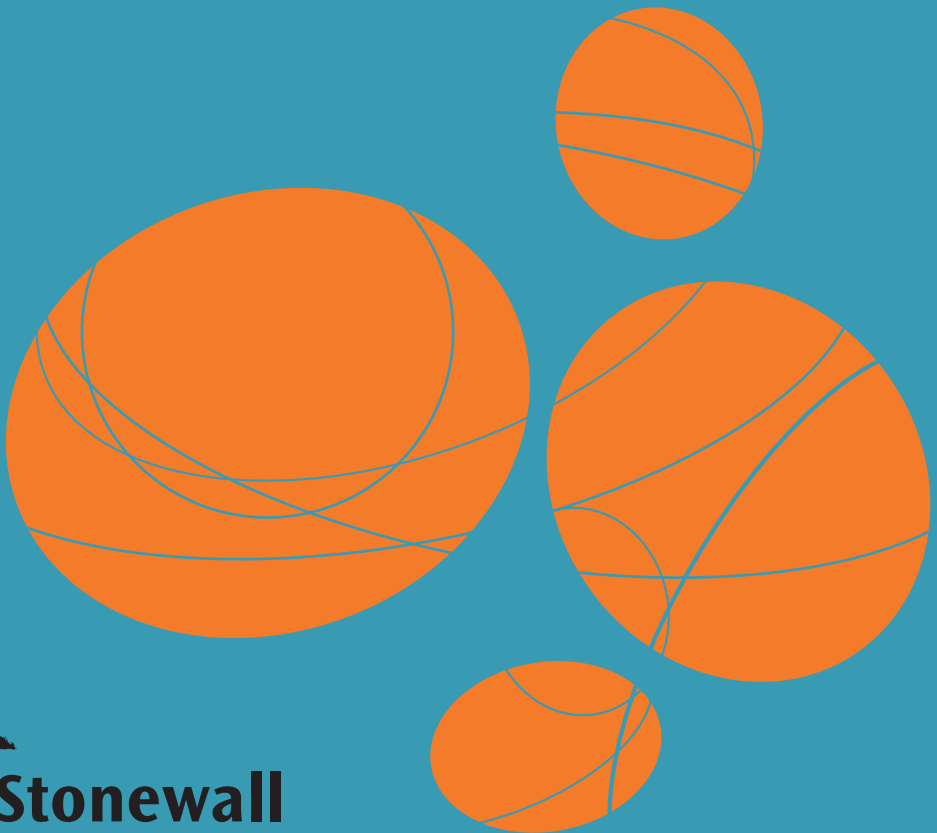


# GLOBAL WORKING

Supporting lesbian, gay  
and bisexual staff on  
overseas assignments



**Stonewall**  
WORKPLACE GUIDES

# GLOBAL WORKING

Supporting lesbian, gay  
and bisexual staff on  
overseas assignments



Supported by



## **GLOBAL WORKING**

Supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual staff on overseas assignments

### **Stonewall**

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Stonewall Workplace Guides

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# FOREWORD

Stonewall's work with 600 major employers, who employ more than ten million staff globally, is now the largest non-governmental intervention of its kind in the world. For them, being able to put the most talented people, regardless of birth or background, wherever in the world they need them most is vitally important to their business. Increasingly too, their staff see international postings as central to their own career development.

Many countries, however, remain unsafe or, at least, deeply inhospitable environments for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Gay staff tell us they want to know their employers understand their concerns about working overseas. Employers meanwhile tell us that they want to make sure their gay staff can take advantage of international assignments.

This guide – the latest in a series of Stonewall good practice publications – profiles some of the employers paving the way for gay staff to work internationally. It explores how employers can best support their gay staff to make informed choices about working abroad, and how to support them when they get there. Having helped transform the British workplace for gay staff in the last decade, now is an opportune time for global employers to model best practice and in doing so help improve the lives of more than 400 million gay people worldwide too.

**Ben Summerskill** Chief Executive, Stonewall

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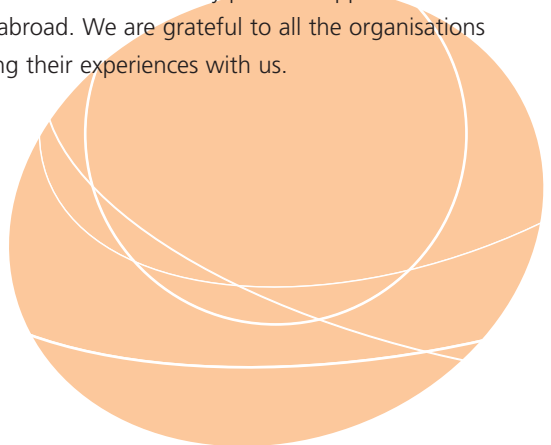
# INTRODUCTION

