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Ref No: **FOI 24_484**

8 February 2024

Dear

Thank you for your email of 25 January 2024 which contained your request for information. The Government Legal Department (“GLD”) have processed your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”).

Pursuant to Section 1(1)(a) of the Act, GLD informs you that it holds the information you have requested.

1. *Within your organisation, what policies exist to support staff members who identify as transgender and are transitioning?*

GLD has an interim policy in place which is currently under review until expected central policy changes are received

2. *With respect to the question above, could you please provide a copy of the policies to support staff who identify as transgender?*

GLD does not publish draft policies as they risk misinterpretation.

3. *Do you have any information publications or presentations available to staff regarding LGBTQ+ and Transgender, if so please could you provide details and copies of the information.*

On GLD’s Intranet is provided a link to <https://www.agender.org.uk/>, a “code of conduct” document from the TAG (Trans+ advisory Group), a link to the LGBTQ+ Solicitors Network website, the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association and Foundation and it has a document featuring LGBT role models at GLD together with contact details for each.

4. *How many persons who identify as transgender are employed or volunteer with your organisation, and at what grade or position are they employed?*

GLD considers this information to exempt under S40(2)(a) of the FOI Act. By disclosing this information it would be possible to identify the employees due to the low numbers.

5. *What advice and information do you supply to managers and staff regarding Transgender? Do you provide any specialist training in dealing with colleagues or clients who identify as*

transgender?

If so, please provide copies of the relevant policies and material.

GLD does not provide any specific guidance or training to staff or managers on dealing with colleagues or clients who identify as transgender.

- 6. Does your organisation have any connections with Stonewall or similar organisations to support employees from the LGBTQ+ and Transgender community, and if so, please could you provide further details and copies of any documents or policies?*

GLD no longer has links with Stonewall.

- 7. Do you have any specific policies to support staff members transitioning/transgender in where they are deployed or employed in the organisation and in dealing with members of the public, if so please could you provide further information?*

Other than the guidance already mentioned/attached; there is no further information.

- 8. Do you have a specific lead or individual(s) who deal with LGBTQ+ issues or liaison within the organisation? If so, please could you provide details?*

GLD has an LGBT network, with two Champions and Chairs, and we have more general avenues of support, such as the Employee Assistance Programme, Mental Health First Aiders (10% of whom are declared LGBT) and our Culture and Behaviour Champions.

- 9. Do you have specific policies regarding keeping female, LGBTQ+ and transgender staff safe? If so, could you please provide details and copies of any relevant policies?*

Other than the guidance already mentioned/attached, the only other policy is the Dignity at Work (BHD) policy.

Your Rights

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original correspondence. Please use the contact details provided at the top of this letter in order to request an internal review relating to your original request.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
www.ICO.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Team

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Dignity at work (Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination) Policy and guidance		
Issue date	Effective date Implementation Date	Next review
May 2018	May 2018	May 2021
For action by	HR department Line Managers	
For information	All staff directly employed by GLD	
Contact	HRHelp@governmentlegal.gov.uk	
Associated documents	Civil Service Code Staff Handbook Section 6.2 Grievance Policy, Procedure and Advice Discipline Policy, Procedure and Advice Whistleblowing Policy	
Policy owner	HR Director	
Policy author	Agreed with Trade Union Side	
Replaces		
Revision history		



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Policy

Policy Statement

1. Government Legal Department (GLD) is committed to the development and promotion of a positive working environment that is free from harassment, bullying or discrimination. All employees have the right to work in an environment where they are treated with respect and where the dignity of each individual is valued and maintained.

What is unacceptable behaviour?

2. Unacceptable behaviour is wider than bullying and harassment and can be described at a basic level as any behaviour that could potentially undermine someone's dignity in terms of self-worth and self-respect. Everyone who works for or with GLD is required to conduct themselves in a professional manner, which recognises the dignity of labour, when interacting with others. They should consider their own behaviour and the impact that this can have on others. GLD recognises that personalities, characters and management styles may differ but, notwithstanding these differences, as a minimum standard everyone is expected to:
 - work co-operatively with others in order to achieve objectives
 - manage performance in an appropriate, fair and proportionate manner
 - give and receive constructive feedback as part of normal day-to-day work. Such feedback should be evidence-based and delivered in an appropriate manner
 - consider other people's perspectives in order to help reach agreement
 - establish and maintain good working relationships
 - maintain confidentiality as appropriate
 - comply with reasonable management requests that do not adversely affect health and safety in the workplace.

Scope of the policy

3. The policy applies to all employees working on and off the premises. This will include GLD employees working away from their normal working base, and also those not directly



employed by GLD such as those working in GLD on loan or secondment, agency workers and contractors.

