

# What's it like Coming Out at CBRE?

A Guide to Support LGBTQ+ Colleagues



# Contents



- 1 Coming out
- 2 CBRE's inclusive culture
- 3 Support available
- 4 Protecting you
- 5 Allyship
- 6 Dealing with an unsupportive colleague

# Proud to be CBRE

“At CBRE our DE&I vision is to enable our people and business partners to thrive by fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment...where everyone can succeed.

This means ensuring that our LGBTQ+ colleagues find CBRE an inclusive place to work, where ‘coming out’ in the workplace is an experience in which our people feel safe, valued and heard.

This guide has been produced to support our LGBTQ+ colleagues should they choose to come out, as well as offering guidance to all staff in how to act as an ally. Everyone is welcome at CBRE no matter their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Many thanks to our PROUD Network and DE&I team for putting together this guide. I hope you find it a helpful resource.“

**Clarence Dixon, Global Head of Loan Services  
UK Advisory DE&I Executive Sponsor**

**Kevin Lynn, Division President, UK GWS | Local  
Chair, GWS EMEA DE&I Steering Committee**



# Proud to be CBRE

“Coming out is an individual choice and experience, and often not a one-off event, and each time can be a different experience. Coming out is the process of expressing your sexuality and/or expressing your gender identify to another person. This means the LGBTQ+ community can ‘come out’ several times in just one day when meeting new people or people they know but haven’t expressed their sexuality and/or gender identity before.

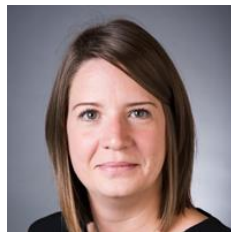
At CBRE we want to create an inclusive environment where employees feel they can be their true self everyday and not hide in fear of rejection, discrimination, or ignorance. We know from research that if more people are visibly out in the workplace, there will be greater allyship and more education on what matters to the LGBTQ+ community. Therefore, the UK Proud Network is extremely Proud to launch this first ever ‘Coming Out at CBRE’ guide for all employees.”

**Kevin McLean, UK Advisory Co-chair**

**Nicola Young, UK Advisory Co-chair**

**Hannah Farmer, GWS Co-Chair**

**George Lopez Del Valle, GWS Co-Chair**



## With thanks to contributors:

- Aodha Mulhall
- Chantal Labode
- Emma Mason
- Gareth Williams
- James Brandon
- Ruth Geeson

1

Coming out

# What is coming out?

**‘Coming out’ is the term for when you share something about yourself that someone might not have known or might not be immediately obvious.**

**For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer (LGBTQ+) people this is about sharing their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.**

**The process of sharing this information is unique to the individual and will depend on how comfortable, safe, and confident they are to have these conversations.**

# 35%

of LGBTQ+ staff have hidden, or disguised that they are LGBTQ+ at work in the past year because they were afraid of discrimination.

**National LGBT Survey, Government Equalities Office, 2018**

## Why do people still have to come out?

In order for us all to thrive it is important for us all to be our true and full selves. Most people want to be able to share who they are and who they love. However, for LGBTQ+ people it hasn't always been safe to do so, and this often means we hide part of ourselves until we do feel safe to share.

To hide who we are and who we love can be difficult requiring focus and energy which could be deployed elsewhere.

The LGBTQ+ community is unique and diverse. However, we live in a society which is dominantly cisgender (people's gender identity matched that assigned at birth) and heterosexual (straight). This means that any groups outside of this often must actively share their identity to gain support or to be recognised (for example in health benefit or policies).

## Do people have to come out?

Coming out is highly personal and you may choose not to do this at all in the workplace. At CBRE there is no pressure to do this, and we acknowledge that it will depend on our culture being safe and supportive. This decision is yours.

Equally if someone has come out to you it is up to that person to decide how they are coming out to other people, bear in mind that they may feel comfortable coming to you but not the wider team or social group.

Coming out is not something that LGBTQ+ people do just once. It is something that is considered with every interaction, that may be meeting a new person, joining a new team, or starting with a new company.

This guide has been created to show clearly that CBRE is place where if you chose to come out it is handled with sensitivity and compassion. We are a place where you can be your full and authentic self.



2

CBRE's  
inclusive  
culture



# CBRE's inclusive culture

At CBRE, our unwavering commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion begins with you. We are strengthening our inclusive culture, so everyone feels safe valued and heard. Because when you belong, we all succeed.

By creating an environment where each individual is valued for who they are, recognised for their contributions and given a chance to grow, we open our business to new perspectives and opportunities.

