

# Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Trans inclusion

## *LGBT+ mentoring scheme*

11 July 2019

Alongside The Law Society [<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/>] and Stonewall [<http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>], we supported a scheme where law firms were given the opportunity to receive free mentoring on developing their approaches to LGBT inclusivity.

This offered mentoring to small and medium-sized law firms, sharing good practice and providing guidance about creating an LGBT friendly workplace. Those who signed up were supported in attracting the best talent, as well as other business benefits such as increased networking opportunities.

The mentors, all of who are top performing law firms in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index [<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace-equality-index>], provided an average of two hours free support and guidance every month.

One year on, we are sharing some of their stories. Read what has been achieved from this innovative scheme and the impact it has made.

Open all [#]

## *EMG Solicitors – empowered to deliver change*

### *Background*

EMG Solicitors has a team of 37 employees who work hard to make sure they look after, listen to and train their people. They promote openness and conversation amongst their teams.

They were keen to sign up to the LGBT+ mentoring scheme and develop their approach to LGBT+ inclusivity. They were mentored by Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner (BCLP).

The mentoring scheme helped them to develop a safe, friendly and inclusive workplace culture where everyone can be themselves. They found the support and regular contact offered by BCLP instrumental in driving through change on inclusion and LGBT+.

### *What did they do*

- Won full support from senior leaders and Directors to be part of the mentoring scheme.
- Set up an 'Empowerment, Diversity and Inclusion Team'.
- Carried out a firm-wide questionnaire on equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Redrafted client documentation to make sure it was inclusive.
- Delivered a presentation to all staff on inclusivity which covered several areas but had a specific focus on LGBT+. This was well received and helped to ensure that inclusivity is recognised as one of their core values.
- Supporting LGBT+ inclusivity on all their social media platforms.
- Sponsored Pride Radio at two Pride events with staff members contributing to broadcasts.

### *Next steps*

- Support local community campaigns against homophobia and hate crime.

- Create links with local LGBT+ charities to see what support they can offer.
- Secure an entry into the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.
- Look at inclusivity so they not only promote LGBT+ inclusivity but also consider other minority groups to make sure their approach to inclusivity is overarching.

"Here at EMG, we fully appreciate and actively ensure that our clients and colleagues are always treated with the utmost respect and dignity. However, as with everything, there is always room for improvement.

I hope that the more we develop our understanding, the better we will be as a firm at supporting those colleagues and clients we have from the LGBT community".

## *Horwich Farrelly Solicitors - Improving inclusion for everyone*

### *Background*

Horwich Farrelly is a defendant insurance law firm, with over 750 people working in multiple locations across the UK.

They signed up to the LGBT+ Mentoring scheme and partnered with Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner (BCLP) to share experiences, ideas and challenges, and have the support to try new things.

The firm was proud of the level of diversity they had achieved organically, but they were also keen to do as much as they could to ensure there were no barriers to employees being able to succeed and feel comfortable in being themselves at work.

### *What did they do*

- A diversity and inclusion steering group was created to support inclusivity for all.
- An action plan was developed to look closely at any diversity challenges the firm faced.
- Recruitment and progression processes were reviewed to remove unconscious bias.
- They used various channels to communicate their commitment to improving inclusion for all, and to facilitate progression to senior roles for under-represented groups.
- They signed up to the Inclusive Insurers Pledge and Race at Work Charter.
- They committed to communicating and celebrating LGBT+ events in the future.

### *Next steps*

Their next steps include:

- Launching a network of diversity champions
- Publish an external facing commitment on diversity and inclusion
- Work towards completing the Stonewall UK Workplace Equality Index.

We recognise that meaningful change takes time, and that there is no quick fix for us or,

indeed, any firm when it comes to equality, inclusion and diversity. We are pleased to have taken part in the LGBT+ Mentoring Scheme and can already see the internal benefits. Achieving equality, inclusion and diversity across our business is tremendously important to Horwich Farrelly, and partnerships such as this help us to deliver on our commitments in this area.

## *Lester Aldridge - Learning together*

### *Background*

Lester Aldridge has 327 employees servicing both corporate and individual clients in a wide variety of business areas.