4. This policy sets out information about bullying, harassment and discrimination and outlines the responsibilities of employees and managers.

Guidance

Roles and responsibilities

GLD employees and workers

5. All GLD employees and workers have a personal responsibility not to harass or bully other employees, and not to collude with or condone harassment, bullying or discrimination by others.
6. Harassment, bullying and discrimination are classed as examples of misconduct and action may be taken under the disciplinary procedure against any employee alleged to have harassed or bullied a colleague at work.
7. Employees can help stop harassment, bullying and discrimination by:
 - complying with this policy and treating colleagues with dignity and respect
 - challenging unacceptable behaviour
 - ensuring their own behaviour does not contribute to or collude with unacceptable behaviour
 - cooperating fully in any investigation undertaken by the department
 - being supportive to colleagues who are being harassed or bullied
 - where they witness incidences of harassment and bullying, reporting it to his/her line manager or HRHelp@governmentlegal.gov.uk.
8. Employees may behave unacceptably for a variety of reasons. For example, they may have personal problems, be suffering from anxiety or stress or be affected by other factors in relation to the workplace or in their private lives. GLD encourage all employees in this type of situation to seek support. [Home > How do I > Human Resources > Support and wellbeing.](#)



Managers

9. Managers have the same personal responsibility as set out in 5 above.
10. Managers have a crucial role in promoting a healthy working environment and have an obligation to take action as soon as harassment, bullying or discrimination has been identified, whether or not a complaint has been made. They should respond to complaints swiftly and sensitively, and be aware of behaviour which would cause offence.
11. In particular managers have a responsibility to:
 - act as a positive role model for their team
 - manage employees in a firm, fair, reasonable and consistent manner
 - promote a safe and supportive working environment
 - support any employee who complains about harassment, bullying or discrimination and deal with any issues as soon as they become aware of them
 - ensure that their employees are aware of this policy and the expected standards of behaviour and deal with shortcomings in a constructive and supportive way
 - make it clear to employees that complaints of harassment or bullying will be taken seriously and treat instances of bullying and harassment as disciplinary offences where appropriate
 - release employees for training as required
 - provide full and clear guidance on the procedures for dealing with a complaint
 - maintain confidentiality in all cases
 - ensure that there is no victimisation of any employee who raises a complaint about harassment or bullying or assists someone else in making such a complaint.
12. Failure to take these responsibilities seriously will be considered failure to fulfil all the responsibilities of the managerial position.
13. A Bullying, Harassment and Diversity toolkit for leaders and managers has been developed and can be accessed on the Intranet. Home > How do I > Human Resources > Conduct and Behaviour > Bullying and harassment.

Third parties



14. Third parties include clients, Ministers, contractors etc. with whom employees come into contact with during the course of their work.
15. Harassment, bullying and discrimination of GLD employees by third parties is not acceptable and GLD will take action.
16. Where complaints are received from members of the public or third parties they will be investigated. Managers should support employees and make sure they are given the opportunity to provide their account of events.

Definitions

What are bullying and harassment?

17. Some examples and definitions of what may be considered bullying and harassment are provided below for guidance. For practical purposes, those making a complaint usually define what they mean by bullying or harassment – something has happened to them that is unwelcome, unwarranted and causes a detrimental effect.
18. **Harassment** is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic of a person; it has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Protected characteristics are:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender Reassignment
 - Marriage and Civil Partnership
 - Pregnancy and Maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or Belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual Orientation.
19. **Bullying** may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour; an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.
20. **Bullying and harassment** are not necessarily face-to-face. They may be by written communications, visual images (for example pictures of a sexual nature or embarrassing photographs of colleagues), emails, phone and supervision methods where such methods not universally applied to all employees or objectively justified.



21. Behaviour that is considered bullying by one person may be considered firm management by another. The following list gives examples of the types of behaviour that are unacceptable within GLD:
- spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone (particularly on the grounds of age, race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, including bisexuality, religion or belief, or any of the protected characteristics)
 - additional unacceptable behaviours:
 - touching
 - standing too close
 - display of offensive materials
 - asking for sexual favours
 - making decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted e.g. deciding not to investigate an allegation of fraud
 - unwarranted intrusive or persistent questioning about a person's marital status, sexual interests, sexual orientation, culture, religion or belief
 - sexual teasing
 - lewd or suggestive remarks
 - sexist or racist jokes or remarks
 - using language which stereotypes bisexual individuals and any groups under the protected characteristics
 - disclosing someone's trans identity without their consent
 - innuendo
 - mockery
 - patronising or derogatory behaviour.
 - openly criticising others in front of colleagues, copying emails or other forms of communications that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
 - ridiculing or demeaning someone, picking on them or setting them up to fail
 - exclusion or victimisation unfair treatment e.g. because they have brought a grievance or legal proceedings against the department or have given evidence in such proceedings
 - overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position making threats or comments about job security without foundation
 - deliberately undermining an employee by overloading and/or constant criticism



- preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities without good reason
- sending or posting of inappropriate or cruel text or images using the internet, intranet or any other form of digital communication.

