

LGBTI Specialisation Verification Framework criterion:
[B2.2] One or more staff members are resourced and supported by management to act as 'champions' within the outlet to support care recipients and other staff.



FAQs

LGBTI Champions in Aged Care

This resource provides answers to the most frequently asked questions people have about establishing an LGBTI champion in aged care. This information is relevant for people at all levels within an organisation including the governing body, leadership team, management, staff and those considering taking on a champion role.

What is a workplace champion?

Workplace champions are one or more employees who actively support, promote and lead positive change to improve a certain area in an organisation. They help build awareness, role-model desired behaviours and encourage others to participate in initiatives such as workplace safety, health and wellbeing, mental health, or diversity and inclusion.

What is the role of an LGBTI champion in an aged care organisation?

An LGBTI champion promotes a safe, welcoming and inclusive organisation for LGBTI people including care recipients and staff. A workplace that is welcoming and safe for LGBTI staff enables an organisation to better provide inclusive services for LGBTI older people. LGBTI champions uphold the rights of LGBTI older people by ensuring all staff are supported to provide inclusive and culturally safe aged care services.

How does a champion support an aged care organisation's LGBTI specialisation?

Providers who wish to claim specialised care offerings on My Aged Care, such as for LGBTI older people, must make an application and meet specific criteria outlined in the [Specialisation Verification Framework](#). One of these criteria relates specifically to the organisation supporting one or more staff to act as champions in the workplace. Providers need to show they provide care that is sensitive to the needs of LGBTI older people that goes beyond the standard obligations of the Aged Care Quality Standards. Specialisation verification sets a standardised framework for specialised care and helps older people make informed decisions when choosing providers. A champion may also support the organisation to meet other specialisation criteria such as reviewing policies, rolling out staff training, establishing an advisory group and celebrating LGBTI events.

Does a person need to be LGBTI to become a workplace champion?

While many LGBTI workplace champions are from LGBTI communities, having lived experience is not a requirement for undertaking the role. Non-LGBTI people or ‘allies’ can play an equally important role in leading diversity and inclusion in aged care. An ally refers to someone who is heterosexual and/or cisgender and/or endosex and tries to make the world a better place for LGBTI people.

While LGBTI people may reflect upon their lived/living experience in undertaking the role, someone who isn’t LGBTI may be especially valuable in shifting culture and engaging staff who aren’t part of LGBTI communities. It can also be an opportunity to model what a good LGBTI ally looks like. Each person brings their own unique strengths and experiences to the role.

Not all LGBTI people will be interested or feel comfortable undertaking a workplace champion role. It is therefore important not to assume or place pressure on a person to take up the role just because they are LGBTI. LGBTI communities are very diverse and not all LGBTI people feel they can represent others outside their own experience. They may also have their own personal reasons for not taking on the role.

What activities does an LGBTI champion undertake?

Some of the activities an LGBTI champion can undertake include:

- starting conversations about LGBTI inclusion in aged care e.g. needs of LGBTI older people, using pronouns
- encouraging staff to complete LGBTI inclusion training
- promoting LGBTI events and celebrations e.g. Pride Month, Mardi Gras (refer to *Acknowledging and Celebrating LGBTI Events in Aged Care* infosheet in this toolkit)
- leading or participating in an LGBTI advisory body (refer to *Establishing an LGBTI Advisory Body* guide in this toolkit)
- sharing LGBTI inclusive resources, policies and updates with colleagues
- encouraging and modelling respectful conversations and inclusive language in the workplace
- raising awareness of trauma-aware and healing informed practices across the organisation
- supporting connections to local LGBTIQ+ community-controlled organisations (refer to *Partnering with LGBTI Community Organisations* guide in this toolkit)
- engaging with staff and providing feedback to management regarding ideas or concerns related to LGBTI inclusion
- listening to LGBTI care recipients and communicating with staff and management regarding their needs and any feedback
- organising an LGBTI network for staff.

**Showing your
commitment to a
safe, supportive
environment**

This list is just an example—workplace champions don’t have to do everything on it and can come up with their own ideas as to how to support LGBTI older people!

How does the LGBTI champion role support the Aged Care Quality Standards?

The Aged Care Quality Standards have been developed with a focus on a rights-based approach to deliver person-centred, accessible and quality care. The work of an LGBTI champion can support an aged care organisation to work towards meeting the following outcomes of the Standards.