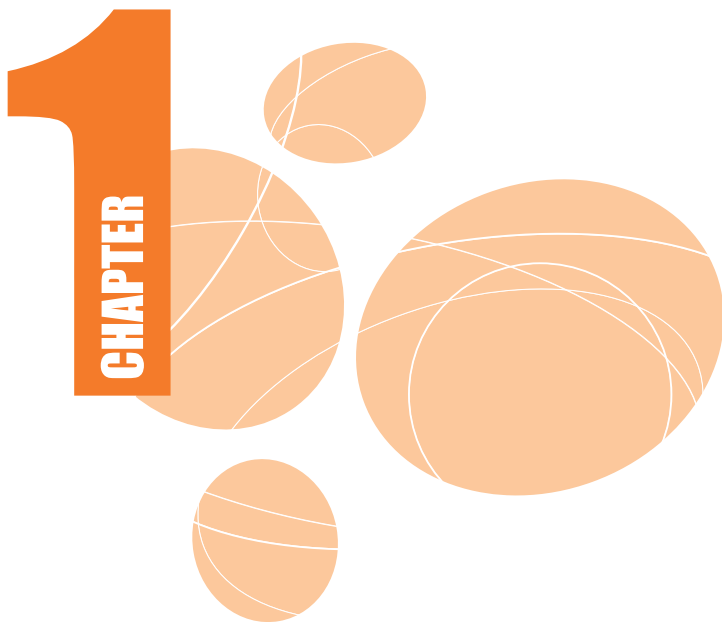
International assignments are increasingly a feature of working for a global organisation. In some sectors internationally based roles are now the norm. This can pose particular issues for gay staff, who may not enjoy the same legal protections overseas as they do in Britain. In many countries lesbian, gay and bisexual people still face extreme violence and persecution, and in many more there is no legal recognition for same-sex partners or parents.

Many organisations are unclear about the extent to which their lesbian, gay and bisexual staff are protected when working abroad, or how best to support them if complications do arise. This guide provides clear, practical tips on how gay employees can access international assignments and how to support them when they do so.

This guide explores the benefits to global companies of considering the implications of international postings for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff. It also explores how the very best organisations use their global influence to promote better workplaces for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff around the world.

This publication is the tenth in a series of workplace guides from Stonewall, Britain's leading lesbian, gay and bisexual equality organisation. It features practical case studies from leading organisations detailing how they make sure international recruitment is open to all and how they provide support when sending gay staff abroad. We are grateful to all the organisations featured for sharing their experiences with us.





# THE EXPERIENCES OF GAY PEOPLE WORKING WORLDWIDE

Working abroad can be an exciting opportunity for many employees. The experience will be different for every employee and will vary between different countries and business regions. Many gay staff who work abroad have positive experiences and are happy to undertake international assignments. Many countries, however, remain unsafe or unfriendly places for lesbian, gay and bisexual people to live and work in.

In recent years Stonewall has been instrumental in securing comprehensive legal protections in Britain. However, male homosexuality is still illegal in over 80 countries worldwide and female homosexuality is still illegal in 49. In five countries homosexuality is punishable by death, in seven by life imprisonment and in six by hard labour. Gay people living and working in some countries may therefore be liable to prosecution and persecution simply for being lesbian or gay. They may be subject to violence or harassment from state authorities and may not be able to turn to

the police for protection. In many countries where being lesbian or gay is legal there remain many practical legal barriers for lesbian, gay and bisexual people there, including:

- No legal protection from discrimination at work, in the provision of goods and services or from homophobic violence or harassment
- No legal recognition of their relationships with partners, even if they are in civil partnerships or marriages
- No legal recognition of their parental rights, even if they are the legal parents of their children in their home country
- Restrictions on immigration rules allowing same-sex partners or parents to apply for visas or residency
- Legal restrictions on lesbian, gay and bisexual organisations and venues, preventing gay people from meeting or networking with one another
- Legal restrictions on 'promoting' homosexuality, preventing gay people and organisations from openly discussing their personal lives

Even in countries with some legal protections against discrimination for gay people, social and cultural attitudes towards them may be overwhelmingly negative. This may mean that while they face no legal impediment to living and working in a country, their quality of life may be significantly affected by negative attitudes and discrimination from colleagues, neighbours and those providing them with goods and services. In some countries the reverse may be true – some areas of a country may be relatively accepting of gay people even though this is not reflected in the country's legal framework.

# 2



## CHAPTER

The best organisations recognise that all their staff need to be able to take advantage of every opportunity, regardless of sexual orientation. For global employers this includes international roles and postings, which are increasingly seen as important career development opportunities for staff. They also recognise the importance of being able to put their most talented staff, including their lesbian, gay and bisexual staff, wherever the business needs them most.

The best organisations understand that in the competition for the best talent they need actively to demonstrate how they can support gay staff to take advantage of international roles. In sectors where international roles are very common, this needs to be made explicit at the recruitment stage if gay people aren't to be deterred from applying. The very best organisations also recognise the reputational benefit of publically demonstrating their support for gay equality beyond the workplace.



## The benefits

**DEVELOP AND RETAIN TALENTED STAFF** Employees of global organisations increasingly see working abroad as an important aspect of their professional development. Supporting and encouraging lesbian, gay and bisexual staff to take advantage of these opportunities too increases job satisfaction and leads to a more productive and skilled workforce. Employees who don't feel supported in this way may look for work elsewhere.

**DELIVER BETTER OUTCOMES** Organisations that operate globally can only be fully effective in delivering business outcomes if their staff can work on an international level. Putting policies and systems in place to support gay staff to take on international assignments means that clients benefit from having the best person for the job wherever they are based.

**DEMONSTRATE CREDIBLE GLOBAL VALUES** The credibility of global organisations that support gay equality at work is undermined if they operate different policies in different locations around the world. Making sure that organisational values on equality and diversity are applied consistently in all locations demonstrates to employees and clients that those values are taken seriously.

**IMPROVE REPUTATION** Organisations that go out of their way to support lesbian, gay and bisexual staff on overseas assignments demonstrate modern and dynamic ways of working and earn themselves a reputation as an employer of choice amongst talented gay recruits.

**AVOID RISK** Discrimination or harassment in the workplace because of sexual orientation is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. British employers have responsibilities for protecting their employees regardless of where they are in the world. Taking steps to ensure that employees can take advantage of and are supported during international postings can protect organisations from costly and damaging employment tribunals.



