



Workforce Sexual Orientation Equality Standard 2025

NHS South East London Integrated Care Board

Compiled by Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team

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Introduction



The NHS workforce is the foundation for the NHS, there are 1.6 million employees, 350 different professions and all of this is made up of staff from different backgrounds and nationalities. Every individual enriches the NHS with distinctive skills, which supports the NHS in delivering exceptional care and services for all. The Workplace Sexual Orientation Equality Standard (WSOES) offers organisations valuable insights into the experiences of their Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual+ (LGB+) staff WSOES enables organisations to implement positive change and foster inclusivity within the workplace. It was developed by University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust in collaboration with Lancashire LGBT (a charity organisation supporting the LGBTQ+ community). The WSOES is not yet mandatory but supports SEL ICB's commitment to sexual safety.

The WSOES has **eight metrics** comparing LGB+ staff experiences with non-LGB+ colleagues: data for **four** metrics is sourced from **workforce data**, **three** metrics from the **National Staff Survey** and the data for the **final** metric comes from the **Board**. SEL ICB use the data to develop and publish an action plan to ensure the continuous improvement of healthcare services and the wellbeing of both patients and staff. Research shows that a motivated, included and valued workforce helps to deliver high-quality patient care, increased patient satisfaction and improved patient safety.

For the purposes of the WSOES report, our focus is specifically on LGB+ staff. Including trans staff within a comparison of heterosexual and LGBTQIA+ groups could be misleading, as trans individuals may identify as heterosexual. The standard is intended to examine sexual orientation, not gender identity.

Currently the WSOES is being discussed for national adoption. Monitoring for inclusion for **all** LGBTQIA+ staff can be achieved through initiatives like the WSOES, LGBTQ+ Health Inclusion Framework and the People's Promise.

Disclaimer:

Due to small sample sizes, changes in the data are not statistically significant and should be interpreted with caution. This limits the reliability of WSOES findings for an organisation the size of SEL ICB.

Key	
↑ Positive upward trend	↑ Negative upward trend
↓ Negative downward trend	↔ No change
↓ Positive downward trend	



Metric 1: Overview of ICB workforce and south east London population

Total workforce			
Category	Workforce%	Workforce no.	SEL Population%
LGB+	4.5	30	5.5
Heterosexual / Straight	87.0	582	86
Unknown/not stated	8.5	58	8.5
Total	100	670	100

- SEL ICB currently has a workforce of **670**, of which **4.5%** identifies as LGB+, **87%** identifies as heterosexual/straight and **8.5%** fall under the 'not stated/unknown' category. This may indicate that staff may not feel safe to share what their Sexual Orientation is or may not be aware of how to update their details on the system.
- South East London's LGB+ population (as per the 2021 census) is **5.5%**, meaning the ICB is slightly under-representative of the community we serve (by **0.9%**).
- The workforce has decreased from 684 (2023/24) to 670 (2024/25) employees, representing a **2.0%** reduction.
- The percentage of individuals who come under the not state/unknown category has increased from **7.8%** to **8.5%**.

Metric 1: Percentage of staff in AfC (Agenda for Change) pay bands.

Non-Clinical							
Pay Band	LGB+ % - 23/24	LGB+ % - 24/25		Heterosexual / Straight % - 23/24	Heterosexual / Straight % - 24/25	Not stated / Unknown %- 23/24	Not stated / Unknown %- 24/25
Cluster 1: <1 to 4	3.0	5.6	↑	90.9	86.1	6.1	8.3
Cluster 2: 5 to 7	6.6	3.4	↓	87.8	88.5	5.6	8.2
Cluster 3: 8a and 8b	6.3	9.1	↑	84.8	82.5	8.9	8.4
Cluster 4: 8c to VSM	3.9	2.2	↓	85.9	88.8	10.2	9.0
Other	0.0	0.0	↔	90.9	0.0	9.1	0.0
Total	5.5	4.9	↓	86.7	86.7	7.7	8.5

Non-clinical staff

- **LGB+** staff make up **4.9%** of the workforce, while **heterosexual/straight** staff account for **86.7%**. **8.5%** of the workforce come under the category of **not stated/unknown**.
- There is a higher concentration of LGB+ staff in **Cluster 3** however heterosexual/straight staff are significantly more prevalent across all bands.
- From **Cluster 4 onwards** LGB+ staff representation decreases, this suggests there may be possible barriers to career progression present.
- The percentage of staff with undisclosed sexual orientation is notably high across all bands, indicating a reluctance to disclose.

