

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLINICIANS

These recommendations have been produced in response to 'Beyond Babies & Breast Cancer', a wideranging overview of available evidence on the healthcare needs of lesbian and bisexual women.

To read the full report, download a copy from www.lgbt.foundation/womenshealth, email women@lgbt.foundation or call **0345 3 30 30 30** to request a printed version.

COMMUNICATE in a non-discriminatory way, without making assumptions about sexual orientation, to create a safe and respectful environment for everyone.

- Don't make assumptions about sexual orientation - this includes not automatically asking about a husband or boyfriend. When asking about partners, use gender neutral language or reflect the terms the patient uses. If you need to know the gender of a partner, ask whether your patient has male or female partners, or partners of both genders.
- Don't assume that all sexually active women are either in need of contraceptive advice or trying to get pregnant - be aware that some women are sexually active with other women and phrase questions appropriately. Be prepared to give safer sex advice to women who have sex with women - research shows that some of these women will be at risk of STIs and most will never have accessed sexual health services.

MONITOR sexual orientation as part of your equality data and use the findings to inform future plans.

- Questions on sexual orientation should be asked and recorded alongside questions on other protected characteristics. Ensure that you and your team are confident in asking these questions, in respecting confidentiality and in dealing with queries if they arise.
- Ensure that your organisational systems allow you to adequately record relationship status and sexual orientation.
- Analyse monitoring data across all protected characteristics (including sexual orientation) to identify where there are gaps, trends and differences. Use this data to improve patients' access, outcomes and experience of your services. Refer to the guidance produced by NHS North West and LGBT Foundation: lgbt.foundation/som.

INCLUDE lesbian and bisexual women's needs in mainstream health information, services, policies and strategies.

- When displaying or disseminating health information, ensure that it is inclusive of and relevant to lesbian and bisexual women.

TARGET lesbian and bisexual women with specific health information and campaigns.

- Consider targeting patients for health checks/screening. Lesbian and bisexual women may visit their GP less often, especially if they are not parenting or accessing contraception. This means they may miss out on routine screening, such as cervical and breast screens, and may not be exposed to healthy living messages around drinking, smoking and weight gain.

DEVELOP specialist health and support services for lesbian and bisexual women, their partners and families.

- Be aware of local specialist service providers, such as LGB charities, specialist sexual health clinics, support groups, etc. Refer patients on to these services as appropriate to their needs and preferences.