# CHAPTER 3

# GAY-FRIENDLY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The very best global employers know that putting policies in place that explicitly refer to sexual orientation and consistently applying them globally helps support their lesbian, gay and bisexual staff. They also send a clear message to gay staff about what they can expect from their employer, wherever they may be based.

## Global equality and diversity policies

All employers should have a comprehensive policy in place that explicitly prohibits discrimination or harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation. The best global organisations apply the same equality and diversity policy in all regions in which they operate. This means that in some countries the policy exceeds local legal requirements.

Having a blanket policy globally demonstrates to all staff an organisation's commitment to gay equality and respect at work and gives lesbian, gay and bisexual staff confidence that they can expect the same standards of treatment from their colleagues wherever they may work. Some organisations have faced resistance when trying to implement region-specific policies that explicitly mention sexual orientation. Having global policies can make it easier to apply

an organisation's values in regions where they may otherwise meet with resistance.

**IBM's global diversity policy prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in hiring, training, compensation, promotions, transfers, terminations and social and recreational functions. It's applied consistently across all of the 170 countries in which IBM operates. The wording within the policy is consistent and IBM does not accept or allow any changes to this terminology in any of the countries the company has offices in, including in the Middle East, Far East and Africa.**

All staff considering international assignments should be made aware that the organisation's equality and diversity policy applies globally. The best employers require all staff applying for international assignments to demonstrate that they have an understanding of the importance of equality to the business and that they will apply those values in a respectful way in the host country.

## Relocation policies

Many multinational organisations have a specific policy in place setting out how to manage staff relocation overseas. Policies should cover international assignments of any duration, from short term business trips to secondments or overseas postings for several years.

The best organisations explicitly mention in their relocation policy that there may be additional considerations for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff, and set out how these issues should be handled by managers. The very best employers recognise that international assignments are a valuable career development opportunity and state clearly in their relocation policy that, where international travel is not an integral requirement of a particular role, employees won't suffer a detriment to their career if they decide not to accept a posting.

Where the organisation has a policy of allowing an employee's partner to accompany them – and offers associated benefits such as language or cultural awareness training – this should explicitly apply equally to same-sex partners, and should be publicised to all staff.

**Ernst & Young** makes provisions in its global mobility policy for dependents – spouses, partners and children – to accompany employees on international assignments. The policy explicitly defines a dependent spouse or partner as a 'legally recognised spouse or partner (including same-sex and co-habitation relationships as defined under home country laws), significant other (including same-sex partners) or fiancé(e)'

Immigration rules for same-sex couples and families may make relocation of a gay employee's partner or family difficult, however. Relocation policies should therefore be clear about what the organisation can reasonably do to support the relocation of a gay staff member and their family. The best policies include a commitment to find alternative ways of relocating a gay staff member's partner or family in jurisdictions that do not recognise same-sex partners or their children.

**Simmons & Simmons** has a relocation policy that contains specific guidance on the considerations required in jurisdictions where same-sex marriage and civil partnerships are not recognised. The policy affirms that the employer will seek alternative means of granting a visa to relocate the employee's partner. The policy lists the jurisdictions in which they operate that recognise same-sex partnerships, those that criminalise homosexuality and homosexual acts and those that do not recognise same-sex adoption or parenting.

Organisations will often undertake a security or risk assessment before deploying staff internationally. Assessments should consider the particular issues affecting lesbian, gay and bisexual staff and should be regularly reviewed throughout their assignment. Employers should consider the cultural and legal environment, as well as any differences in attitudes towards gay people that may exist between rural and urban locations. Security risk mitigation and management plans may need to have specific protocols for gay staff. For example, gay staff may need health insurance that enables them to be flown back to the UK or a third country for treatment with their partner, since a normal incident such as a road traffic accident could leave a gay staff member exposed to discrimination at a time when they are very vulnerable.

## Training staff

Line managers and staff who are responsible for staff relocation should receive training on how the policy applies to lesbian, gay and bisexual staff. They should also receive practical training on how to best encourage staff who may not be 'out' to voice concerns they may have about international postings. This can include how to ask open-ended questions about any personal circumstances that may affect their decision. This will benefit employees with a range of concerns about international postings, including, for example, staff with caring responsibilities.

**Barclays Corporate** ensures that its training for managers specifically includes making decisions about international assignments. The training includes a scenario involving a gay member of staff which covers how managers and employees should discuss potential alternatives to assignments to avoid them suffering any detriment to their career from being unable to take up a post due to their sexual orientation.

The training specifically advises, alongside scenarios including single parents and employees with caring responsibilities, that 'a gay employee may wish to take their partner on an international secondment and decisions on appropriate locations should be taken in collaboration with them'.



# 4

## CHAPTER

# SUPPORTING STAFF DECISIONS ABOUT RELOCATION

There are personal considerations for every employee when making decisions about working or relocating abroad. For many, including lesbian, gay and bisexual employees, shorter assignments, such as travelling for meetings, pose fewer concerns and they are happy to undertake them. Longer term assignments will require greater consideration by both employers and gay staff, especially in cases where immigration rules make it difficult to take along a same-sex partner or their children, or where there is a real risk that their personal safety might be compromised.

The best employers take steps to make sure that all staff are as informed as possible about what to expect in a particular location, and make clear that employees will be supported if they decide a post is unsuitable for them. Employers shouldn't assume that lesbian, gay and bisexual staff fully understand the legal and cultural situation for gay people worldwide in different regions or countries.

