is important to remember that everyone is at risk of biphobia, as anyone can be perceived to be bisexual or discriminated against for associating with a bisexual person. It is equally important to remember that everyone, including bisexual people, is at risk of discriminating against others. Internalised biphobia can also negatively impact on how service users engage with organisations, sometimes resulting in people who feel ashamed of their sexual orientation participating in biphobic comments or deselecting themselves from accessing LGBT specific services.

It should also be noted that service users can experience both homophobia and biphobia when accessing services, so we may be trying to avoid at least two types of discrimination. This may be one of the main reasons why bisexual service users are more likely to remain discreet about our sexual orientations than our gay and lesbian counterparts.

Biphobia is experienced while accessing all types of services, so all services need to acknowledge and address it. This includes services for young people. A survey of more than 10,000 LGBT students in the USA found that "LGBT youth and young adults report negative experiences in schools, including higher levels of harassment, discrimination, and violence." [19]

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[19] Movement Advancement Project (MAP), 2016. "Invisible Majority: the Disparities Facing Bisexual People and How to Remedy Them", pi.

A similar survey from 2011 found that "more than 44% of bisexual youth reported having been bullied, threatened, or harassed in the past year through the internet or by text, compared to 20% of straight youth, 30% of lesbian and gay youth, and 31% of questioning youth." [20] So ignoring biphobia within educational services can be particularly harmful.

Bisexual people experience more discrimination when accessing LGBT services and health services than any other type of service. [21] So it is particularly urgent for LGBT and health services to understand and acknowledge biphobia.

Biphobia is often fed by how bisexuality is represented in the media. [22] Fictional characters are generally not portrayed as bisexual even when they express feelings for more than one gender. Those characters are, instead, portrayed as going from straight to gay or going through a phase, thus reinforcing harmful stereotypes. When bisexual people are represented, they encompass all negative stereotypes associated with bisexuality, such as being greedy or promiscuous. Such behaviours are often linked to tragedy or villainy. [23] Repeatedly absorbing such negative portrayals and experiencing biphobia from services can feed the fear of being open with services providers.

[20] MAP. "Invisible Majority", p7.

[21] Rankin, S et al. "Complicated?", p32.

[22] Barker, M et al. "The Bisexuality Report", p7.

[23] Barker, M et al. "The Bisexuality Report", p15-16.

Including gay does not automatically include bisexual

The distinction between gay and bisexual issues is an important one because the experiences and needs of bisexual people are different to those of gay people. The 'Complicated?' report looked at various studies indicating that bisexual people are at higher risk of addiction, eating disorders, and other mental health issues than lesbian or gay people. [24] Bisexual people have a harder time finding sexual health resources that fit their needs, as those aimed at gay people often ignore bisexual needs such as reproductive health.

Bisexual people are more likely to feel that their sexual orientation is invisible, no matter the gender of their partner. This is because a bisexual person in a same-sex relationship is often assumed to be gay, and those in mixed-sex relationships assumed to be straight. Some bisexual people are discouraged by their partners from being out, or are out under pressure to identify as gay or straight.

Discrimination affects people's health

It is important that services recognise the negative impacts of biphobia on people's health:

"Like with many other populations who face stigma, for bisexual people a lack of acceptance, harassment, and discrimination do significant mental and physical harm … Bisexual youth and adults have elevated mental health and suicide-related outcomes. According to the United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 40% of bisexual high school students seriously considered attempting suicide, compared to 30% of gay and lesbian students and 12% of heterosexual students … Bisexual people … have a higher prevalence of some specific negative physical health outcomes, including cardiovascular disease, smoking, substance use, some cancers, and sexually transmitted infections … Service

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[24] Rankin, S et al. "Complicated?", p46.

providers must understand these specific risks and outcomes in order to serve bisexual patients". [25]

Bisexual people are also at higher risk of experiencing trauma that often results in negative health outcomes:

"Bisexual people face shocking rates of intimate partner violence, domestic violence, rape, and sexual assault. The United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that 46% of bisexual women have been raped, compared to 17% of heterosexual women and 13% of lesbian women. Bisexual students too suffer high levels of sexual assault on campus and bisexual people in places of incarceration report high rates of violence at the hands of staff and other inmates." [26]

This higher risk profile should never be misunderstood or twisted to imply that anyone has experienced such a trauma because they are bisexual. E.g. a psychotherapist told a bisexual client that it was their fault they had been raped because they were bisexual. This kind of prejudiced comment would be unlikely had the client been lesbian or straight. [27]

It is important that services understand that while bisexual people can be at higher risk of poorer health outcomes and trauma, we are simultaneously less understood and often treated as a lower priority by many of the services. If a person has repeatedly experienced exclusion, they are more likely to expect prejudice from services, affecting how they engage with them. It is important that service providers recognise this dynamic and put out positive messages about how they include all sexual orientations in order to mitigate this expectation.

