



Setting Up an Internal Network

An internal Rainbow network is a relatively easy and effective way to support staff from the LGBTTI communities and to demonstrate that the organisation has a commitment to Diversity & Inclusion with this group of employees.

Such networks provide both social and professional opportunities. They can provide peer support and increased social bonds within the organisation, as well as aiding in professional development and furthering the Diversity and Inclusion agenda of your organisation. They also allow the employer to have a direct line of communications with this group.

Internal networks can be exclusive to Rainbow staff or can be open to all who are supportive of these issues. Some networks are primarily exclusive but have a number of open meetings or functions over a year, e.g. when inviting a guest-speaker to present or demonstrating to the wider organisation just what the network does. There is no hard and fast rule, here, but it is an issue that needs to be considered from the outset.

Internal networks are an important step in demonstrating organisational commitment to Rainbow staff support and inclusion, but they are not by themselves the answer to ending discrimination in the workplace.

Some Key Points in Setting Up an Internal Network

- Develop the business case for the network, showing how it benefits both employees and the organisation
- Enlist support from the Board or senior management. This could be in the form of a supportive message on the intranet, an email to all staff or them attending some meetings.
- Decide on the aims and purpose of the network. Is it there to help career development? Is it purely social? Will it offer advice on policy and process? Most likely there will be a mixture of objectives.
- Establish a plan based on the objectives in the point above, outlining its purpose and goals, any proposed activities, and any need for resources such as funding, meeting space or time.
- Develop criteria for group membership, with regard to who the group is open to and how privacy will be maintained for those who need it.
- Publicise the network internally via emails or the intranet or any in-house publications, and externally via relevant media.

RAINBOW TICK

- Some members may choose not to be out at work, so using an external email address for the group rather than a company-based one or a social media website for contact can help them contribute while feeling safe.
 - Review the network regularly to make sure it continues to be relevant to all stakeholders.
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Some Points to Consider

Consider the makeup of the group. Is it largely dominated by men, or by one tier of staff from the organisation? There are ways to address this, such as always having a male and female group coordinator, or hosting a women's only networking meeting half an hour before the general meeting.

If you are only getting middle management joining, make a concerted effort in other tiers of the organisation to publicise and welcome staff throughout.

How ethnically diverse is the group? Does it reflect the general ethnic mix of the organisation?

Are there are other internal networks that you can work with?

Some networks establish a relationship with a particular community group and work to assist them (e.g. a Rainbow elders' group, or even something outside the Rainbow world such as an animal welfare charity).

Is there a local Rainbow community business network you can link with?

Does the group want to participate in public events such as Pride parades or festivals?

Once established it is useful to connect with other networks in your area or Rainbow business groups in the area.

Report back to the wider organisation on the activities and benefits of the group.