Managers should therefore be encouraged to discuss with gay staff any potential risks of international placements and the impact this may have on the employee and their family. This should include an open discussion about the possible implications of being openly gay during the posting. All staff should also be offered an opportunity to raise any concerns with someone other than their manager, who they may not be out to.

**Barclays** has a global mobility team to support staff who transfer from one country to another. Once an employee has been selected to go on an international assignment, they are allocated a case manager who is the point of contact for the individual throughout their assignment. The case manager provides a range of support – from the logistics of moving to personal considerations. For example, for an employee posted to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), care is taken to make sure the employee knows that unmarried partners (same-sex or opposite-sex) are viewed differently in the UAE. Case managers are advised of where to find information about the human rights of gay people in different countries so they can provide this to employees, and national branches ('chapters') of Spectrum, the Barclays lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender network, can also provide information.

## Providing country information

It is common practice for employers to compile country information about destinations for international postings. The best organisations collate real-life insights from their gay staff in the different countries in which they are based or have worked. The most useful information includes the experiences of staff on both short and long term assignments. Some organisations also put potential candidates in touch with gay staff who work in or have worked in a specific country. This enables gay staff to get a more detailed account of what the experience has been like for others in particular locations. Gay staff should be provided with information on:

- The legal situation for lesbian, gay and bisexual people, including whether partner or parental rights are recognised, and whether immigration rules allow visas for accompanying same-sex partners and children
- The prevailing cultural attitudes about gay people, including whether workplace cultures are accommodating, and whether there are different attitudes towards gay and bisexual men compared to lesbian and bisexual women
- Whether there are particular areas, cities or neighbourhoods that are more gay-friendly than others
- Whether there are any venues or local support groups for lesbian, gay and bisexual people

Employers should be honest with staff and manage their expectations about what they can expect from them and from international postings. There may, for example, be practical and legal limitations to the level of protection and support they're able to offer to gay employees in specific countries. Employers should be clear that they are not above national laws and cannot secure equal treatment in every circumstance.

Organisations should also avoid making guarantees they cannot fulfil, for example about securing visas for same-sex partners or families. This helps gay employees make fully informed decisions about whether to accept an overseas assignment.

## Offering suitable alternatives

In many cases lesbian, gay and bisexual employees, on the basis of a full and frank discussion with their employer, will feel comfortable taking on international assignments, particularly if the assignment is only of short duration. There will be cases however – in particular for longer assignments – where lesbian, gay and bisexual employees decide that a particular overseas posting is unsuitable for them because they are gay.

The best organisations recognise the potential impact on career progression of having to decline an assignment for this reason and take steps to make sure an employee won't suffer any detriment as a result. Some offer an alternative means of accepting the assignment, such as working remotely, or a posting to an alternative location where possible. Where an alternative posting isn't possible, some organisations offer career development opportunities of equivalent merit in the employee's home country, such as working on an equivalent project or taking up tailored training opportunities.

To ensure that gay employees do not suffer a detriment in their career progression, **Accenture** works in conjunction with them to identify similar opportunities in a different location – or elsewhere in their home country – that provide a similar or better prospect for progression. The objective of this process is to help make sure that the employee has the same or better career development opportunities.



**Simmons & Simmons** gives specific guidance in its diversity policy around international working. Any employee who has concerns over international travel is encouraged to seek confidential support from either human resources, diversity staff or the network group heads to discuss their circumstances. Where an employee is uncomfortable working in a certain location, the policy is clear that alternative solutions will be considered. This includes, among other options, proposing alternative locations, working remotely, or allowing for return visits.

If a lesbian, gay or bisexual employee chooses to decline an international assignment for reasons related to their sexual orientation, for example due to unfavourable social or political conditions in an assignment country, **IBM** works to make sure it won't have a negative impact on the person's career and looks for alternative options for the employee. Where necessary, a human resources representative can speak to the employee's manager about the situation and the reasons why the employee cannot accept the offer. If required, more specialised advice and support can be obtained from IBM's Global LGBT Program Manager.

Managers should discuss with the employee in question whether they are comfortable with their reason for declining the assignment being made known. This will be especially important if other employees are asked to undertake the posting in their place or if this poses difficulties for a team scheduled to take on an international assignment together. Managers should firmly but sensitively handle any negative reactions from colleagues or team members as a result of an employee's decision to turn down an international posting.

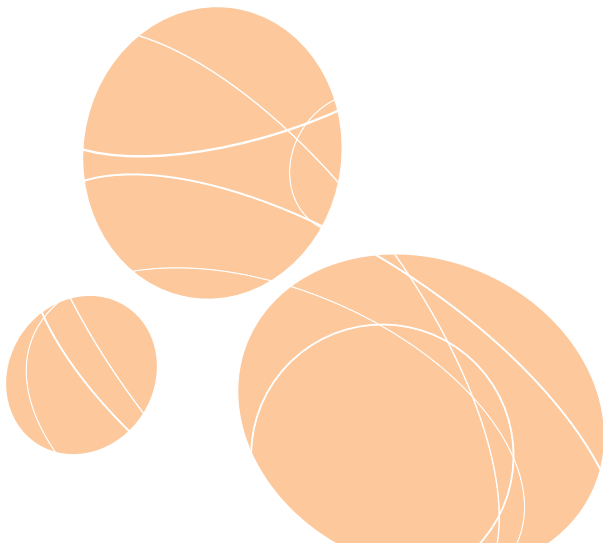
In a small number of cases travel to particular countries may be critical to an individual's role. Therefore it may not be possible for employers to offer suitable alternatives to gay staff. Employers should be clear with gay staff in these circumstances that they will support them when working abroad and managers should discuss with them how to best ensure their safety and well-being while abroad. In very rare circumstances managers may need to consider whether alternative positions might be more suitable. Being explicit in job descriptions about whether travel to certain destinations is a requirement of a particular role helps to avoid disputes.