“DE&I are fundamental to who we are as a global organization. Our commitment to advancing change for employees and the communities where we live, and serve is unwavering.”

## **Tim Dismond, Chief Responsibility Officer**

Our commitments don't only just flow from the top but are embedded into everything we do. One way you can find support is our Proud Network. From marching at pride, finding a mentor to help your career to joining us for a social event we are open to everyone. We make many notable moments throughout the year and work to raise awareness of our communities and recruit allies to ensure that we are creating an LGBTQ+ inclusive culture across our firm. Check out the network on our intranet page.

# 5 things we are doing to create a more LGBTQ+ inclusive culture

1

## Visibility

---

We work hard throughout the year to raise the visibility of the LGBTQ+ community, celebrating our uniqueness and diversity.

2

## Pronouns

---

We have embedded into our brand guidelines the use of pronouns in all staff signatures.

3

## Policy

---

We are consistently reviewing our policies to ensure that they use gender neutral language and create new policies that foster greater protection and visibility for LGBTQ+ people.

4

## Benefits

---

We continually review our benefits offer to make sure they are right for the LGBTQ+ community. An example is that providers of our Employee Assistance Programme have been trained in supporting LGBTQ+ employees.

5

## Training

---

We offer a range of events, eLearning and Allyship sessions that help improve the knowledge of LGBTQ+ communities in our workforce.

# Modern LGBTQ+ life in Britain and across the globe

Here are some key facts about modern LGBTQ+ life:

73

countries criminalise same-sex sexual activity between men

45

countries criminalise same-sex sexual activity between women

12

countries impose the death penalty on LGBTQ+ people

15

countries criminalise the gender identity and/or expression of transgender people

29

countries recognise same-sex marriage

68%

of LGBTQ+ people avoid holding hand with a same-sex partner for fear of a negative reaction from others

40%

Of LGBTQ+ people have experienced an incident because they were LGBTQ+, such as verbal harassment or physical violence in a twelve-month period

1 in 8

trans people have been physically attacked by customers or colleagues in the last year because of being trans

2 in 5

bi people aren't out to anyone at work about their sexual orientation

35%

of LGBTQ+ staff have hidden, or disguised that they are LGBTQ+ at work in the past year because they were afraid of discrimination

51%

of Black, Asian and other ethnic minority LGBTQ+ people have faced discrimination from within the LGBTQ+ community

# What are the benefits of coming out at CBRE?

## Recommended Reading

[Click Here](#)

to read **The Law Society's 'Being out at work – why does it matter?'** article.

LGBTQ+ people who are out at work are 67% more likely to be satisfied with their achievement.

An environment where we can be our whole selves without fear ensures that we can deploy all of our energy and resources to our tasks. The effort it takes to 'hide' or 'mask' our identity can be exhausting. But there are some benefits when you are comfortable coming out:

- Your experience as an LGBTQ+ person gives you the ability to contribute different opinions, experiences and perspectives that can benefit a project/brief.
- The ability to bring ones 'whole self' to work emboldens you to explore wider interests and build real, meaningful friendships.
- Managers and colleagues recognise the strength and courage to come out and this will be applauded and if appropriate can be celebrated.
- You will be able to form deeper relationships with colleagues/clients.
- Coming out can support building more trusting working relationships.
- It gives you the ability to bring partners to corporate/social events which will alleviate anxieties around acceptance and allow you to share more of yourself.
- Your visibility helps to break down barriers in understanding for those less exposed to the LGBTQ+ community.

Remember that coming out get's easier over time and you always have support from the PROUD network to find peers and support.



3

Support  
Available

# The line manager playlist

**Proud Network present key songs to help Line Managers understand their role in supporting someone who is coming out.**

**Want some more Proud music?**

**[Click here to access the Proud Network Playlist on Spotify.](#)**

## **‘This is Me’ The Greatest Showman (2017)**

In many instances you may be the first person that someone shares that they are considering coming out. It is important that you ensure sensitivity and anonymity in this conversation. The individual should be supported to feel that they are in control of their coming out journey but have the full support of you as their line manager and the wider organisation.

## **‘Nails, Hair, Hips, Heels’ Toderick Hall (2020)**

Watch out for an ‘biases’ that might arise. How people express their identity (and gender in particular) is unique and individual to them. As someone comes out in the workplace this may change for someone. It’s important not to challenge someone on the clothes they are wearing in the workplace and to ensure that you facilitate a wider discussion around this. As long as the clothing is appropriate for the workplace it shouldn’t require further conversation.

