B2: Focus on LGBTQI+
LGBTIQ+ People and Volunteering

Barriers & How to Navigate Them

Sarah Collins (She/Her)

Living Proud
LGBTIQ+ Community Services of WA

Living Proud

• QLife peer support and referral service
• Opening Closets training
• Specialist and advanced training
• Consultancy and policy support
• Community engagement and development
LGBTIQ+

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people and other sexuality, and gender diverse people.

– LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
www.lgbtiqhealth.org.au

“We recognise that people’s genders, bodies, relationships, and sexualities affect their health and wellbeing in every domain of their life.”

Existing Studies

• Predominantly look at LGBTIQ+ people’s volunteering in LGBTIQ+ organisations

• For gay and bisexual men, predominantly looks at volunteering in HIV organisations

• Not many ask about the experiences of LGBTIQ+ volunteers in mainstream organisations
Southby, South & Bagnall (2019)

A Rapid Review of Barriers to Volunteering for Potentially Disadvantaged Groups and Implications for Health Inequalities

- No literature was identified in relation to sexual orientation. This may reflect a dearth of evidence in these areas rather than a lack of barriers to volunteering for these groups.

- The literature concerning relationship status and volunteering exclusively focused on heterosexual marriage.

- No research was identified exploring either pregnancy and/or maternity/paternity or sexual orientation and barriers to volunteering.

Gates & Hughes (2021)

Civic Engagement and Loneliness in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer+ Australian Volunteers

- Volunteers reported a consistent and high degree of community engagement and a strong sense of attachment to the Australian LGBTIQ+ community.

- Volunteering appears to be a dimension of many LGBTIQ+ peoples' everyday lives.

- An important finding...was that while LGBTIQ+ participants seemed to be socially connected, they also reported relatively high loneliness levels. This suggests there may be unique differences within the LGBTIQ+ community that need to be accounted for in volunteer management programs.

- Social workers should make special efforts to reach out to transgender/gender diverse volunteers to learn more about whether they feel supported at the organisation.
Gates & Lillie (2021)

- Social service leaders must work toward developing anti-harassment and non-discrimination policies that **explicitly identify sexual orientation** and gender identity/expression as a protected category within the SSO.

- Additionally, within the organization the use of LGBTQ-inclusive language in day-to-day practice, hiring LGBTQ staff and promoting a culture of inclusion are all essential.

- Leaders must also advocate for inclusion by acknowledging past and current mistakes regarding LGBTQ issues and by actively working to correct those mistakes.

---

**Hiding sexuality or gender identity**

- 35% While accessing health services
- 35% 16 to 24 year olds at home
- 50% 16 to 24 year olds at school/uni

GLBT Victorians have avoided showing affection in public

Source: Personal Lives: GLBT and Lesbian Health Victoria, 2012
“It is daunting approaching mainstream places to volunteer when you are not sure of their stance on being LGBTQ+ friendly and welcoming…If a organisation feels particularly ‘heteronormative’ I will actively avoid volunteering there out of concern for my safety”

“I had to apply with my deadname so I had to come out after they already all knew my old name and hope they would use my actual name”

“If working one on one with clients I get worried how they will react to me”
“Working and volunteering in mainstream organisations is vital for my resume. It can be incredibly daunting, draining and sometimes leave me feeling very unsafe…Comparing working within a LGBTQ+ organisation and a mainstream organisation, I crave returning to the (former) to volunteer.”

Is there anything the organisation could have done?

• Proactively communicated they were friendly.
• An indication they are LGBT-welcoming on the volunteering form or website, even just a rainbow flag somewhere would be great.
Common Issues & Everyday Situations

- Emergency Contact Person
- Screening/ID Checks

- Deciding Whether to Come Out
  - Small Talk
  - Icebreakers
  - Correcting Assumptions (or not)

- Legal vs Social Name
- Pronouns
- Uniforms
- Gendered Facilities
- Transitioning in the workplace
### Barriers to Employment

#### Barriers to employment encountered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>37.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General fear of outing</td>
<td>16.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical/Medical evaluations</td>
<td>8.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background/criminal checks</td>
<td>11.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification documentation</td>
<td>19.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial barriers</td>
<td>12.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of discrimination</td>
<td>53.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference checks: former names/identity</td>
<td>17.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires outing myself</td>
<td>17.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete work history</td>
<td>8.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External social/family challenges</td>
<td>30.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress codes</td>
<td>42.23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

**WA Museum Boola Bardip**

![Image of a person at WA Museum Boola Bardip]
Engaging LGBTIQ+ Community

- Select partner organisation(s)
- Address potential concerns up front
- Link in with LGBTIQ+ events
- Educate/Inform staff and volunteers
QLife – Phone & Webchat

- QLife peer support and referral Service
- Staffed by peer volunteers
- 3PM-Midnight, 7 days a week

References

Living Proud : Opening Closets Training


Kris Southby, Jane South & Anne-Marie Bagnall (2019) A Rapid Review of Barriers to Volunteering for Potentially Disadvantaged Groups and Implications for Health Inequalities