What is victimisation

22. **Victimisation** is unfair treatment directed against someone by an individual, group or organisation because they have or intend to raise a grievance or a complaint against them or assisted someone else in making such a claim.

The key differences between managing and bullying

23. Behaviour that is considered bullying by one person may be considered firm management by another. Most people will agree on extreme cases of bullying and harassment but it is sometimes the 'grey' areas that cause most problems. Outlined below is a list, not exhaustive, of key differences between managing and bullying:

- **Managing:**
 - is constructive and enabling
 - is inclusive
 - is calm
 - dignified and professional
 - is consistent
 - provides opportunity for improvement
 - cares about the individual and their feelings
 - results in the person knowing what has to be improved and how they can begin to do it.
- **Bullying:**
 - is destructive
 - is based on assumptions
 - is critical and blaming
 - takes a, negative, angry or aggressive tone
 - is inconsistent
 - provides no opportunity for improvement since the person feels threatened
 - takes no account of the person and their feelings
 - results in humiliation and loss of confidence.

What is discrimination?



24. Discrimination can be either direct or indirect or can be in the form of victimisation. These terms are defined below:
- **direct discrimination** occurs where a person is treated less favourably on prohibited grounds stipulated in the Equality Act 2010
 - **indirect discrimination:** treating employees in exactly the same way does not necessarily avoid discrimination and achieve equality of opportunity. Indirect discrimination can occur when a provision, criterion or practice is applied to all employees but results in a detriment to a considerably larger proportion of one particular group. This is unlawful unless the provision, criterion or practice can be objectively justified
 - **discrimination by association** is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic
 - **perceptive discrimination** is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

Some examples of discrimination are:

- instructing an employee or group of employees to work on a Saturday during budget time when they have declined to do so on religious grounds. This could be indirect discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief as followers of the Jewish faith are not permitted to break the Sabbath
- not recommending an employee as suitable for promotion because they took a lot of time off recently to care for their disabled father. This is associative discrimination on the grounds of disability because the employee has taken the time off to care for a disabled relative
- failing to invite an older colleague to a work social event when all other colleagues have been invited. This would be classed as direct discrimination on the grounds of age.

Complaints

25. Acts of bullying, harassment or discrimination will not be tolerated. Complaints of bullying, harassment or discrimination will be taken seriously and where appropriate, treated as a disciplinary offence.
26. Incidents of harassment can constitute a criminal offence and may therefore be reported to the police.



27. GLD undertakes that allegations of bullying, harassment or discrimination made in good faith will be dealt with seriously and confidentially and that employees will be protected against victimisation for making a complaint.
28. If a complaint is found to be malicious or vexatious, the complainant may be subject to disciplinary action.

Confidentiality

29. As a general principle, confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible during and after any complaint of harassment, bullying or discrimination. Further information can be found in the Whistleblowing procedure. Home>How do I?>Human Resources >Conduct and Behaviour > Reporting wrongdoing at GLD (Whistleblowing).

Complaints

30. This procedure covers complaints of unlawful discrimination and instances of discrimination or alleged discrimination, harassment and bullying, which are in contravention of this dignity at work policy.
31. Complaints should be made in line with the grievance procedure on the Intranet Home > How do I > Human Resources > Conduct and Behaviour > Access the Staff Handbook > supporting guidance.
32. If the complaint relates to a third party e.g. clients, service providers etc., this should be raised with your line manager.
33. GLD recognises that some employees may be less likely to complain, may lack the confidence or may require specific help to make full use of its grievance policy. GLD is committed to providing appropriate assistance wherever possible, consistent with its diversity initiatives.
34. Reasonable adjustments will be made to enable disabled employees to engage with this policy and procedure. For example, where hearing is impaired, a signer will be provided and those with visual impairments can have documents read to them.
HRHelp@governmentlegal.gov.uk should be contacted for further assistance.
35. It is up to the employee to decide which route (or combination of routes) they choose and this will vary according to the nature of the complaint and their own feelings.

What should I do if I witness unacceptable behaviour?

36. Employees who witness bullying, harassment, discrimination or anything they consider to be unacceptable behaviour are encouraged to speak up.