Comparison to 2024:

- The total number of LGB+ staff decreased by **4** (13.3%).
- There has been a decrease of 50% in Cluster 2.
- There has been an increase of 40% in Cluster 3.

Key	
↑	Positive upward trend
↓	Negative downward trend
↔	No change
↕	Positive downward trend

Metric 1: Percentage of staff in AfC (Agenda for Change) pay bands.



South East London

Clinical						
Pay Band	LGB+ % - 23/24	LGB+ % - 24/25	Heterosexual / Straight % - 23/24	Heterosexual / Straight % - 24/25	Not stated / Unknown % - 23/24	Not stated / Unknown % - 24/25
Cluster 1: <1 to 4	0.0	0.0	↔	0.0	0.0	0.0 ↔
Cluster 2: 5 to 7	0.0	2.1	↑	100	91.5	0.0 ↑
Cluster 3: 8a and 8b	5.1	1.7	↓	83.1	85	11.9 ↑
Cluster 4: 8c to VSM	6.7	7.4	↑	86.7	92.6	6.7 ↓
Other	8.7	0.0	↓	82.6	66.7	8.7 ↑
Total	5.0	2.9	↓	87.2	88.3	7.8 ↑

Clinical staff

- LGB+ staff make up **2.9%** of the clinical workforce, while **heterosexual/straight** staff make up **88.3%**. **8.8%** of the workforce come under the category of **not stated/unknown**.
- This is a **2.6%** underrepresentation for LGB+ staff compared to the SEL community.
- Heterosexual/straight staff have significantly higher representation on all bands.

Comparison to 2024:

- The number of LGB+ staff has decreased by 3 since 2024/25 – 2 of which are staff from Bands 8A – 8B.
- Representation in 8C to VSM has remained consistent over the last year.
- Heterosexual/straight representation has also remained consistent (drastic % changes should be attributed to the overall decrease in **total** staff) from bands 8A upwards, but there has been a significant increase in bands 5 – 7.

Key	
↑ Positive upward trend	↑ Negative upward trend
↓ Negative downward trend	↔ No change
↓ Positive downward trend	

Metric 1: Yearly comparison

Year on Year Comparison

Financial Year	Overview		Non-Clinical		Clinical	
	LGB+ %	Heterosexual / Straight %	LGB+ %	Heterosexual / Straight %	LGB+ %	Heterosexual / Straight %
2023/24	5.4	86.8	5.5	86.7	5.0	87.2
2024/25	4.5	87.0	4.9	86.7	2.9	88.3

The table above provides a two-year comparison, showing an overall downward trend in the representation of LGB+ staff across all categories. Please note, there was a programme of management cost reductions in 2024/25.

- **Overall:** There has been a **0.9% decrease** from **5.4%** to **4.5%**.
- **Non-clinical:** Representation of LGB+ staff has **decreased by 0.6%** (from **5.5%** to **4.9%**).
- **Clinical:** This group has seen the **highest decrease** of LGB+ staff by **2.1%** (from **5%** to **2.9%**).

Metric 2: Appointed following shortlisting

Metric 3: Likelihood of formal capability process

Year	Metric 2 The relative likelihood of LGBTQIA+ applicants being appointed from shortlisting compared to those without	Metric 3 Relative likelihood of LGB+ staff entering the formal capability process.
2023/24	1.4	0.0
2024/25	0.7 ↓	0.0

- In 2023/24, heterosexual applicants were **1.4** times more likely to be appointed following shortlisting (see note below).
- For 2024/25 data shows that heterosexual applicants are **0.7 times** as likely to be appointed, suggesting a higher appointment rate for LGB+ applicants.
- Although this shift indicates progress in addressing disparities, there is still a slight underrepresentation within the organisation a whole. Sustained efforts are still required to achieve more balanced representation overall including the encouragement of staff to disclose their sexual orientation.