## **‘I Want to Break Free’ Queen (1984)**

LGBTQ+ colleagues often feel the weight or masking or hiding their true self. If you think to the times when someone is introduced and what assumptions are made. As a Line Manager it is your responsibility to cultivate an environment where all your team feels they can be their true self. You can do this by actively sharing information (such as this guide) and making clear statements at throughout the year (such as during Pride Month).

## **‘A Little Respect’ Erasure (1988)**

Your role as a Line Manager is also to ensure that anyone who chooses to come out is supported with dignity and respect. As a leader it is your responsibility to ensure that this is embedded in your teams. This may mean calling out inappropriate behaviour and language or facilitating courageous conversations around LGBTQ+ identities. The Proud Network and DE&I team are available to draw on for support or if you have any concerns.

Note that it is important that this is embedded in the values of your team both in formal spaces (such as the workplace) and informal spaces (social events). Read the ‘Protecting You’ section to understand the legal obligations that we have as a company.

# Support available to you

This guide has been put together to provide helpful resources on how to come out at CBRE. You may be out already to your friends and family outside of CBRE but if not, there are some great online resources that can help if you are ready to start your journey.

Stonewall have put together a guide which can support you coming out as a young person, coming out as an adult and also shares advice for parents with a LGBTQ+ child. The guide can be accessed [here](#).

If you are wondering what support there is available to you at CBRE, we have a number of different initiatives that show our commitment to supporting our diverse workforce:

- Our [DE&I policy](#) is available to read which explains our standpoint on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and how it is integral to our company.
- View our policy on [Discrimination, Harassment & Victimisation](#) to see how we protect all individuals working for us from any of these behaviours, irrespective of their status, level or grade.
- We have a [Gender Identity, Expression and Transition Toolkit](#) which provides guidance on transitioning within the working environment and has advice on how to be a supportive colleague for someone you know who may be going through this process.
- [WorkWell MIND](#) is a hub for all things to help support your mental health while you are on your coming out journey. Here you will be able to find a list of our trained Mental Health First Aiders who you can reach out to confidentially for help.
- We also provide access to an [Employee Assistance Programme](#) which enables you to speak to specialist mental health nurses 24/7, giving you additional support outside of working hours.
- [The Wellbeing Network](#) is a place for employees to come together and share ideas on how to maintain and improve your wellbeing, inside and outside of work. At CBRE, we are committed to creating a safe and secure environment for all of our employees and this is promoted through our [Wellbeing Guidelines](#).





4

Protecting  
You

# Protecting you

We believe that CBRE is an LGBTQ+ inclusive organisation, so if you are joining us new or deciding to come out later in your career, we aspire for it to be a positive experience. We are aware that several factors will also be considered in your decision to come out, for example:

- Will I get treated differently?
- Will I still have a fair access to promotions and projects?
- What if my line managers tell everyone else without my permission?
- Will I be safe travelling to one of our offices in a country that isn't accepting of LGBTQ+ communities?

There are three key laws that provide you protection in the workplace (see below). At CBRE we have robust policies that reflect these laws so if you find yourself considering these questions you can be assured that we take protecting you and your identity seriously.

## The Equality Act (2010):

It is illegal to discriminate against a person, or to harass or victimize a person, in a work context, because of their sexual orientation or their gender or sex identity.

## General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR):

Sexual orientation and gender identity constitute special category data under the GDPR. Special category data cannot be collected or processed without explicit consent.

## Gender Recognition Act:

The gender of a transgender person is legally recognized under this Act. The Act also makes it an offence for an employer to disclose the fact that a person is pursuing or has completed the process of obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate. It is an offence to disclose the gender status of an individual prior to the affirmation of their current gender.

# Protecting you

The following is the key policies that you should know about and draw upon if needed:

## **Discrimination, harassment & victimisation policy**

This policy sets out our definitions of Discrimination and Harassment in response to the Equality Act 2010. It also details the processes that you can draw upon to raise a complaint and the support that you can expect in this instance.

## **Employee personal information protection & data protection policy**

This policy sets out our approach to handling Employee Personal information and sets out our legal obligations for handling special category information.

## **Grievance procedure**

In the unfortunate situation where there has been unacceptable behaviour this policy set out the processes that an employee can take to find a resolution.



5

Allyship

# What is an ally?

## Ally: noun or verb

(n): a person who associates or cooperates with another; supporter.

(v): to associate or connect by some mutual relationship, as resemblance or friendship.

An Ally can be anyone, typically straight and cisgender but can be from the LGBTQ community supporting underrepresented people such as trans\*, bi or QPOC, the key part is how you promote equality for LGBTQ+ people in a broad variety of ways.