The firm believes in equality and diversity for everyone – employees and clients. It is committed to equality of opportunity and is fully dedicated to promoting a working environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

To help it do this Lester Aldridge joined the LGBT+ mentoring scheme and was partnered with Baker McKenzie. Theirs has been a very fluid relationship and they have worked together on wider general issues, as well as targeted LGBT+ initiatives.

### *What did they do*

- Identified what they as a firm could realistically achieve - given they were very much in the early stages of raising awareness and implementing change on LGBT+.
- Improved communication with employees, as while the firm saw itself as an inclusive employer, its employees did not see it that clearly.
- Supported the development of action plans and encouraged the launch of employee groups and engagement activity.
- Improved senior leadership buy in.
- Recruited several volunteers to get involved with Pride.
- Increased focus on LGBT+ issues in the firm's Equality and Diversity committee.

### *Next steps*

- Recruiting 'diversity ambassadors' – an idea that evolved from a suggestion of Baker McKenzie.
- Making sure long-lasting and sustainable cultural change.
- Involvement in two Pride celebrations.
- Giving out rainbow lanyards to those who would like to wear them.
- Developing a three-year equality, diversity and inclusion plan.

"It has been very beneficial to draw from our mentor firm's significant experience over the past 12 months, and to be given the flexibility to work at a suitable pace".

## *MSB Solicitors - Leading from the top*

## *Background*

MSB is a law firm with more than 120 people.

The firm is committed to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality and diversity. They see diversity and inclusion as needing to be at the top of its agenda, until such time as it no longer needs to be.

As part of this commitment, MSB joined the LGBT+ mentoring scheme as a way of doing more. They welcomed the chance to show the legal profession of what could be achieved when law firms work together. They were mentored by DWF LLP.

## *What did they do*

- MSB's managing Partner, Emma Carey, took personal charge of the relationship and ensured the whole firm was committed to making the mentoring scheme work.
- Clear objectives were set at the beginning of the relationship, and progress against these were regularly reviewed.
- DWF LLP shared their resources and guided MSB on how they could be adapted for a smaller workforce. It was helpful to bounce ideas off with DWF who had experience of which activities and initiatives might bring about a wider impact.
- They made sure there was an LGBT+ representative on the firm's Diversity and Inclusion group.
- Both firms marched together at Manchester Pride, with colleagues networking with one another.
- Adapted their approach to recruitment, to attract diverse applicants.
- Collaborated on community engagement with the Navajo Merseyside & Cheshire LGBT Charter Mark, Liverpool Pride and visiting students in all three Liverpool universities.

## *Next steps*

- Working together on a joint allies event.
- Using learning and ideas from the scheme to help other protected characteristic groups.

"Often it is the big firms which are seen to be doing things in the area of equality, diversity and inclusion. In fact, all the work, initiatives and policies can be implemented in small and medium firms too – this does work, and it must.

"We quickly developed a good rapport with DWF. This meant the experience was fun, as well as extremely useful, and the project has been a catalyst to advance equality, diversity and inclusion at the firm more widely".

## *Trans inclusion*

### *Guidance*

Read our good practice for law firms on creating a trans inclusive workplace

[/solicitors/resources/diversity-toolkit/lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-inclusion/good-practice-for-law-firms-on-creating-a-trans-inclusive-workplace/].

## *Case studies*

Read how some firms are supporting and promoting trans inclusion and why it is important to support your staff.

Open all [#]

### *Creating a trans inclusive workplace (Eversheds Sutherland)*

#### *Background*

Eversheds Sutherland International are a top 100 ranked employer in the Stonewall Equality Index and have been for eight years. One of their aims is to make sure that all colleagues and partners can bring their true selves to work.