In the past 12 months, there have been no formal disciplinary investigations or hearings within SEL ICB. This trend is consistent with the previous year, which also reported no cases, indicating a positive and sustained outcome.

Note:

- A relative likelihood of 1 indicates no difference in appointment rates between LGB+ and heterosexual/straight applicants.
- A value below 1 suggests LGB+ applicants are more likely to be appointed following shortlisting,
- A value above 1 means heterosexual/straight applicants are more likely to be appointed.

Key	
↑ Positive upward trend	↑ Negative upward trend
↓ Negative downward trend	↔ No change
↓ Positive downward trend	

Metric 4: Relative likelihood of LGB+ staff accessing non-mandatory training and CPD

Staff have access to paid-for training as well as generic training promoted across the organisation e.g. NHS Elect and NHS Leadership Academy courses.

For non-mandatory training requests costing more than £500, a training review panel is in place to monitor, review, and approve such requests.

Year on Year Comparison			
Financial Year	Overview		
	LGB+	Heterosexual / Straight	Unknown/not stated
2023/24	0	3	0
2024/25	1 ↑	20	7 ↑

- **3** training applicants in 2023/24, and **28** total applicants in 2024/25.
- Demographic reporting was optional, meaning some applicants chose not to disclose this information.
- Applicants might choose not to disclose their sexual orientation due to privacy concerns, fear of potential bias or discrimination, uncertainty about how the information will be used, or simply personal preference to keep that information confidential.
- Of those who reported: only **1** applicant identified as LGB+, the remaining **20** were heterosexual.
- This data aligns with findings from the 2023/24 WSOES report, where only 32% of LGB+ respondents (Metric 5) felt the ICB offered equal opportunities for career development.

Key	
↑ Positive upward trend	↑ Negative upward trend
↓ Negative downward trend	↔ No change
↓ Positive downward trend	

Metrics 5-7: Staff survey data

Year of Staff Survey	Metric 5 % staff believing that the ICB provides equal opportunities for career progression or promotion			Metric 6 % staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from managers			Metric 7 % staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from colleagues		
	L & G %	B %	Heterosexual / Straight %	L & G %	B %	Heterosexual / Straight %	L & G %	B %	Heterosexual / Straight %
2023	35.7	27.3	52.6	28.6	9.1	13.1	28.6	0.0	13.6
2024	57.1 ↑	N/A	55.1	7.1 ↓	N/A	9.2	0.0 ↓	N/A	11.5

The table above presents data for Metric 5 to 7, sourced from the National Staff Survey.

- **Overall:** All metrics have seen a highly positive change in the 2024 Staff Survey for both LGB+ and Heterosexual / Straight colleagues when compared to the 2023 staff survey. It should be noted, however, that the number of LGB+ staff responding to the survey this year is significantly lower (**14**), when compared to 2023 (**25**), which will have an impact on the proportionality of the results. Please note there is **no data** for bisexual staff for 2024 due to no staff identifying as bisexual on the survey.
- **Metric 5:** This year's results show a significant improvement for both Lesbian and Gay staff and heterosexual/straight staff, with Lesbian and Gay staff seeing an increase of **21.4%** (from **35.7%** to **57.1%**) and heterosexual staff **2.5%** (from **52.6%** to **55.1%**).
- **Metric 6:** This year's results shows a significant improvement for Lesbian and Gay staff by **21.5%** (from **2.6%** to **7.1%**) in the proportion of staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from managers, indicating positive progress.
- **Metric 7:** Lesbian and Gay staff have seen a significant (from **28.6%** to **0%**) decrease in incidents of harassment, bullying or abuse from colleagues. Please note that the data for this year only includes Lesbian and Gay colleagues compared to 2023, which also included staff who identify as Bisexual.

