

Pride in the Workplace

As we celebrate National Inclusion Week (26 September to 2 October), is your company doing enough to foster a genuinely inclusive working environment? If there's room for improvement, A City Law Firm is here to help

Everybody's welcome

Firms are now starting to recognise the importance of creating an inclusive workplace. Every employer needs to make proactive efforts to welcome and support all members of their team — including those from the LGBTQ+ community — on an equal footing. A positive environment results in a workforce that is happier and more motivated, which can only benefit the business.

Protected by law

The Equality Act 2010 protects someone from discrimination and victimisation because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. It states that employees should not be treated less favourably, harassed, or victimised because they are/or are perceived to be LGBTQ+. Although the law exists to address discrimination, prevention is of course preferable and to make moves towards this, businesses need to establish a supportive culture for all their staff from the start.

How to create an inclusive workplace

1. Take time to learn more about the LGBTQ+ community and staff members who belong to it. Although you should never ask an

employee about their sexuality or make any assumptions, a wider understanding is vital. Actively encourage openness; use the correct words and pronouns; and don't be afraid to discuss family.

2. Invest in education. To create an environment that is truly inclusive, you need to engage non-LGBTQ+ staff as well as LGBTQ+ employees. Suitable and effective training — especially for those in HR and management roles — on matters and considerations that the LGBTQ+ community face is essential.

3. Create an LGBTQ+ alliance of staff to build comradeship within your organisation. Also recommended is a forum or open-door policy so that staff have a safe space where they can share any problems. This way, employers can pick up on issues early and take steps to resolve them before they escalate.

Policies to be proud of

At A City Law Firm, we work with many businesses to ensure that their company practices foster a positive, embracing environment for LGBTQ+ staff members. Aside from an equality and diversity policy, does your organisation have up-to-date protocols on parental leave, adoption and surrogacy? Are all of your policies

and procedures — from dress codes to pensions — genuinely inclusive? Do you use gender-neutral terms, for instance, and do your policies support the health needs of someone who may be transitioning or who has HIV? If not, we can assist you in making these changes.

Benefits for all

It should go without saying that the benefits afforded to heterosexual families and couples should also apply to same-sex couples and their families. Are your benefits relevant and inclusive, or do they need to be adapted to offer shared parental leave for surrogacy and adoption, for example? If these are already in place, are LGBTQ+ staff actively encouraged to take advantage of them and do they know how to sign up?

As lawyers, we have fought for workers who are facing discrimination and we have also helped employers create inclusive policies and practices. Let us work with your organisation to create a business environment that is positive, inclusive and supportive for *every* employee.