## Seeking employee feedback

The best organisations evaluate their international postings to find out whether lesbian, gay and bisexual staff are satisfied with the support they've been offered throughout the relocation process. This can capture the experiences of gay staff who've excluded themselves from international opportunities, on the basis that the locations offered are unsuitable or that there hasn't been enough support available.

**Ernst & Young** asks a specific question in its biannual Global People Survey on employees' experiences of career development: *'Ernst & Young's approach to being a global organisation provides me with professional development and career opportunities I could not get at another organisation'*.

Participants in the survey are monitored for their sexual orientation, allowing Ernst & Young to establish if there are any specific discrepancies experienced by its lesbian, gay and bisexual staff on international assignments or in the application process. Results have shown that lesbian and gay staff are more satisfied than heterosexual staff on this question.





Once a lesbian, gay or bisexual employee has accepted an overseas assignment, organisations should take steps to support them through the relocation process and once they are in post. Even employees posted to countries that are relatively gay-friendly will benefit from support.

## Avoiding being outed

Thought should be given to whether an employee's safety may be compromised if they are outed as gay during an international posting. Where this does pose a risk, the best organisations work with the employee to mitigate this by, for example, replacing their work email address with a personal address on any mailing lists for the lesbian, gay and bisexual staff network. In addition employers should discuss whether internal communications which may out an employee – such as staff network newsletters – can be restricted to certain locations.

Organisations should also provide clear advice to gay staff about the use of social media while abroad, since some employees may already be out on their online profile. This will be particularly important for those posted to regions where communications may be monitored by state authorities.

## Advising in-country managers how to support staff

Managers on the ground play a role in supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual staff who join them on international postings. In some locations cultural attitudes towards gay people can make this difficult. Adopting a global policy on equality and diversity makes it easier to hold managers to account if problems arise.

In many cases, however, the issue is not that in-country managers are homophobic but that they lack the knowledge and training to know how to support openly-gay staff coming from Britain. Some organisations implement training programmes for managers in the host country or promote messages about gay equality in global communications, outlining why sexual orientation is relevant in the workplace and why it's important to support lesbian, gay and bisexual colleagues.

**IBM's Growth Market Units (GMU) operate in the world's fastest growing economies, including Africa, South America and South Asia. To address the cultures and traditions that can make acceptance of lesbian, gay and bisexual people difficult in many of these countries, IBM set up the GMU reverse mentoring programme in 2011. With executive sponsorship from the GMU General Manager and the HR Vice President, IBM recruited volunteers from their LGBT network groups (and their straight allies) across the world as mentors and assigned them to managers in the GMU. The managers, first line and senior executives, were carefully chosen as those who would be best placed to influence the workplace climate.**

## Supporting same-sex partners and families

When taking on international assignments, gay employees should be given the opportunity to relocate with their partner and children whenever possible.

When immigration rules make this difficult, the very best employers find creative, legal ways of enabling same-sex partners and children to accompany their employees on assignments. This can include

arranging consecutive tourist visas or offering the partner a temporary job in the host country. Some organisations also make sure that, wherever possible, partner benefits such as pension benefits or medical insurance are made available to same-sex partners, even if their relationship is not legally recognised in the host country. In countries where heterosexual couples are eligible for tax breaks that are not available to same-sex couples, the very best organisations compensate for this by making up the difference in the employee's salary.

In countries where **Google** is legally allowed to enrol non-married partners as dependents, the company allows employees to enrol their partner without having to declare their relationship to the beneficiary. This ensures that employees can take advantage of partner benefits regardless of their sexual orientation.

In cases where local laws make it too dangerous or simply impossible for same-sex partners to accompany the employee, the best organisations compensate for this by covering additional travel expenses for return trips home to allay any strain on their personal relationships that their heterosexual colleagues wouldn't experience in similar circumstances.

## Maintaining contact with staff networks

Being posted overseas can be isolating for any employee. For gay staff, who in some cases may have to conceal their sexual orientation from colleagues overseas, maintaining contact with understanding and supportive colleagues back home can be incredibly important. Staff posted overseas should be given the opportunity, wherever possible, to engage with the branch (or 'chapter') of the lesbian, gay and bisexual staff network in their home country.

Many organisations facilitate online networking, or make it possible for staff posted overseas to dial into network meetings or events using telephone or video conferencing facilities or via webcam. Advice should be provided to staff in locations where the internet may be censored or monitored by state authorities. Some organisations fund travel for staff overseas to attend important network events.

Chapters of **Procter & Gamble's** GABLE Network work closely together to ensure global consistency and help employees moving from one region to another. Each region makes use of teleconferencing and video conferencing to enable employees across the globe to link in with the network – for example, a dial-in facility is provided at GABLE North America's annual conference.

**Barclays** has chapters of its Spectrum LGBT Network across its worldwide operations. Spectrum tries to make sure lesbian, gay and bisexual staff worldwide are able to access the network. They do this by distributing information using social media and using video conferencing at network events or discussions.

**Google** holds an annual three-day summit for leaders from their network groups from all over the world, including members of Gayglers, Google's network for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees. The event is held to share best practice and to give staff an opportunity to network with each other. Bursaries for travel and accommodation are provided for 'Gayglers' worldwide.