Key	
↑ Positive upward trend	↑ Negative upward trend
↓ Negative downward trend	↔ No change
↓ Positive downward trend	

Metric 8: Board membership



South East London

	LGB+	Heterosexual	Unknown	Total
Total Board Members	0 (0) ↔	9 (7)	4 (4) ↔	13 (11)
Voting Members	0 (0) ↔	9 (7)	4 (4) ↔	13 (11)
Non-Voting Members	0 (0) ↔	0 (0)	0 (0) ↔	0 (0)
Exec Board	0 (0) ↔	7 (6)	1 (1) ↔	8 (7)
Non-Exec	0 (0) ↔	2 (1)	3 (3) ↔	5 (4)
No. of Staff Overall	30 (37) ↓	583 (594)	57 (53) ↑	670 (684)
Difference - Board: Workforce %	-4.0 (-5.0) ↓	-18.0 (-23.0)	22.0 (29.0) ↓	N/A

The table on the left depicts the percentage difference between SEL ICB’s Board membership and SEL ICB’s overall workforce, disaggregated by:

- Voting and non-voting membership of the Board
- Executive and non-exec membership of the Board

The snapshot of this data is 31 March 2025 and the data in brackets are the numbers from 31 March 2024.

Overview

- Please note that the data in the table pertains to board members employed by the ICB, not the Partnership Board.
- There are a total of **13** Board members: **0** are LGB+, **9** are Heterosexual, and **4** are unknown.
- All board members are voting members.
- There are **8** executive directors: **0** who are LGB+, **7** who are Heterosexual, and **1** who is unknown.
- The difference between LGB+ Board members and LGB+ staff (workforce) is (minus) **-4%**.
- This should be an area of focus for board going forward.

WRES, WDES and WSOES Action Plan update

The ICB Workforce Equality Standards and Gender Pay Gap Reports now operate under a **single** action plan, providing a clear framework to address key priorities and deliver measurable, positive change across the organisation. It has been agreed that the actions outlined in the report will span a three-year period to support effective implementation and ensure long-term impact.

These actions will be reviewed annually to maintain relevance and alignment with organisational goals. Due to the ongoing Change Management Programme (CMP), some actions were temporarily paused however have been revisited and completed. The accompanying action log outlines completed actions, those currently in progress, those on hold, and actions from the EDI Strategy that align with the Workforce Equality Standards.

- **Completed** actions: 17
- **Ongoing** actions: 3
- Actions **on hold**: 1
- Actions from **EDI strategy** that align: 9

Action Plan update – completed actions (1/2)



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Actions
Create concise job descriptions by working with hiring managers to rewrite job descriptions to focus on essential duties, required qualifications, and key responsibilities
Design additional recruitment training sessions and explore the potential for “Train the Trainer” recruitment workshops (through Enact) to equip SEL ICB staff with the skills needed to carry out a fair and equitable recruitment processes.
Review 2024 staff survey data to understand colleague experiences and integrate findings into the OD plan for FY 25/26, following which further actions will be developed and updated in the next report.
Strengthen and actively promote the Speak Up process
Develop and deliver training on workplace adjustments and the access to work process.
Develop awareness raising sessions, through ad hoc events or the Equalities Forum
Advertise ICS leadership training for SEL ICB staff.
Participate in the development of the ICS conference and awards session.
Training request form will be digitised, with mandatory fields for demographic and diversity data to ensure accurate information capture

Action Plan update – completed actions (2/2)

Actions

Implement a Sexual Safety Charter

Ensure the accessible application form is available on request to use within Trac and NHS Jobs.

Develop and implement a process where applicants can request interview questions in advance.

Ensure that candidates, once an interview has been scheduled, are told in advance the names and job titles of the colleagues sitting on the interview panel.

Ensure interview panels are diverse, with all panel members required to complete mandatory unconscious bias training in advance of participation.

Revitalise the mediation service, including training more staff to become mediators

Raise awareness of the ICB's Mental Health First Aiders.