37. This may be by raising concerns informally with the individual about their behaviour and the impact it is having.
38. Alternatively employees may raise the matter with their line manager or someone higher up in the line.

Informal grievance

39. Where possible employees are expected to try to resolve work-related problems and issues themselves or informally with their line manager first. Alternatively for complaints under this policy employees may:
 - make a direct approach to the individual they believe has discriminated, bullied, harassed or victimised them, if they feel able to do this
 - raise the matter with the most immediate line manager not involved in the grievance, or someone higher up in the line.
40. Employees can get advice and support from:
 - a trade union representative who may accompany them
 - Diversity Officers
 - Appropriate Behaviour Champions (ABC), who can be from another directorate
 - Human Resources HRHelp@governmentlegal.gov.uk
 - a work colleague who may accompany them.
41. The grievance procedure should be followed: Home > How do I > Human Resources > Conduct and Behaviour > Access the Staff Handbook > supporting guidance.
42. Employees may also approach Right Management for support.
43. Employees still have a right to raise a formal complaint at any time during or after the informal grievance.

Management action

44. Managers should offer support to employees to try to resolve issues informally where possible. The matter can be addressed quickly and informally through, for example, a discussion about expectations and standards of behaviour or through counselling, training, coaching or mentoring. See How to Resolve Complaints Informally guidance. Home > How do I > Human Resources > Conduct and Behaviour > Access the Staff Handbook > supporting guidance



45. However, if the matter is resolved informally, line managers should also advise employees that further misconduct may lead to formal action being taken in future. A note of all line management action should be kept securely either electronically or in hard copy and a copy given to the employee. As this is informal action, the note should not be placed on the employee's personal HR file at this time.

Formal grievance

46. If it has not been possible to resolve the grievance informally or the employee raises a formal grievance a deciding officer will normally be appointed by their line manager. Alternatively this will be the most immediate line manager not involved in the grievance or someone higher up in the line.
47. The formal grievance process will then be followed. Home > How do I > Human Resources > Conduct and Behaviour > Access the Staff Handbook > supporting guidance.

Third parties

48. Line managers may not be in a position to resolve complaints against third parties and may need to involve others for example Contract Manager, Deputy Director etc.
49. Where appropriate, informal resolution will be sought while formal complaints will be investigated with appropriate action taken.

GLD LGBT+ Role Models



Welcome to our new GLD LGBT+ Role Models Book.

Inside you will find 11 inspiring stories of role modelling within GLD and the wider Civil Service. If you are interested in becoming a Role Model or want to find out more about these individuals or the work of the Network, please contact the network via EAGLE or @ LGBT@governmentlegal.gov.uk

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KAT'S STORY

Katrina McIntosh is an Analyst in the MOD.

I have always known that I was Trans, even before I knew what Trans was! Though growing up in the Social Services in Scotland, with various Children's homes and Foster Parents made it difficult to express this in the Scotland of the 60's/70's and 80's.

I decided to "FIX" the problem by joining the Army and being a "real man". To be honest it did help for many years, I forgot/repressed my feelings and focussed on being a good soldier. I served all over the world, I got a trade, I served in Armour, Airborne and Joint Service. I was pretty good at it as I was promoted and ended my career after 26 years commanding over fifty men and women. The problem was that over the last few years of this life I found the internet. I found out what Trans was, even trying to dip my toe into the London scene. I was disappointed to find that I wasn't simply a Transvestite, that I couldn't just dress sometimes and go back to work the next day. I had deeper issues.

I was very much in the closet and unsure what to do. I was at the end of my career when I sought help, both professionally and from friends and family. My mind had gone to dark places even planning to end things. Thankfully that was where my best friend made me see sense and look at transition, to live my life as the real me.

I left the Army in 2010, and started my transition, using my own money for surgery in Thailand and starting my new life. Work initially was hard and there was prejudice out there, nothing overt, just in the background stopping new jobs without having to give any reason, or even a reply in some cases. There were a few companies who saw past the prejudice however and helped me in those early days, I am forever in their debt.

The Civil Service accepted me in 2015, initially working in an Information Hub for the 1st Sea Lord where I worked for two years. The big difference here was that immediately I found acceptance, for who I was not what I was. People valued me for what I could do, not what I had gone through. I stand by that to this day. I have never had prejudice since I joined, in fact doors have opened and I have been involved in helping other starting their journey. I am even the Civil Service champion in my chosen sport (archery), in my chosen gender.

I have since moved into an Analyst role in MOD where my differences are valued. My skills from a life in the Army and my experience from what I have lived through are treated equally. It has taken a few years, but I believe that I have truly found peace in my life.