An Ally can act that is an informal listener, friend and public supporter who is proactive and takes on issues that concern the trans/non-binary community.

## Why do I need to be an ally?

Many underrepresented people such as trans\*, bi or QPOC do not have a confident voice or are too worried to speak out at all, allies need to be that voice on their behalf.

## How to be an ally

- **Encourage the inclusion of LGBTQ individuals** – Break from the presumption that LGBTQ individuals don't exist in our workspaces.
- **Use gender neutral and inclusive language** – Follow the persons lead, and avoid presumptions in terms of word choices, ask what pro nouns they would like you to use.
- **Treat LGBTQ people the same as anyone else** – Listen and take your cue from the LGBTQ person regarding what they do and don't want to talk about, don't ask personal questions.
- **Speak out about unsupportive behaviours** – Don't remain silent "I actually don't find that funny" "There's nothing wrong with being LGBTQ".
- **Own up to your mistakes** – "I am sorry, what can I do to improve how I handle this next time?"
- **Be willing to learn**
  - "I'm not sure how to do it properly, but please let me know if there's anything I can do to support you".
  - "I want to introduce you to a client, and I want to make sure I get your pronouns right. What are they?"
- **Listen** – sometimes it can be difficult for trans\*, bi or QPOC to speak up or discuss their experience so when they do listen.

# How to be an ally?

Avoid saying	Say instead	Why?	Example
Homosexual	<b>Gay</b>	“Homosexual” often connotes a medical diagnosis or discomfort with gay/lesbian people	“We want to do a better job of being inclusive of our gay employees”
“A gay” or “a transgender”	<b>“A gay person” or “a transgender person”</b>	Gay and transgender are adjectives that describe a person/group	“We had a transgender athlete on our team this year” vs “We had a transgender on our athletic team this year”
“Transgender people and normal people”	<b>“Transgender and cisgender people”</b>	Saying “normal” implies “abnormal which is a stigmatising way to look at a person.	“This group is open to all people, whether you are transgender or cisgender”
“Mailman”, “fireman”, “policeman”	<b>“Mail person”, “Firefighter”, “Police officer”</b>	People of all genders do these jobs	“I just saw a firefighter rescue a cat from a tree”
“Ladies and gentlemen”	<b>“Everyone”, “folks”, “honoured guests” etc.</b>	Moving away from binary language is more inclusive of people of all genders	“Good evening folks, I am your host for the evening”
“It” when referring to someone (e.g. when pronouns are unknown)	<b>“They”</b>	“It” refers to things, not people	“You know, I am not actually sure how they identify”
“Hermaphrodite”	<b>“Intersex”</b>	Hermaphrodites is a stigmatising, inaccurate word with a negative medical history	“What are the best practices for the medical care of intersex infants?”





# 6

## Dealing with an unsupportive colleague

# Dealing with an unsupportive colleague

CBRE has a zero tolerance approach to homophobia, transphobia, biphobia or any discrimination against someone's sexuality or gender identity/expression. If you have experienced this or witness this type of behaviour please contact your local People Team and/or the Proud Network at [proudnetwork@cbre.com](mailto:proudnetwork@cbre.com)

We are proud to be a workplace that is for everyone. We are led by our values of Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence (RISE). In the unlikely event you feel a colleague is not being supportive of an individual's gender expression, sexuality, or any other criteria there is some action you can take. In any instance where this happened draw on your People Team representatives. Everyone should feel safe, welcome, and accepted at CBRE.

## What might this look like:

- You experience direct discrimination, for example homophobic/sexist/racist comments.
- Someone's words or actions are unsupportive.

In the first instance you may want to deal with this yourself. A great model to aid your discussion is the UHT model.

- **You** have said or done this.
- **Here's** how it may impact me/that person/the LGBTQ+ community.
- **This** is what you could say/do/act.

If you would like to take more formal action, then there are a few steps to take. Always review our policies and processes set out in our Grievance Policy and Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation Policies.

- Where you believe that you have been discriminated against you should raise this with People Team immediately.
- Document the interactions including times, dates, names, witnesses, location and description.
- Reach out to People Team, DE&I Manager or the PROUD Network for support or advice.
- Speak with your line manager or if needed another member of the senior team.



Thinking about coming out at CBRE  
or want to discuss supporting  
someone else coming out at CBRE  
or at home? We'd be happy to have  
a confidential chat with you and see  
how best we can assist you, simply  
contact [proudnetwork@cbre.com](mailto:proudnetwork@cbre.com)