

Creating Inclusive Residential Care for LGBTQ+ Elders

The CIRCLE study

Presentation for HAPPI hour – 03/06/25

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What is LGBTQ+ inclusive care?

- Access to care and resources that is **equal and equitable** to cis-gender and heterosexual people.
- An environment in which people's **differences** in sexual orientation and gender identity are **valued and celebrated**.
- Acknowledging that sexual orientation and gender identity are **relevant** to care needs.
- Facilitating **full participation** in the care environment.
- **Discrimination and intolerance** are addressed and eradicated.

Why is it important?

- An estimated **1 million** people in England and Wales are over 60 and identify as LGBTQ+. They have lived through many **discriminatory policies and laws**.
- This group expects to **rely more heavily on social and health care**, as they have specific health risks, are more likely to live alone, and have a lack of informal social support.
- Older LGBTQ+ are concerned about the possibility of needing care. They worry they will have to go **back into the closet** and hide their identity.
- Several recent reports demonstrate that care services are **lacking in their LGBTQ+ inclusive care provision**.

What is CIRCLE?

- CIRCLE was a 2-year research study that finished Oct 2024 (funded by the National Institute for Health & Care research).
- Research Question: How can residential care providers be best supported to provide LGBTQ+ inclusive care?
- We explored and evaluated three different ways of supporting residential care providers to improve their LGBTQ+ inclusive care offer:
 - A comprehensive inclusion programme
 - Community of Practice
 - Co-designed resource

The Resource



LGBTQ+ inclusion?

LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning and other sexual and gender minorities.

LGBTQ+ inclusive care ensures that LGBTQ+ people are treated equally and equitably, that their identities are celebrated and that discrimination is eradicated. It means care staff recognise it is important to know about someone's LGBTQ+ identity.

Why is this needed?

Many older LGBTQ+ people still face discrimination when engaging with care services and go back into the closet to feel safe when they move into a care home.

At the same time, many care staff feel they do not have the knowledge and skills to provide LGBTQ+ inclusive care. This guide will support staff to provide it.



Creating Inclusive Residential Care for LGBTQ+ Elders
A handy guide

Using this guide

This guide offers lists of practical tips for people working in care homes on how to make the different aspects of their care more inclusive for LGBTQ+ residents.

You can carry it in your uniform or lanyard, put it on reception counters or put it in staff induction packs. The tips are easy to carry out, free or affordable, and make a big difference to LGBTQ+ residents.

→ A timeline of a person's stay in a care home, with tips for each key stage.

↓ General tips that can be used at any point during a person's stay.



The law

Know the law around safeguarding and equality.

- The Care Act 2014 sets out that the care system should protect adults at risk of abuse and neglect.
- The Human Rights Act 1998 protects the right to be treated as equals regardless of gender identity or sexuality.
- The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination. Sexuality and gender identity are protected characteristics.



Looking for a care home

In brochures and on your website, include visible imagery of the LGBTQ+ community and mention explicitly that the care home is LGBTQ+ inclusive. Include your pronouns and the CIRCLE LGBTQ+ commitment sign (downloadable from our website) in your email signature.

Mention LGBTQ+ inclusion on your NHS capacity tracker profile.

Ensure you respond in a non-judgemental way when potential LGBTQ+ residents inquire about living in the care home.

Family & friends

Use inclusive language when referring to people's loved ones (e.g. partner).

Understand that relationships may look different (e.g. not married).

Take people's relationships seriously.

Involve resident's loved ones in their care planning.

Continue checking who the most important people in the resident's life are.

Look into the concept of chosen family (does not always equal biological family).

Consider whether the resident needs an advocate.

Educate yourself on the legislation relating to capacity and decision-making.

Moving into a care home

In the admission conversation, ask:

- What pronouns do you use?
- Who is important to you?
- What do you want me to know about you?

Introduce rainbow lanyards and pronoun badges for staff.

Explain what training staff have received.

Clearly explain the processes for safeguarding and reporting negative experiences.

Appoint an LGBTQ+ champion amongst staff and make it clear who this is.

Do not make assumptions about someone's identity. Understand that people can belong to multiple groups (e.g. black, religious and gay).