Some organisations also put gay employees on international postings in different parts of the world – and their straight allies – in touch with one another. This gives them the opportunity to seek advice from peers in similar circumstances. Other organisations put employees in touch with in-country chapters of their global lesbian, gay and bisexual network, where they exist. In some cases in-country staff networks of different organisations collaborate to share information and provide support to lesbian, gay and bisexual staff. This is particularly useful in locations where there are very small numbers of gay employees working for any one organisation.

**Proud2Serve** is an online networking site for military personnel in the **Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force** and is endorsed and funded by the three services. It is designed to supplement LGBT staff networks that operate in all three services but which tend to meet physically only in the UK. It enables serving lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender personnel to connect with one another wherever they're based throughout the world, and has 1400 registered users in →

over 22 countries. The P2SForum acts as an online support and information service to staff who are stationed across many locations and who can often experience serious feelings of isolation.

Proud2Serve has an established record as the first port of call for information for the community which has grown stronger, year on year, since the website and P2SForum were established in 2005. It has over 1.5 million page views each year and over 5000 military personnel and civilians visit the site each month.

**Ernst & Young** has a number of LGBT networks that are local to specific countries. Historically, information sharing between these networks was via the Diversity & Inclusion team. However, this limited the ability for staff to build their own personal networks across Ernst & Young's global locations. Ernst & Young also recognised that some countries do not have local networks for their staff.

As a result Ernst & Young launched a multi-country online lesbian, gay and bisexual community which brings together gay staff to share best practice, successes and ideas, brings a sense of community to staff with no active network in their location, and provides support to those countries looking to set up a network. The online community now links Ernst & Young employees across Europe, Middle East, India and Africa.

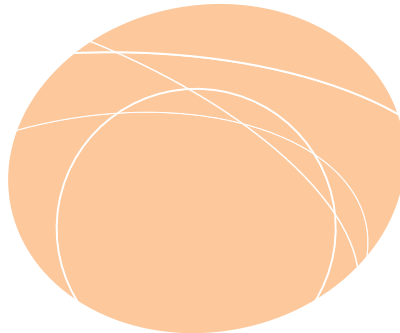
The **Home Office SPECTRUM** LGBT network has a position of international representative on its committee. This position was introduced to help address the isolation some network members felt in certain countries, and to more effectively address staff questions on international issues. The representative is based outside the UK, and the role includes raising the visibility of the network in overseas offices, for example by writing articles for the Home Office and UK Border Agency's internal magazine for overseas staff. The representative advises on issues related to working abroad, enabling staff to make informed choices about postings and other international issues.

## Supporting staff if things go wrong

Even when organisations have made the best possible preparations to support lesbian, gay and bisexual employees, problems can still arise once staff members are on an international posting. This can range from difficulties in the workplace, such as homophobic comments being made in the office, to those beyond the employer's direct control. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people on international postings may, for example, face on-going difficulties integrating with their local community, such as at their child's school, causing feelings of isolation. In the most extreme cases they may face violence, harassment or prosecution for being gay. These issues will have a clear impact on their performance at work.

The very best organisations have clear policies in place to make sure that gay staff are able to access support and advice on a range of issues they may experience on international postings. Staff should be able to access advice and support from sources other than their line manager at home or in-country. Some organisations arrange regular conversations with relocation staff or a mentor in their home country, to give staff on international postings an opportunity to raise any concerns they may have as and when they arise.

In cases where an employee's safety or well-being is severely compromised and the situation cannot be resolved by other means, the organisation should have clear policies to support the employee to return home quickly.







Operating globally presents a valuable opportunity to implement gay-friendly initiatives in workplaces outside Britain, including in countries where there are significant social and cultural barriers to gay equality. Changing workplace cultures is an important part of changing wider attitudes towards lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Knowledge and expertise gained through supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual staff in Britain can help to accelerate culture change overseas. Staff in Britain should be proactive in supporting their counterparts abroad to introduce gay-friendly initiatives. Gay staff posted on international assignments can also be a valuable resource for overseas workplaces, since they too bring with them their experiences of promoting lesbian, gay and bisexual equality back home.

Employers should, however, be realistic and accept that there will be limitations to the work they can do. Even for the most committed organisations, there will be circumstances where it's simply not possible – or appropriate – to implement these sorts of initiatives, particularly where this may pose a risk to the personal safety of gay employees, their families or their colleagues.

## Global leadership

The very best organisations and leaders recognise that to ensure global initiatives on gay equality are credible, it's critical that they are endorsed by senior global leaders. Senior leaders who champion gay equality send a positive message to all staff who work for the organisation. Senior leaders can also play an important role in articulating the business case for gay equality beyond the workplace when engaging with local governments or policymakers.

Many organisations establish a lesbian, gay and bisexual champion to act as a visible international spokesperson on issues of gay equality. A champion doesn't have to be lesbian, gay or bisexual themselves, but should demonstrate a clear and visible commitment to their gay colleagues. Those who *are* openly lesbian, gay or bisexual send a clear message to staff all over the world that gay people can be successful and are to be taken seriously. They also help challenge the attitudes that clients and stakeholders in other countries may have towards gay people.

**Ernst & Young** has a number of senior champions for LGBT issues around the world, who each have responsibility for covering particular areas of their worldwide operations. There are LGBT champions for the US, the UK, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland & Austria (GSA), South Africa, Africa and Asia-Pacific. In addition, Beth Brooke operates as the Global Diversity and Inclusiveness Champion. Beth is Global Vice Chair for Public Policy and a member of the Global Executive.