KAT IS OUR TRANS ROLE MODEL

JOHN'S STORY

John Ward is a Deputy Director in the Government Legal Department.

I joined the Government Legal Service (GLS) in 1997, working in the Office of Fair Trading, and came out to colleagues as soon as I started. The application form made it clear that the GLS would not discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation, and in those days that gave me enormous encouragement. By then, being gay was no longer a bar to higher levels of security clearance, thanks to reforms by John Major's administration and things were beginning to change in the Service. A gay friend who worked in the GLS at the time encouraged me to apply join.



I have subsequently moved around Government, working in Defra, the Legal Secretariat to the Advocate General for Scotland, the Home Office, No10 and DWP, dipping in and out of what is now GLD at various times. I am lucky enough to have had the same partner, now civil partner, throughout my career in the Service. I have never felt unable to have a 'water cooler chat' about what I have been doing at the weekend with him. I 'outed' myself very publically in the FDA magazine one year when I attended London Pride under the FDA banner.

I have only once encountered some homophobia in all my time in the Service. It was back in the early 'naughties' and was generalised. But as soon as I said such talk was unacceptable at work, she stopped. I have never felt afraid to 'be me' and have openly supported LGBTI networks across a range of different departments. It was a real privilege to be able to invite the GLD LGBTI network to visit No10 to mark 50 years since the Sexual Offences Act 1967.

The then Treasury Solicitor's Department, now GLD, is and always has been an enormously influential part of what is now the Government Legal Profession. All my exposure to the Department over the years, whether through training events, ad hoc meetings in the Cabinet Office, or as an employee has been immensely supportive of people like me. I have felt like a round peg in a round hole from day one. By my example as a member of the SCS, I hope I help other people like me to feel the same way.

JOHN IS OUR GAY MAN ROLE MODEL

JO'S STORY

Jo Greenidge is a Deputy Director, currently working in the Dept for Health and Social Care Legal Advisers Division of the Government Legal Department

I joined what was then the Solicitor's Office in HM Customs and Excise more than 20 years ago as a legal trainee. In my early career there I did a range of legal work from prosecuting drug smugglers (not as interesting as it sounds) to drafting tax legislation (surprisingly much, much more interesting! Really.). I spent some time at what was then MAFF during the foot-and-mouth outbreak in 2001, and also found myself at one point supervising the corporate governance policy team at HMRC during the height of the PAC's interest in the then Permanent Secretary's approach to settling tax disputes with large corporations. But, mainly my career had a strong EU and legislative focus through a variety of posts.



Highlights for me were leading the government's centre of expertise on EU law advising No 10 during Prime Minister Cameron's renegotiation of the UK's relationship with the EU; walking into the office at 8am the day after the referendum as he resigned in Downing Street and immediately starting work to mobilise the GLS to support the new PM on whatever EU policy s/he might want; and leading the legal work on what became the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 to give legal effect in the UK to our leaving the EU.

I am now an out lesbian at work: but it wasn't always so. I regret to say that it is only in the last few years that I have felt safe enough to be out and proud at work. That hasn't been because of anything that I have experienced in government: more a reflection of the times in which I grew up. I am of the generation that grew up with the AIDs crisis; section 28; the WHO classifying same-sex attraction as a mental illness. I suffered low-level abuse and discrimination for being gay at work (before I joined the Civil Service) and in the wider outside world. I am happy to find that many younger LGBT+ colleagues are not as fearful as I once was, and I think times are changing. But, we don't live in a perfect rainbow butterfly unicorn world yet: every time a LGBT+ person outs themselves - at work, in the pub, in the street - we take a risk. I am happy to mentor, help or just chat with any LGBT+ colleagues; and to tell them that I believe GLD is a safe place for us.

JO IS OUR LESBIAN ROLE MODEL

HELEN'S STORY

Helen Robinson is a Lawyer in DCMS

I have been a lawyer in the civil service for just over nine years, and within the GLD for almost half that time. Shortly after completing my training contract in a city law firm, I decided to escape the late nights and corporate tedium and took a job in HM Courts and Tribunal Service (an agency of the Ministry of Justice) as a Registrar in the Upper Tribunal Administrative Appeals Chamber - swapping mergers and acquisitions for welfare benefits appeals.

Then, after 5 happy years at the UTAAC, it felt like the right time to give 'mainstream' government legal work a go, and in September 2014 I joined the advisory legal team in DWP on loan, becoming a permanent GLD employee two years later. Earlier this year, following the Grade 7 development moves round, I left DWP to join the media and culture team in DCMS Legal Advisers. Alongside my GLD role, I have recently been appointed as a fee paid Deputy Judge of the UTAAC, where I will be sitting for a few weeks each year.