Ensure staff have an opportunity raise concerns as part of the appraisal process.

Long service awards/recognition certificates.

Action Plan update – on-track actions

Action
Redesign the ICB’s recruitment internet page layout to be more welcoming, user-friendly, and accessible, this will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A “What It Means to Work with Us” section highlighting values, mission, and staff experiences.• Videos showcasing staff at all levels within SEL ICB i.e. regarding the reasonable adjustments we offer etc.• Links to employee testimonials, benefits, and career growth opportunities.• Statement about why we are collecting equalities data/who can see it to encourage a higher disclosure rate.
Design and deliver enhanced line management training.
Develop and implement a formal workplace adjustments policy.



Action Plan update – EDI Strategy actions which align to the Equality Standard

Strategic theme	Ongoing actions
Active leadership commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue active discussion of EDI considerations at SMT throughout the consultation period, supported by the established role of the Executive Equalities SRO.
Being an inclusive employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide suite of EDI training to support staff through change` • Continue with the provision of mandatory EDI training on unconscious bias (which includes micro-incivilities and micro-aggressions) for Band 4 roles and above.
Progressing careers and talent development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite guest presenters to discuss career journeys when speaking at EDI forums
Building staff support, health, and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote staff networks as safe spaces to discuss change • Implement in-house solutions and support e.g. workplace adjustments, allyship and compassion training.
Training, learning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use training needs analysis findings to understand training needs and priorities • Implementation of an EDI training offer, including EIA, workplace adjustments, allyship, EDI awareness, compassionate working, micro-incivilities and inclusive recruitment. • Staff networks to promote discussions on intersectionality



Actions Impact Statement

Over the past year, action holders have worked diligently to improve staff experience. A significant number of actions have been completed and formally closed, and this progress is reflected in the findings across all three Workforce Equality Reports. Key examples include:

- ✓ Several actions relating to recruitment have been fulfilled including ensuring applicants can submit alternative applications, concise job descriptions, workplace adjustments, unconscious bias training. The WDES reflect the improvement made for disabled applicants as they are more likely to be appointed following shortlisting, in the WRES we can see the move towards parity between Global Majority applicants and White Applicants and in the WSOES LGBTQ+ staff are 0.7 times more like to be appointed following shortlisting.
- ✓ The implementation of actions addressing bullying, harassment and abuse (BHA) has had a positive impact, as reflected across the Workforce Equality Standard (WES) reports. For example, within WDES, experiences of BHA from managers reduced by 11.2%, and BHA from colleagues reduced by 5.9%. There was also a 14.8% increase in the proportion of staff reporting BHA, indicating greater confidence in reporting. Within WRES, Global Majority staff reported a reduction in experiences of BHA by 2.1%. Significant improvements were also observed in WSOES, with BHA from managers decreasing by 21.5% and BHA from colleagues reducing from 28.6% to 0%.
- ✓ The completion of actions relating to training and development has had a positive impact across several reporting measures, indicating an improvement in staff experience. For example, the delivery of workplace adjustments training has contributed to improved outcomes for disabled staff, with over 70% reporting that they have received the required adjustments. Staff engagement scores have also increased. In addition, wider training and awareness sessions have supported improved perceptions of feeling valued, particularly among disabled staff, with an increase of 10%. There has also been a 42.9% increase in staff believing that the ICB provides equal opportunities for career progression. Similar improvements were observed among LGBTQIA+ staff, with an increase of 21.4% in this measure. Overall, there has been an increase in the number of training applications received, with applications from Global Majority LGBTQIA+ staff increasing.

This report highlights the progress we have made by advancing equity within our processes, while also thinking about the areas we still need to improve on. The reduction we have seen in bullying, harassment and abuse is a significant achievement, which reflects the ICBs commitment to improving staff experience.

The lived experiences shared by our staff provide essential insights that will continue to inform our approach, helping us to drive the systemic changes needed for sustained progress.

Contact Us

If you have any questions about this report, or would like it in a different format, please contact us at:

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Team

Email: equality@selondonics.nhs.uk