Beth featured prominently in Ernst & Young's 'It Gets Better' video – featuring her story of being an out lesbian. The video was launched to all Ernst & Young staff globally via its global internal newsletter, Ernst & Young's global channel on YouTube and via the It Gets Better project's own website.

Beth has also played a central role in conversations on advancing gay equality in a number of countries and has championed inclusive leadership at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

**Goldman Sachs** runs a Managing Director (MD) Ally Programme through which senior staff members commit to a set of actions to visibly demonstrate support for their gay colleagues. This programme extends across their global operations with MD Allies based in various locations around the world, including China, Korea and Japan.

**GABLE, Procter & Gamble's** Global Network for LGBT employees, works to engage senior management around the world to help them understand lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in the workplace. This has led to collaborative partnerships with the company's global marketing leader, who recorded a video highlighting the importance of the LGB consumer sector to P&G as a company. This video was shared with all employees globally.

## Global staff networks

Many organisations support in-country staff to establish national branches, often referred to as 'chapters', of a global lesbian, gay and bisexual staff network. The best organisations support in-country staff to set up and manage their own network chapter autonomously, while encouraging an affiliation with existing chapters in other regions in which the organisation is based. This enables network members from all over the world to share good practice on advancing gay equality in the workplace and provides support to individual gay employees.

**Barclays** has chapters of its Spectrum LGBT network within each business area, which have in turn developed an extensive network of global chapters in Europe, the Americas and Asia. Working globally is a key objective of a number of different chapters of Spectrum. For example, the network for Retail and Business Banking has an objective to 'support the business to achieve its global ambitions and help identify and develop business opportunities within the LGBT market.' One outcome from this objective is Barclaycard sponsoring WorldPride.

**Accenture** has focused on expanding its Global LGBT Network, launching 12 chapters in less than 12 months. To support the formation of new networks and programmes, bi-monthly conference calls provide a forum for sharing good practice, allowing regional network leaders to connect with one another. The LGBT global team's monthly newsletter keeps subscribers all around the world up to date with events and good practice.

## Supplier policies

Many global organisations buy goods and services from suppliers based all over the world. The best organisations use the leverage they have with suppliers to encourage them to improve their own workplaces and services for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. This promotes lesbian, gay and bisexual equality throughout the global supply chain and has the potential to change workplace cultures and wider cultural attitudes worldwide.

Organisations should make sure that their procurement policy includes equality and diversity criteria, including an explicit reference to sexual orientation, and that, as far as the law in each country allows, the policy applies globally. Gay staff on overseas postings can play a useful role in identifying suppliers who fail to meet the organisation's own standards on promoting gay equality.

**Barclays** has a global policy on selecting and working with their suppliers. This includes the organisation's expectations in relation to diversity and inclusion, including lesbian, gay and bisexual equality. As part of the process of selecting suppliers Barclays requires certification from its high-risk suppliers to show compliance across areas of health and safety, diversity and inclusion, human rights and environmental management.

Supported by the policy, Barclaycard engaged with its outsourced telephony provider to check that its call operators based in India would deliver a gay-friendly service to customers. Barclaycard wanted to ensure, for example, that a UK customer who wanted to add their civil partner to their account would receive a gay-friendly service no matter where the call operative was based. The supplier was questioned about the training it provided to its staff to ensure that this would result in a positive experience for gay customers.

Following a review of **Goldman Sachs's** same-sex benefits across the Asia-Pacific region it was discovered that one of the health insurance companies the firm used in Japan didn't extend its coverage to same-sex partners. Goldman Sachs told the insurance supplier that it would seek an alternative provider if it could not extend its benefits to same-sex partners. The insurance company changed its policies accordingly.

## Career development

Many employers have long recognised the advantages of nurturing talented lesbian, gay and bisexual employees. Not only does this improve staff satisfaction and retention but it enables staff to reach their full potential and ultimately leads to a more productive and skilled workforce. Developing gay role models across the globe also helps challenge wider attitudes towards gay people.

Global organisations are increasingly recognising the value that gay staff can add, wherever they are based in the world, to the professional development of other talented gay employees. Many organisations establish formal development programmes, such as global mentoring opportunities, to help develop the careers of talented gay staff. This is especially valuable for gay employees who lack openly-gay peers or role models in their own country.

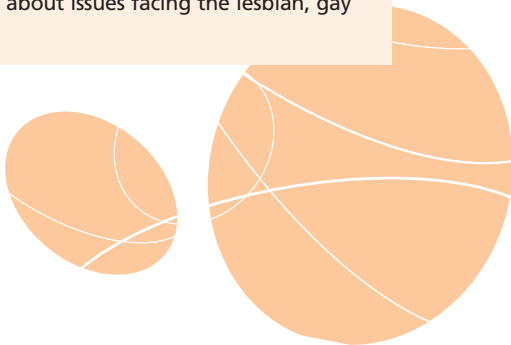
**IBM** provides a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender executive as a mentor to all its high potential LGBT employees around the world, identified through matching self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender individuals in the company's human resources systems with the high potential database. To support continued personal and professional development of future LGBT leaders, IBM also hosts specific LGBT leadership development conferences for this audience. These have been held in both Europe and the US.

## Championing gay equality worldwide

The very best employers go further and use their influence to actively support gay equality beyond the workplace. Often this involves directly engaging with local gay organisations campaigning for equality. Supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual pride organisations or parades, which are often small and work in hostile environments, is an important way for employers to demonstrate their commitment to gay equality. In practical terms, the presence of a major organisation and its staff at a pride event can lend the event credibility.