One of my first steps on moving to HMCTS was to join both the MoJ and GLS LGBT networks, an opportunity I relished, having come from the private legal sector at a time when such networks were a rarity (my firm set up its first LGBT network in 2009, just as I was leaving). While I have been out as bisexual throughout my career, it was not until I came to the GLD that I found myself in a working environment that felt genuinely diverse and inclusive of LGBT+ people. I had never before worked among so many openly gay colleagues, and was surprised at the difference it made to me, having peers and role models who shared the experience of being other than straight in a predominantly straight world.

Despite strong L and G representation, those who openly identify as neither straight nor gay have continued to be conspicuous largely by their absence. I have been lucky enough, through my involvement in the GLD LGBT+ Network as Deputy Chair and informal bi rep, to have met and heard the experiences of a number of other bisexual civil servants, but we remain a relatively isolated minority.

However, I remain hopeful that this will change; there is exciting work going on across the civil service to raise awareness and increase understanding of the issues facing bisexual people, and I am proud to be able to be a part of that through my work with the Network.



HELEN IS OUR BISEXUAL ROLE MODEL

JOE'S STORY

Joe White is a Legal Trainee in Commercial Law Group B

I've only recently begun my civil service career, but I knew from the very beginning that I wanted to get involved with the LGBT+ Network and how important it was to be visibly queer (with the fashion sense to boot).

You could say that I am giving back to the community, whether it be through visibility at work or campaigning for LGBT+ inclusion in sport. The community provided me with a space to be myself, lifelong friends, supported me when times were tough and continues to rally behind me on dark or difficult days.



When I was a teenager, it was “negotiated” that I no longer live at home because of my sexuality, I found myself isolated in rural Shropshire – a place where the only LGBT+ visibility was in the media or on TV. I founded the first LGBT+ youth group in the county because I knew I could not be the only gay in the village. I was unashamedly queer at school and in public. It was not always easy but I was stubborn to be me, unashamedly proud of who I am. My struggles made me resolve to look past the isolating darkness that could creep in and focus on my goals – I had first visited the Royal Courts of Justice at the age of 13 and knew then that I wanted to pursue a career in law. That was my light at the end of the tunnel that kept me going (and is nearly a reality). The community I was embraced by in Manchester’s Village reminded me of my goals whenever times were hard, and made me believe in myself as much as they believed in me.

People are often very quick to trash the community through simplistic stereotypes – that we’re sassy gays or #masc4masc and the like, but the vast majority in our community has shared experiences. Whether that is issues with our mental health and practising self-love, whether it is acceptance within our families or a toxic approach to alcohol, masculinity or identity – we can relate and understand each other. We all too easily view ourselves in our different tribes forgetting that whether we are doing drag on stage, or cheering on England in the World Cup, we all have these understandings and lived experiences that bond us. Our “baggage” doesn’t burden us, our approach to it does.

Despite my outlandish approach to life, I still worry daily about what others think and whether I’ll be accepted – I spent so long worrying whether I’d fit in on my first day that I had an anxiety attack. What has shocked, and pleased, me in both of my seats so far (MOJ Private Law & Inquests and Immigration 3) is they have embraced all aspects of my personality – from the football mad to the “yas qween!” side. I have not had to worry about holding myself back and can focus on being the best lawyer I can be as opposed to worrying about every little interaction. I still have some dark days, but my community of support and friends has expanded from just my social life to my work life too. Every day, we engage in little acts of visibility – whether the lanyards around our neck, discussing our last failed date, holding hands with our partner in public or by just being our authentic selves

My experiences have made me a “campaigner” from a relatively young age, but that was only enabled due to the shoulders we all stand upon – the Marsha Johnson’s, the Alan Turing’s, the Audre Lorde’s and the Harvey Milk’s of this world. We now carry the torch of equality. All of our interactions and acts of visibility send the message that we do exist, and we are not going to shy away from our truth. We will stand up for equality and against hate. We have come so far, but there is still so much to do – there are still 70 countries where it is illegal to be LGBT+ and many more where our community is not equal. However, I strongly believe and hope that when it is our time to pass it o, we will be doing so in a much more inclusive world.

JOE IS OUR NEXT GENERATION ROLE MODEL

ADRIAN'S STORY

Adrian Roberts heads a team in DExEU Legal Advisers working on Brexit

Last month marked 30 years since I became a barrister: I spent the first 13 years with a wig and gown practising at the self-employed bar, and the last 17 as a civil servant. I joined the Treasury Solicitor's Department as a litigator, and have worked in Defra, MOD, DECC, FCO, and now the GLD team working on Brexit. Back in 2002, a senior colleague joked that I "came out by Office Notice", as TSol's first diversity rep dedicated to LGBT issues. That wasn't quite my intention, but it did break the ice, and it encouraged some colleagues to share confidences about their own orientation.