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[25] MAP. "Invisible Majority", pii.

[26] MAP. "Invisible Majority", pii.

[27] Rankin, S et al. "Complicated?", p62.

Bisexuality is intersectional

> **❝ Many people face crimes and non-criminal incidents which they perceive as having multiple types of hate motive, for instance, both biphobic and racist motivations. They are entitled to ask police and other safety services to record the crime or incident under more than one hate crime or incident category. Ask service users open questions about their perception of the motivation for a crime or incident.** [28] ❞

There is no one standard bisexual experience. Who we are, how we experience biphobia and what our service needs are all depend on what other protected characteristics we have as well as our class and where we live (e.g. rurality).

The majority of respondents (61%) in the 'Complicated?' report said that they experienced discrimination on more than one protected characteristic (multiple discrimination). Many of these noted that the kinds of biphobia they experience and how they respond to them depended on other aspects of their identity and the identities of those discriminating against them. [29]

Understanding and incorporating intersectionality into your organisation is vital for bisexual inclusion. If intersectionality is not included, many of the most urgent and complex needs may be overlooked. This means front line staff can find it more difficult and time-consuming to deal with intersectional issues, making a service less effective and efficient for all. E.g. "bisexual immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees have unique needs and valid claims. But when

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[28] Galop and BiUK. "Tackling Biphobia", p3.

[29] Rankin, S et al. "Complicated?", p43-51.

a bisexual person approaches an asylum officer to begin a claim, their sexual orientation may be viewed more sceptically than if the claimant was gay or lesbian". [30]

More information about how intersectionality particularly affects bisexual people can be found in 'Complicated?' [31] and guidance about including intersectionality within services is available at the Equality Network's Intersectional webpage [32].

Challenging biphobia and promoting bi visibility

Biphobia is just one more contribution towards me being reluctant to access services or be open about myself. [33]

Like most minority groups, bisexual people are more likely to disengage with services that erase our identities or do not deal well with discrimination. It is therefore vital that services send out very clear messages of how they include bisexuality and tackle discrimination.

Creating safer spaces

One of the best ways to deal with discrimination is to have a clear, published code of conduct that defines what discrimination is, why it needs to be combated, and what steps may be taken when it occurs. Having a published code of conduct, or a safe space policy, sends a clear message that a service takes inclusion seriously. This helps

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[30] MAP. "Invisible Majority", pi.

[31] Rankin, S et al. "Complicated?", p43-51.

[32] See Useful links page for website address.

[33] Rankin, S et al. "Complicated?", p49.

build the confidence of service users and staff that their diverse needs are being considered and supports staff members to deal with discrimination proportionately and effectively.

Work with service users, volunteers and staff groups as much as possible when developing or refreshing your code of conduct. This provides good opportunities to raise awareness about equality throughout the organisation, empowers people in all roles to shape the policy (resulting in greater buy-in), and will highlight concerns so that they can be addressed before the policy is implemented. Ensure that bisexuality and biphobia are discussed during this process and explicitly included in the code of conduct.

Phrasing questions neutrally also makes services safer. Have discussions about how the phrasing of questions indicates what assumptions are being made and the effects of these on service users. The most common of these in relation to sexual orientation is asking "do you have a partner?" rather than "do you have a girl/boyfriend?" Bisexual people can face additional questioning including "so are you straight/gay now?" and "so have you decided then?" that indicate that value judgements and/or assumptions are being made about the validity of our sexual orientations which make a service more difficult to access.

Training

One of the most commonly identified ways to improve services for bisexual people is bi specific training provision. Such training should ideally be led by experienced trainers with lived experience of the issues. It should also include a wide variety of bisexual identities, issues and needs.

General equalities and LGBT staff training should include bi specific information and include bisexual people in case studies and good practice examples.

It is also important to provide ongoing awareness raising opportunities, such as sharing bisexual articles and new research findings with staff, or holding lunch-and-learn sessions to avoid knowledge and commitment to inclusion fading away.

Explicitly mention bisexuality when updating policies

When updating internal policies, it is important to consider how bisexuality and biphobia are explicitly included. This helps to make it clear to your staff, volunteers and service users that you take bisexual inclusion seriously and provides guidance to staff on how to include bisexuality and tackle biphobia.

Bisexual policies checklist	✓
Are you consulting with bisexual people about changes to your policies?	
Are you monitoring if you have a wide range and large number of diverse LGBT people engaging in service development instead of relying on a small number of gay people to communicate the needs of all LGBT service users?	
Are bisexual experiences and needs explicitly considered in your diversity and engagement policies, such as Equality Impact Assessments?	
Do you provide guidance for your staff on how to include people of all sexual orientations within your particular service?	
Do your strategies for staff and volunteer development include bisexual and LGBT-specific training, including evaluation of the quality, inclusiveness and impact of diversity training?	