#### *What did they do?*

- Launched a Transitioning at Work Policy in 2018, with supporting guidelines, FAQs and template Transition Plan.
- Established a working group that included colleagues from HR, recruitment, IT and the Perspective (their LGBT+ employee network) to make sure the policy was implemented successfully.
- Asked Global Butterflies to present a "Trans 101" webinar to educate colleagues on trans inclusion.
- Adapted the gender marker question in their employee wellbeing surveys to include a trans option and free-text boxes.
- Ran a series of client training courses on gender identity and intersex, aimed at increasing awareness and best-practice approaches in the workplace. This was co-presented with Acas and a:gender with trans, non-binary and intersex speakers.
- Hosted a Dive In Festival event in Leeds, "Who do you think you are?", with Sophie Cook, trans advocate, as keynote speaker.
- Hosted a Stonewall Trans Allies Seminar.

#### *Next steps*

They will roll out additional training on their Transitioning at Work Policy and Guidelines. They are also in the process of designing a new HR software system for employees and aim to include more inclusive gender and title options.

#### *What they said*

**Lee Ranson**, CEO, said

"On behalf of the firm, I am proud to announce the launch of our new Transitioning at Work policy and guidelines. We are wholly committed to the trans community and I am delighted that we have formalised our approach around supporting our colleagues who wish to transition."

### *Why law firms need to talk about gender identity (Lui Asquith)*

*Lui Asquith, gender queer solicitor*

I believe that a law firm that is resistant about talking about gender identity and trans inclusion,

is a firm missing out on highly talented people. Having such initiatives will also encourage diversity in to the profession.

Allowing for acceptance and diversity brings with it positive wellbeing and mental health, which inevitably leads to better productivity rate and more business. Trans and gender variant people are significantly more likely to suffer with anxiety and/or depression and law firms can reduce the risk of this by simply being open and willing to learn.

One thing firms can do very easily is to provide trans awareness training for their staff. Firms can also fundraise for charities, that are working for trans equality and who can provide information to help inform colleagues.

If an employee comes out as trans, a timely, confidential and considered chat with them to explore what the firm can do to make them feel more comfortable is really important.

Here are some further tips:

- Be sure to ask them their preferred pronouns, name, title (they may not want one) and make any change of name simple.
- Make sure colleagues are respectful about the changes being made.
- Ask which information the individual wants to remain confidential and how they want their colleagues to be informed about the information they do want others to know.
- Make any approach trans employee led – everyone experiences coming out in different ways. Take the lead of the trans person and not what the firm thinks is best.

A lot of people show support and solidarity, however unfortunately some still show prejudice and discrimination. I would like to see more solicitors and lawyers stand up and count themselves as allies in the legal profession and come out for trans equality, whatever their identity.

My journey has not been an easy one. I had gender dysphoria and suffered with depression. I am now working hard so that I can use my qualification to provide advice, guidance and support to other trans and gender variant young people. I do not want others to go through a delayed process of self-identification and the negative psychological impact that may bring.

Mermaids is looking to create a network of trans aware lawyers around the country. If your firm is interested in becoming a Mermaids' legally accredited firm, please get in touch [<https://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk/contact.html>].

## *Promoting and encouraging trans equality (Pinsent Masons)*

### *Background*

Pinsent Masons is committed to making sure their firm is as inclusive as possible and this includes promoting and encouraging trans equality. They have been ranked as second in Stonewall's Top 100 employers [<http://www.stonewall.org.uk/get-involved/workplace/workplace-equality-index>].

### *What did they do?*

- Launched a film on gender identity in aid of Mermaids [<http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk/>], a charity supporting children and young people, who are raising awareness about gender issues amongst professionals and the general public.
- Added a gender identity question to their annual diversity monitoring form. This resulted in some staff answering positively in that they identified with a different gender to that assigned

at birth.

- Relunched their 'Straight Allies' network as 'Allies' to take in to account gender identity as well as sexual orientation.
- Changed client registration to include Mx as an option alongside Ms, Miss, Mr etc.
- Sponsored an inspiring production by the Adam World Choir, a digital trans and non binary community choir.
- Introduced new inclusive leadership and workplace training.

### *Next Steps*

Pinsent Masons are looking to introduce gender neutral toilets, as well considering redesigning their office and work spaces to more inclusive.

### *Having a trans inclusion policy (Hogan Lovells)*

#### *Background*

Hogan Lovells recognise that their success as a global firm depends on them attracting and retaining the best people. They understand that a key part of this is having a working environment where people of all backgrounds and experiences can reach their full potential.