When I moved to London in 1987 after university, I had not really 'come out' to myself, let alone others. With the help of a supportive gay housemate and a copy of Time Out, I discovered a good local gay pub, Bhangra music, and the wonderfully diverse London Lesbian & Gay Centre. Getting my membership card did feel like officially becoming a card-carrying homosexual! At work, it was an open secret that a number of heads of chambers, including mine, were gay, but it wasn't really talked about. When I did come out my colleagues were, with one exception, totally accepting. By the time I joined Government, my CV included volunteering for LGBT helplines and the Bar Lesbian and Gay Group: I had decided I would not want to work in an organisation where sexual orientation was an issue.

As a government lawyer doing international negotiations I've worked in over 20 countries, some of which criminalise homosexuality. That feels awkward, but I have been open with colleagues from all parts of the world, talking about our families or partners when socialising, and have never encountered personal discrimination. There was one occasion when I needed to challenge some stereotyping 'banter' in a group of senior military officers, but their reaction was professional and positive. Vetting, which I thought might be an issue, wasn't a problem because I could be totally open. Now, as a 53 year-old gay man in a 25 year relationship, I'm fortunate also to have a genuinely diverse network of LGB&T friends both in and outside work.

ADRIAN IS OUR MATURE ROLE MODEL

ADAM'S STORY

Adam Paine is lawyer in the Government Legal Department.

I began my civil service career 14 years ago, as an IT helpdesk assistant at the Southampton headquarters of the DfT's Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). I was 20, and, although I didn't know it at the time, I was sealing my first major victory in a gruelling battle against the unholy alliance of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

The odds were stacked against me. My background was of the distinctly "lower socio-economic" variety, with parenting that was by turns distant, abusive, and non-existent. I'd ditched my A-levels and spent the years since playing video games and flirting with alcoholism. I was gay – a fact I'd acknowledged and was open about, but to which I hadn't reconciled myself because of so much internalised homophobia. I hated the person I thought I was. I had no plan; no goals; no ambition.

Then I started at the MCA, and things began to change. The people there treated me with respect, and they valued my work. Instead of the worthlessness I saw in myself, they saw ability and potential. They were proved right by the opportunities that followed – promotion to EO; secondment to DfT as a policy official; HEO; a paid-for law degree (1st!); a GLD training contract; qualified lawyer. And at every turn people proved me wrong about myself by never giving any sign that I should be ashamed to be me.

But despite all the evidence, I still struggled to see what other people saw. I still second-guessed my every conclusion (because I can never do anything right). I still worried endlessly about the impression I made on colleagues (because I'm weird, arrogant and overbearing). I was still evasive about my private life (because I'm gay and no-one wants to hear about that). So last year, I finally self-referred for treatment. A course of cognitive behavioural therapy has equipped me to start seriously tackling the self-defeating patterns of thinking that power my mental health issues.

It takes a long time to change habits of thought picked up as a child, but I'm getting better at seeing the real me, and I can't overstate how much my recovery has owed to working in an environment where there is such a consistent commitment to recognising and valuing diversity and inclusion.



ADAM IS OUR MENTAL HEALTH ROLE MODEL

ANDREW'S STORY

I'm a barrister and Grade 7 Lawyer in B division. I also have dyslexia and ADD.

I've worked at GLD since 2010 when I joined as a trainee. After I finished pupillage at an outside chambers, I worked in a variety of teams in GLD, and most recently at the immigration litigation department. In the past few years, I have appeared on behalf of the SSHD in the Upper Tribunal and Administrative Court acting as counsel.

I have both dyslexia and ADD, which would make most people think twice about working in law. But I have never let my disabilities prevent me from following my dreams. Through a series of coping mechanisms, accessibility programs on my computer, and various apps on my phone, I am able to mitigate the effects of my disability and produce high output work both as a litigator and advocate.



I find great strength in drawing from other elements of my intersectionality. Being a proud member of the GLD LGBTQ community has taught me an important life lesson – not to allow your characteristics to define who you are and who you want to be.

In the most part there are very supportive and caring colleagues throughout GLD and the wider Civil Service who are more than happy to mentor you, come up with ideas of how to work at your best, and; most importantly – help you to achieve the goals you want and to get to where to where you need to be and ultimately write your own narrative.

