

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMISSIONERS

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.

- Ensure that service providers are trained in communicating in a sensitive and non-discriminatory way and understand how making assumptions about sexual orientation can be damaging to patient/clinician interactions.

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 (for example gender, disability and ethnic origin) for both patients and staff members. Ensure that services you commission monitor sexual orientation and that providers train their staff on the importance of monitoring and the sensitive collection of this data.
- Use information collected through monitoring to inform service commissioning.

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

- Conduct rigorous Equality Impact Assessments on your services, policies and strategies, to ensure that the needs of, and specific data regarding, lesbian and bisexual women are not overlooked.
- Ensure that health information you commission is inclusive of lesbian and bisexual women. If talking about partners and families, ensure that your language is inclusive of all relationships. Consider using quotes or case studies from identifiably lesbian or bisexual women, referring explicitly to lesbian and bisexual women when there is specific information that is relevant to them, and using images of same-sex couples.
- Ensure that the mainstream services you commission recognise and respond to the specific health needs of lesbian and bisexual women.

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

- Commission targeted campaigns around key issues, such as alcohol consumption, smoking, self-harm, mental illness and breast health. Targeted communication aimed at lesbian and bisexual women, such as on cervical screening, has been shown to be successful at changing behaviour.

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

- Consider commissioning specialist services for lesbian and bisexual women, especially sexual health services, mental health services and support with alcohol use, drug use and smoking cessation.
- Support services for women who are ill are often aimed at heterosexual women. This is especially true with breast and gynaecological cancers, which can impact on couple intimacy but where information and support is almost always geared towards women and their male partners. Consider commissioning specialist support for women and/or their female partners.