Bisexual policies checklist	✓
Are biphobia and transphobia mentioned as specific forms of discrimination alongside homophobia in your code of conduct and procedures to deal with discrimination?	
Do event planning policies encourage staff to include bisexual and LGBT specific issues in their agendas, invite diverse bisexual and LGBT speakers to contribute and advertise through bisexual and LGBT networks?	
Do you check your bi specific initiatives do not clash with initiatives for other communities of interest that may intersect, e.g. running a bi specific session at the same time as one for minority ethnic people?	
Do you make sure that any questions are necessary, specific and phrased in a neutral way without making assumptions about people's sexual orientations or the genders of their partners?	
When reporting on diversity and engagement, are you reporting on bisexual outcomes separately instead of conflating bisexual results with those of lesbian and gay people?	
Do you check that organisations and groups are bisexual friendly before supporting and signposting users to them?	
Have you thought through balancing the different needs and values of different service users groups and how you respond to these if they are conflicting (e.g. some service users may need support to recognise that promoting equality has positive outcomes for all and is not just special treatment for some)?	

Include bisexuality in published information

How an organisation refers to, or remains silent on, bisexuality is a strong indicator of how inclusive and safe it is for bisexual people. Include bisexuality when mentioning sexual orientation: whether it is in website content, marketing leaflets, or information resources. E.g. anti-bullying campaigns should include bi specific issues by explicitly incorporating bisexual case studies, examples of biphobic comments, and guidance on how to recognise and challenge biphobia.

If you are publishing information on a particular topic, research if there are any bi specific issues that should be noted and if it is possible to signpost to any bi specific resources or groups on the topic. E.g. bisexual people may be at higher risk of domestic abuse and experience specific barriers to accessing support if local services do not recognise biphobic domestic abuse.

If your organisation is considering producing separate information resources for people in same-sex and mixed-sex relationships, consider the effects of this on bisexual people and those exploring their sexual orientation, and on trans (including non-binary) people. When sexual health information is aimed at only people in same sex or mixed sex relationships, it makes it more difficult for people to find one resource that contains all the information they may need on sexual health, especially when those resources do not include trans people. Not having all sexual health information can be dangerous when people unexpectedly experiment with different kinds of partners.

The images used in resources are also important. Avoid using oversexualised images or images of three people together to indicate bisexuality. It is most often more appropriate to use a variety of photographs depicting different kinds of relationships, a person in a bisexual T-shirt or a bisexual group on a pride march.

The quickest way to better include bisexuality in your information is to make use of bisexual specific resources that are already available. Make these resources more available by including links to them on your website, sharing them with colleagues and making bi inclusive literature and posters available in your reception area.

A list of some suggested resources is available in the Useful Links section.

Celebrate bisexual identities and support bi specific work

"Find out about local, regional or national bisexual groups and events. Start dialogue with bisexual communities to find out about their experiences and needs, while acknowledging that they are under-resourced and have little capacity. Consult them on changes to your service and ask for their expertise and support their work in exchange. Promote opportunities to get involved in your organisation, such as joining independent advisory groups and management committees". [34]

Bisexual people should be regarded as part of the rich diversity of humanity that should be celebrated, and not just a collection of issues or problems that need to be solved. It is through this recognition, which includes supporting bisexual activism, that organisations can demonstrate that they acknowledge, value and understand bisexual people as part of their core service user group. It can also be a key strategy for services to reach out to this often hidden population.

Ensure that bisexual people are included when celebrating LGBT identities. Remember that LGBT terms as we currently use them are relatively new. As recently as the early twentieth century people who were in same sex relationships or who did not adhere to typical

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[34] Galop and BiUK. "Tackling Biphobia", p4.

gender roles were referred to as 'inverts' rather than LGBT. Famous LGBT people from the past and other cultures are often labelled as 'gay' no matter their life experiences or regardless of the fact that they did not conceptualise sexual orientation and gender identity in modern, Western terms. This erases bisexual and trans identities from our LGBT histories, which in turn results in people incorrectly believing that bisexual and trans people have not been involved in fighting for LGBT rights. Even modern figures who are openly and proudly bisexual can find it difficult to get the media and society to remember their bisexuality and are often mislabelled. It is best to check what terms people use for themselves, either in person or through recent published interviews.

Even at LGBT Pride events, bisexual people often have a difficult time finding bi specific information and merchandise and can face questioning for attending with people of different genders. Therefore it is vital that services, especially LGBT-specific services, explicitly include bisexuality in the resources and merchandise that they distribute at LGBT events and support bi specific events, groups and activism. Bi specific work is also needed to reach the many bisexual people who do not participate in LGBT events. This may include supporting and attending bi specific events.