Community engagement

Connect to local LGBTQ+ organisations and invite them to the care home.

Connect to local LGBTQ+ inclusive faith-based communities.

Connect to LGBTQ+ inclusive cultural communities.

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Connect to local LGBTQ+ inclusive faith-based communities.

Connect to LGBTQ+ inclusive cultural communities.



Personal care

Ask gently what gender someone would prefer their carer to be.

Do not make assumptions on:

- What people want to wear.
- What someone's body will look like.
- What personal care someone prefers (e.g. hair, nails, make-up).

Entertainment & celebrations

Organise celebrations for Pride in June.

Celebrate LGBTQ+ History Month in February.

Make use of these occasions to learn more about the LGBTQ+ community.

Recognise and celebrate LGBTQ+ relationships.

Diversify the films screened in the care home and include LGBTQ+ films.

Include LGBTQ+ literature and magazines.

Consider organising a Drag Queen bingo.

Do not assume that LGBTQ+ residents only want LGBTQ+ entertainment. Ask and listen.

Health

Build awareness around additional health risks LGBTQ+ residents may have, including social isolation, addiction, HIV, and dementia, but do not make assumptions.

Build awareness around HIV care and medication.

Ensure clear communication between the different health professionals involved.

For LGBTQ+ residents with dementia, understand that people may forget/switch identity. Approach it day by day.

With routine health screenings, do not assume gender. Trans men may still need cervical screenings, and trans women may still need prostate screenings.



Training & policies

Have clear and explicit policies around how LGBTQ+ inclusion is ensured and how discrimination and abuse are dealt with.

Ensure all staff are trained on LGBTQ+ inclusion. Ask your manager for training.

Subscribe to websites like PinkNews or Queer to stay updated about LGBTQ+ news.

Provide care that affirms people's gender identity (e.g. appropriate clothing) and support residents accessing gender-affirming healthcare such as hormone therapy.

Respect people's pronouns and chosen names, even if it differs from their legal documentation.

Do not share someone's trans identity without consent.



End of life care

Give people privacy with their chosen family and respect their space in the last moments of life.

Understand that LGBTQ+ older people have experienced a lot of abuse in their life and that their relationships have not been honoured. Make sure to honour them at the end of life.

Ask people about their preferences for the end of life and who they want to be involved.

Consider Power of Attorney and understand that in the LGBTQ+ community this might be a chosen (not always biological) family member.

Key tips

Here are a few of the most important things to remember.

1. Ask the person their preferences, don't assume.
2. Provide care that affirms the person's gender identity.
3. Respect chosen family and LGBTQ+ relationships.
4. Use LGBTQ+ inclusive language and examples.
5. Commit to staying up-to-date with LGBTQ+ training.

Historical context

It is important to recognise that, for most of their lives, many older LGBTQ+ people have had to hide their identity because of discriminating laws and policies. This has made them hesitant to engage with public services.

It is therefore very important that care services are clear about their commitment to being LGBTQ+ inclusive.

Further resources

To learn more, visit...

- Skills for Care - LGBTQ+ learning framework
- Age UK - Safe to be me
- Alzheimer's Society - LGBTQ+ Living with dementia
- NHS Confederation - Health and Care LGBTQ+ Inclusion Framework
- Research in Practice - Working with older trans people



What is this?

This guide was produced as part of CIRCLE, a research project on LGBTQ+ inclusion in care homes.

This illustration shows the goal of the project, an inclusive care home where everyone feels safe and welcome, featuring quotes from older LGBTQ+ people who were involved in developing this guide.

You can use this as a poster to put up in your care home.

Website

Scan the QR code to visit the CIRCLE website and learn more about the project, including a video explaining the contents of this leaflet.



Contact & thanks

For any queries, or if you want to know more about the project, please contact Dr Julie Keenink on j.keenink@kent.ac.uk.

Logo, guide and illustration by Cll Rochford.

The research team want to thank the older LGBTQ+ people and care home managers who were involved in co-designing this leaflet.

A closer look at some of the practical tips

In brochures and on your website, include images and photographs of the LGBTQ+ community and mention explicitly that the care home is LGBTQ+ inclusive.

Introduce rainbow lanyards and pronoun badges for staff.

