

## Mental Health and Support for the LGBTIQ+ Community

Anyone can experience a mental health problem. But those of us who identify as LGBTIQ+ are more likely to develop problems like:

- low self-esteem
- depression
- anxiety
- eating problems
- misusing drugs and alcohol
- self-harm
- other mental health problems

Being LGBTIQ+ does not cause these problems. The reasons why those of us with LGBTIQ+ identities are more likely to experience them are very complicated. But it is most likely to do with experiencing things like homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, stigma and discrimination, feeling alienated in our family of origin, difficult experiences of and facing coming out, social isolation or exclusion and rejection.

However for many there can be positives in embracing your LGBTIQ+ identity and coming out can also have a positive impact on your wellbeing. It might mean you have increased confidence, improved relationships with your friends and family, a sense of community and belonging, the freedom of self-expression and self-acceptance along with increased resilience.

You might face many other challenges in your life that other LGBTIQ+ people don't face, or even understand. This might include other types of discrimination such as social exclusion or social disadvantage. This could be as a result of your age, ethnicity, religion, cultural background, gender identity and gender expression, sexuality or physical ability.

It is vitally important to remember that you are entitled to support and respect regardless of your identity or background. You also have legal rights to access healthcare without discrimination. The Employee Assistance Programme available to you through your employer is a completely free and confidential service for you to access and is completely inclusive as a service to support anybody contacting Care first. All our Counsellors are trained to be non-judgmental and to support you with whatever you want to speak about, they might also direct you to specialist services to assist you further.

Why is it important for LGBTIQ+ people to access support? According to a report published by Stonewall over half of LGBTIQ+ people said they've experienced depression in the last year. Yet in the same report one in seven LGBTIQ+ people have avoided treatment for fear of discrimination because they're LGBTIQ+. Alongside the support available from Care first, other services you may wish to consider for support are:

- Your GP
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/lgbtiqplus-mental-health/useful-contacts/>
- <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

If you would like to view the Webinar on 'Mental Health and Support for the LGBTIQ+ Community' this is being delivered live on Monday 15th June 2020 at 12pm -12:30pm, please use the below link to register for this session –

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6630286420433452558>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.

If you wish to contact the Care first telephone counselling and information line then please don't hesitate to call the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.