Services can support these events by advertising them through social media, having a stall to engage directly with participants, or attending as participants themselves to gather bisexual views, improve knowledge and support bisexual staff. Bisexual activists are most often volunteering their time and do not have any formal funding, so offers of assistance and financial contributions are very likely to be welcomed and can create capacity for activists to better develop their services in return.

Key bisexual specific annual events

Bi Visibility Day

(23rd September)

Anyone is welcome to run a bi specific event and submit the details to this website for international recognition of their efforts to celebrate bisexuality. bivisibilityday.com

BiCon

BiCon is completely self-organised and self-funded by bisexual activists and gathers over 300 people for an annual weekend of workshops and social events. bicon.org.uk

BiFests

One-day events that celebrate bisexuality, run by and aimed at bisexual people and friends. bifest.org

BiTastic!

A one day workshop event in Scotland for bisexual and trans people and our allies. Hosted by the Equality Network and partners. bitastic.org

Bibliography and useful links

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Useful links

Bi Community News
The UK's bi monthly bi magazine
bicommunitynews.co.uk

Biscuit
Mixed purpose organisation catering to bisexual women and femmes
thisisbiscuit.co.uk

The Bisexual Index
Activist group fighting biphobia and bi erasure
bisexualindex.org.uk

Bi UK
UK wide network for bi research and activism
biuk.org

Bi UK Research Guidelines (Social Sciences)
bisexualresearch.wordpress.com/reports-guidance/guidance/
research-guidelines

Bi Scotland
Voluntary organisation for bisexuals in Scotland
wordpress.biscotland.org

Bi and Beyond
Edinburgh bi group
facebook.com/biandbeyond

Equality Network Bisexual page
equality-network.org/resources/publications/bisexual

Equality Network Intersectional page
equality-network.org/resources/publications/intersectional

Scottish Trans Alliance
scottishtrans.org

Glossary

Allosexual person

A person who experiences sexual attraction. It is the word for anyone who is not asexual.

Asexual person

A person who does not experience sexual attraction.

BDSM

Bondage, discipline (or domination), sadism, and masochism (as a type of sexual practice).

Biphobia / biphobic

A discriminatory or prejudiced action related to someone's actual or perceived bisexual orientation.

Bisexual person / bi person

A person who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender or regardless of gender.

Cisgender / cis

A person who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth. Cisgender is the word for anyone who is not transgender.

Demisexual

Someone who can only experience sexual attraction after an emotional bond has been formed. This bond does not have to be romantic in nature.

Gay

A word describing a person who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender.

Genderfluid

See Non-binary.

Genderqueer

See Non-binary.

Intersectionality

Identities, experiences or approaches to equality work that fall into more than one equality strand at the same time.

Lesbian

A word describing a woman who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women.

LGBT / LGBTI / LGBTQ

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer

Non-binary person

A person identifying as either having a gender which is in-between or beyond the two categories 'man' and 'woman', as fluctuating between 'man' and 'woman', or as having no gender, either permanently or some of the time. Other terms non-binary people use to describe their identity include 'genderfluid' and 'genderqueer'.

Pansexual person

A person who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender or regardless of gender. Some people use the term pansexual rather than bisexual in order to be more explicitly inclusive of non-binary gender identities.

Polyamory

Relationships which involve more than two intimate partners, with the knowledge and consent of all involved.

Protected characteristics

A set of characteristics that are protected from discrimination according to the Equality Act 2010.

Queer

An umbrella term sometimes used for diverse sexual minorities that are not heterosexual, heteronormative, and/or gender-binary. It may be used to challenge the idea of labels and categories such as lesbian, gay and bisexual. It is important to note that the word queer is an in-group term (i.e. used by queer people about themselves), and is a word that can be considered offensive by some people, depending on their generation, geographic location, and relationship with the word.

Transgender / trans

Inclusive umbrella terms for anyone whose gender identity or gender expression does not fully correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth. We use trans to refer to trans men and trans women, non-binary people, and cross-dressing people.

Vanilla

Refers to sex practices which exclude fetishes such as BDSM.

Other formats

If you need this document in larger print or another format or language, please contact us on 0131 467 6039 or en@equality-network.org.

This document is available in PDF format on our website: www.equality-network.org

Equality Network

The Equality Network is a national lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) equality and human rights charity in Scotland.

30 Bernard Street
Edinburgh EH6 6PR

Telephone: +44 (0) 131 467 6039

www.equality-network.org
Email: en@equality-network.org

 LGBTIScotland
 equalitynetwork
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Scottish Trans

Scottish Trans Alliance is the Equality Network project to improve gender identity and gender reassignment equality, rights and inclusion in Scotland.

www.scottishtrans.org
Email: info@scottishtrans.org

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