**Google** has focused its community engagement to demonstrate leadership in countries where the gay community faces substantial social, political and cultural barriers to equality. For example, Google was the only corporation with a float in the 2010 EuroPride march in Warsaw, Poland. As a result of this and other efforts to support and champion equality for minority groups, Google received the Hyacinth Tolerance Award from the Equality Foundation in recognition of the company's contribution towards making the country more open, tolerant and diverse.

**Goldman Sachs** makes sure that lesbian, gay and bisexual events are not just held in locations which are already considered to be gay friendly, but also in countries where gay issues are rarely discussed. For example, Pride Month is celebrated throughout their operations, with events in the Americas, EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa), India and Asia-Pacific. Discussion panels, film viewings and networking events are held in the firm's offices, including in China, Singapore and Taiwan, with the aim of raising awareness about issues facing the lesbian, gay and bisexual community.



# TOP TEN TIPS

- 1 APPLY YOUR POLICIES GLOBALLY** Make clear that anti-gay discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated in any regions in which you operate, including in locations where this goes beyond the local laws.
- 2 INCLUDE SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN YOUR RELOCATION POLICY** Be clear about the extent to which you can support lesbian, gay and bisexual staff to take on overseas assignments, paying due regard to their safety and well-being. Provide assurances that staff will be brought home if they do encounter problems.
- 3 TRAIN MANAGERS AND RELOCATION STAFF** Train those involved in arranging overseas postings on the particular considerations that may need to be taken into account for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff.
- 4 GIVE STAFF ENOUGH INFORMATION BEFORE THEY GO** Provide lesbian, gay and bisexual staff with sufficient information about the country they are being posted to, beyond simply the laws and practices affecting gay people. Be clear about the level of support they will receive once they are in-country, so they can make an informed decision about taking on the assignment.
- 5 PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE OPPORTUNITIES** Where possible, offer alternative postings or equivalent opportunities to lesbian, gay and bisexual employees who decide an overseas assignment isn't suitable because they're gay. Ensure staff won't suffer a detriment to their career if they feel unable to go.

6

**OFFER SAME-SEX PARTNERS EQUIVALENT BENEFITS**

Support same-sex partners to accompany your employee in exactly the same way as heterosexual partners, where immigration rules allow. Where local laws are restrictive, find alternative means of enabling the partner to enter the country or find ways to compensate accordingly.

7

**SUPPORT STAFF NETWORKS**

Make it possible for employees posted abroad to maintain contact with their staff network back home. Establish local chapters of your global network in as many countries as possible and promote collaborative working between them.

8

**PROVIDE TRAINING TO IN-COUNTRY MANAGERS**

Train managers in overseas offices about the organisation's policies and the importance of gay equality at work, so they can support staff on international postings. Over time this will help to transform their own workplace cultures.

9

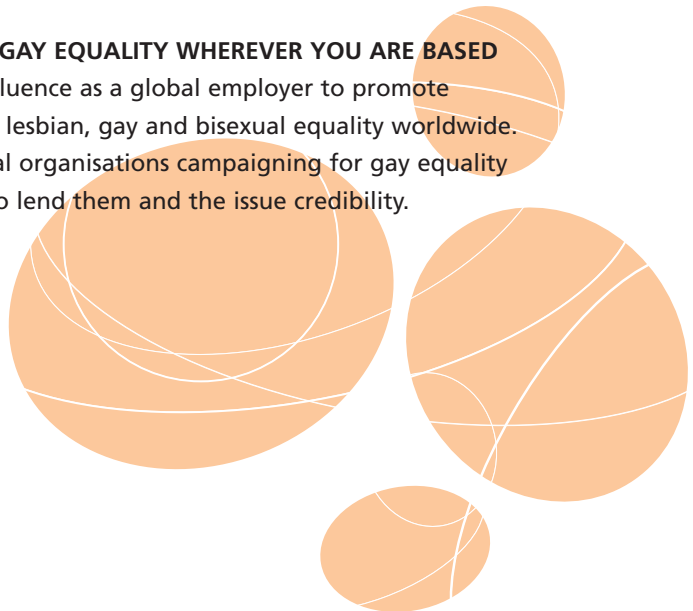
**OFFER GLOBAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Establish formal mentoring relationships between lesbian, gay and bisexual staff in different locations around the world to develop the next generation of gay leaders.

10

**CHAMPION GAY EQUALITY WHEREVER YOU ARE BASED**

Use your influence as a global employer to promote messages of lesbian, gay and bisexual equality worldwide. Support local organisations campaigning for gay equality in-country to lend them and the issue credibility.





### **Stonewall Diversity Champions programme**

Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme is Britain's good practice forum through which major employers work with Stonewall and each other on sexual orientation issues to promote diversity in the workplace. [www.stonewall.org.uk/dcs](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/dcs)

### **Workplace Equality Index**

The Workplace Equality Index is Stonewall's comprehensive annual benchmarking exercise that showcases Britain's top employers for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff. [www.stonewall.org.uk/wei](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/wei)

### **The Stonewall Leadership Programme**

The Stonewall Leadership Programme provides a unique space to look at questions around sexual orientation and authenticity and how these can be used to develop an individual's leadership abilities. [www.stonewall.org.uk/leadership](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/leadership)

**Stonewall Workplace Guides are free to download from [www.stonewall.org.uk/at\\_work](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_work)**

**Also in this series of Workplace Guides:**

Network Groups

Monitoring

Bullying

Career Development

Religion and Sexual Orientation

Bisexual people in the workplace

Marketing

Straight Allies

Procurement

**Thank you to all those who contributed to this guide**

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