I would advise every colleague with a disability (especially an unseen one) to join the network and to actually realise that there are a huge amount of positive role models around the place, just waiting to inspire you!

ANDREW IS OUR DISABILITY ROLE MODEL

NICK'S STORY

Nick Price is the Deputy Director of Operations in the Government Legal Department.

I have been a MOD civil servant for nearly all of my working life. I was first an Administrative Assistant and then Administrative Officer before a brief change of career. I returned to the MOD and was fortunate to get re-employed in the Pathology Laboratory at the Cambridge Military Hospital, Aldershot. I went through the National scheme and was promoted to Executive Officer and posted to Deepcut as a Budget Manager.



Throughout this period, I was predominantly in the closet at work with the door firmly shut - I was Mister Nick at the Officers Mess and expected to field a female companion at all events. Luckily with my connections at the hospital, I was always able to find a QARANC Nursing Officer willing to play my girlfriend. It was a happy time despite the closeted

I moved to London 22 years ago and both my career and life started for real. From the moment I started in Whitehall, I was determined to be open about my sexuality despite the Department's view that employing individuals who were gay was a security risk. I'm not sure why I wasn't bothered - it might have been the stupidity of youth or the sincere belief that my sexual preferences didn't impact on my ability to do my job - but for whatever reason, I decided it wasn't a problem and just got on with my work!

It's not all been plain sailing, I admit, and there have been dark times – but I find it harder to come out as a Christian than I ever do to say that I'm gay, which is huge progress! I honestly do not believe my sexual orientation has held me back; the only one thing that has ever held me back is me – and my faith in me!

NICK IS OUR FAITH ROLE MODEL

AJAY'S STORY

Ajay Khandhar works as an Employment Lawyer for Government Legal Department

Three years ago, I moved to London from Sydney, Australia, where I worked as a lawyer in large city law firms for over 5 years.

Growing up a first generation Indian-Australian, I had always felt like the "other". Being gay exacerbated those feelings of "otherness".

I made a conscious choice upon leaving university to stay quiet about my sexual orientation in the workplace, concerned that it would inhibit my career progression. In any case, I was only out to my sisters and a handful of friends at the time. Putting up "a wall" in this way hindered my ability to form deeper friendships with colleagues and clients. My work satisfaction also suffered as a result.

At the time I left Australia, "diversity" was a buzz word which straight white middle-aged men in boardrooms at city law firms were still struggling to grasp (in 2015!).

GLD was a real breath of fresh air. It is by far the most diverse and welcoming workplace I've been a part of. I truly believe that the benefits of employees feeling comfortable enough to bring their whole self to work are boundless - for the individual and the organisation alike. Be it recruitment, productivity, retention, employee relations or mental health - creating a workplace where diversity in all its forms is embraced is incredibly powerful.

I finally came out to the rest of my (huge) extended family around the world last year through a private Facebook message. In that message, I also announced my engagement to my now husband, Nikhil. The response was largely positive and, more importantly, I feel more my authentic self now than ever before. I know my late parents would be proud.

I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have been born in Sydney and live in London - both beacons of diversity and acceptance. The situation in which many LGBTQI+ people around the world find themselves is in stark contrast to my experience. I think it's incumbent upon those of us who are lucky enough to live where we do, and have access to the support networks we have, to be champions for those who are not so lucky.



AJAY IS OUR BAME ROLE MODEL

VICKY'S STORY

Victoria Wood is a Senior Lawyer in the Department for International Trade.

I started out as a criminal defence barrister before moving in-house and working as a lawyer in universities in the UK and Australia. I began working for the Government Legal Department 5 years ago in the Cabinet Office before moving to the Department for International Trade last year.



I came out as a lesbian at school when I was 12 years old. I remember a spark going off in my mind when I read something about two men being in love and realising this could apply to women as well. I was so chuffed with myself for figuring it out, I promptly told all my friends.

I have always been out. I find it easier to be open and honest about who I am. I always say I don't put myself in a closet, it's only other people's assumptions that put me there.

My partner and I had been together for about 10 years when we decided to have children. I am grateful we live in a time and place where that choice is possible. My children have never known anything other than having two mums. They just accept it as the most natural thing in the world. They've had a playmate cry when he realised they had two mums because he wanted two mums too! We spend a lot of time navigating other people's perceptions. Last week I took my children to the local sports club and their new teacher told my son he was tall for his age and asked if he had a tall father, to which my daughter, the chattier of the two, replied, 'no, we have two mums. Aren't we lucky?' Thankfully the teacher took it all in her stride.

For me, being open about who I am helps me do my job better, be a better parent and provide visibility for others.

VICKY IS OUR PARENTING ROLE MODEL