Explain what training staff have received.

Clearly explain the processes for safeguarding and reporting negative experiences.

Do not make assumptions on:

- What people want to wear.
- What someone's body will look like.
- What personal care someone prefers (e.g. hair, nails, make-up).

Connect to local LGBTQ+ organisations and invite them to the care home.

Connect to local LGBTQ+ inclusive faith-based communities.

Connect to LGBTQ+ inclusive cultural communities.

Have clear and explicit policies around how LGBTQ+ inclusion is ensured and how discrimination and abuse are dealt with.

Ensure all staff are trained on LGBTQ+ inclusion. Ask your manager for training.

Subscribe to websites like PinkNews or Gscene to stay updated about LGBTQ+ news.

Educate yourself on what it means to be trans/non-binary.

Recognise that older people can be trans, even if they have lived their whole life as one gender.

Video format



How to access



University of Kent

Care Home Guide for Creating Inclusive Residential Care for LGBTQ+ Elders

Home Registration form

Care Home Guide for Creating Inclusive Residential Care for LGBTQ+ Elders

Welcome to the web page for CIRCLE care home guide

The free guide with tips on how to provide LGBTQ+ inclusive care in residential care for older people

The CIRCLE care home guide was developed as part of the [CIRCLE research study](#), a study exploring various ways of supporting providers of residential care for older people to improve their LGBTQ+ inclusive care offer. CIRCLE stands for Creating Inclusive Residential Care for LGBTQ+ Elders. The CIRCLE care home guide was co-designed with older LGBTQ+ people and care providers. It was developed for use in care homes for older people, but the content may be relevant for other care providers.

The guide offers practical tips on what you can do to make your care practice more inclusive for LGBTQ+ residents. It can be used in day-to-day care practice, in supervision conversations, and in staff training. It also includes a poster that can be displayed in the care home to indicate the home and staff are working on LGBTQ+ inclusion.



<https://research.kent.ac.uk/circle-guide/>



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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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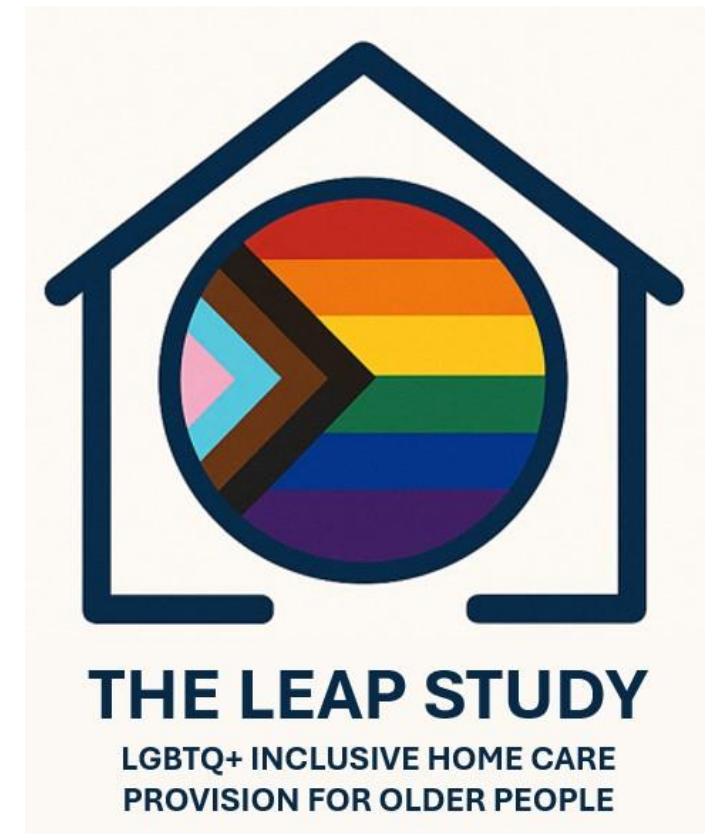
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NEW! The LEAP Study

- LGBTQ+ inclusion in home care
- Led by myself and Prof Paul Willis (Cardiff)
- Updates:
<https://research.kent.ac.uk/leap-study/>



Thank you for listening!

Contact?

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This work would not have
been possible without:

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