#### *What did they do?*

They created a policy spelling out the support Hogan Lovells offers to anyone wishing to transition and the colleagues they work with.

As part of their policy launch, they also provided trans inclusion training to their staff who work with clients. This included advice on how to talk to colleagues and clients about a staff member who has transitioned and guidance on what kind of language to use.

#### *Next steps*

Hogan Lovells will be rolling out further training and support in the future.

#### *What they said*

Ruth Grant, partner at Hogan Lovells and chair of their Global Diversity and Inclusion Committee, said:

Recognising the qualities and strengths required throughout the transitioning process, we are committed to supporting our people who wish to transition and to ensuring that their work and personal wellbeing are maintained throughout their transition."

### *Supporting and promoting trans inclusion (Gowling WLG)*

#### *Background*

At Gowling WLG, their approach to inclusion is simple. Their aim is everyone can simply be themselves in the workplace, maximise their potential without anything getting in the way. In 2011, they joined Stonewall's Global Diversity Champion scheme and started a LGBT network, OpenHouse, shortly after.

#### *What did they do?*

- Worked with trans colleagues to create their first trans policy for anyone considering transitioning - letting them know the firm is with them every step of the way.

- Reviewed their diversity and inclusion statement and policies so they were explicit in the inclusion of gender identity and gender reassignment.
- Launched an inclusion week.
- Celebrated Day of Pink with their staff and marked Trans Day of Visibility and Trans Memorial Day via social media and digital signage around the offices.
- Had a trans colleague speak at recruitment events and as a keynote speaker at a gender awards dinner, telling her personal story and sharing the impact of having supportive employers during her transition and beyond.
- Reviewed recruitment documents and added 'Mx' as an option their prefix when applying for roles at the firm.

### *Next steps*

Gowlings WLG are looking at enhancing their training to be more trans inclusive and changing internal systems to include 'non-binary' as a gender option.

### *What they said*

Mark Greenburgh, partner at Gowlings WLG said:

We want to be an inclusive workplace, which not only enables but encourages and supports all employees to be themselves and thrive regardless of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. If someone wants to transition at work, they will be supported every step of the way and we will work with our trans colleagues to ensure we are as trans inclusive as possible."

### *A trans solicitor's story*

#### *Why it is important to support your trans staff*

Every firm, large or small should be aware of the consequences of not supporting their staff through what can be a very difficult time. People who are transitioning or living their life in the 'wrong' gender can be very vulnerable. One solicitor told us about her experience at work after being diagnosed with gender dysphoria.

Many of us will say we do not know any trans people and it is an issue which does not affect us. However despite the higher profile of some trans men and women in public life these days, there are many people who do not feel safe to come out at work.

Some law firms are thinking more about their responsibilities towards their trans employees but many are closing their eyes to the issues.

I struggled with mental ill health for some years but managed to keep up a successful practice. However In 2010, I had another breakdown and was diagnosed with gender dysphoria. I shared this with close colleagues and my line manager. Suddenly the atmosphere in the office became uncomfortable. Snide comments and dirty looks were hard to ignore and the members piled on the pressure, hoping I would leave.



Things became intolerable and the firm did nothing to help. I was told to take annual leave for the counselling sessions I needed. I became desperately unwell and took a sabbatical from which I never returned. There was never any discussion about how I might return to work or whether I planned to transition and how the firms could support me to do this.

### *Watch our videos about trans inclusion*

#### *Why trans inclusion is important*

Executive Director, External and Corporate Affairs

#### *Why firms should be trans inclusive*

Daniel Winterfeldt, Chair of InterLaw Diversity Forum | Terry and Bernard Reed, Trustees of the Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIREs) | Rachel Reese, Director, Global Butterflies

#### *Find out what three firms are doing to promote trans inclusion*

Sophie Breuil and Alex Vowinkel at CMS | Baches Solicitors, Leighton Paisner and Trowers & Hamlins LLP

#### *Practical tips to help promote a trans-positive workplace at your firm*

Rachel Reese, Director, Global Butterflies and Daniel Winterfeldt, Chair of InterLaw Diversity Forum