Standard 1: The Individual

Outcome 1.1

Person-centred care

The provider implements strategies to:

- deliver funded aged care services that meet the needs of individuals with specific needs and diverse backgrounds
- deliver funded aged care services that are culturally safe, trauma-aware and healing informed, in accordance with contemporary, evidence-based practice
- continuously improves its approach to inclusion and diversity
- recognise the rights, and respect the autonomy, of individuals, including their right to intimacy and sexual and gender expression.

Outcome 1.2

Dignity, respect and privacy

- The provider must deliver funded aged care services to individuals in a way that is free from all forms of discrimination, abuse and neglect, treats individuals with dignity and respect, and respects the personal privacy of individuals.

Standard 2: The Organisation

Outcome 2.2a

Quality, safety and inclusion culture to support aged care workers to deliver quality care

- The governing body must lead a culture of quality, safety and inclusion that supports aged care workers to provide quality funded aged care services by focussing on continuous improvement, embracing diversity and prioritising the safety, health and wellbeing of aged care workers.

Outcome 2.2b

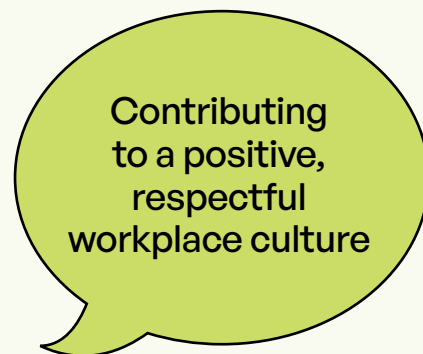
Quality, safety and inclusion culture to support individuals

- In strategic and business planning, the governing body ensures that funded aged care services are accessible to, and appropriate for, individuals with specific needs and diverse backgrounds.

What are the benefits for the LGBTI champion?

Some of the benefits reported by people who have undertaken workplace champion roles include:

- learning more about LGBTI communities, issues and inclusive practices
- developing leadership and communication skills
- helping to reduce discrimination and improve wellbeing for both colleagues and care recipients
- being part of a supportive network working toward meaningful change.



What are the benefits to the aged care provider?

In addition to meeting the requirements of the Aged Care Quality Standards and Specialisation Verification Framework, workplace champion programs in general have been shown to improve staff morale, promote positive workplace culture, proactively identify and address issues, enhance communication between staff and management, and improve an organisation's reputation.

What role does an organisation play in supporting an LGBTI champion?

An LGBTI champion in an aged care organisation should be supported through a clear job description that outlines their role and responsibilities ensuring the position is recognised and valued. This includes access to inclusive guides, resources and practical tools that help promote LGBTI awareness and respect among staff and care recipients. Champions also need access to training that addresses LGBTI inclusion in the context of aged care – covering topics such as respectful language, inclusive practices and the unique experiences of LGBTI older people. Ongoing support from a member of the leadership team is essential to help remove barriers, elevate ideas and demonstrate organisational commitment. In addition, champions should be given opportunities to connect with others in similar roles through communities of practice, forums or peer networks, allowing for shared learning and collaboration across the sector. For the champion role to work there must be support from all levels of the organisation including the governing body, leadership team, managers and staff.

How much time does the LGBTI workplace champion role take?

The champion role is designed to fit around a person's usual job.

They might spend a small amount of time each month doing things like:

- sharing updates with their team
- joining meetings or forums
- supporting events or awareness days
- giving feedback on inclusion activities.

Other aspects of the role can be done on-the-job through everyday activities such as using respectful language and modelling inclusive practices. Most champions take on the role for about 12 months so they have time to build confidence and make a difference. The commitment should be flexible so they can step back at any time or take on more if they're able.

What are the limits of the LGBTI champion role?

It's important to be clear about what the champion role includes and what it doesn't. This helps to protect the champion's wellbeing and manage other people's expectations. Some other strategies include:

- **Time:** It is critical for a champion to work out how much time they can realistically give to the role and what kind of support they're comfortable offering to others.
- **Skills and abilities:** It's a good idea for a champion to reflect on what they can and can't do. They are not expected to have all the answers or act as a counsellor. If someone needs more support than they can provide, it's okay for the champion to refer them to the right person or service.
- **Confidentiality:** A champion needs to understand what to keep private and what they might need to share, especially if someone's safety is at risk. Refer to the organisation's confidentiality and privacy policies to be clear on these responsibilities.

Setting these boundaries can help a champion feel confident in the role and makes sure others get the right support when they need it.

Contact your local LGBTIQ+ community-controlled organisation for support in setting up your LGBTI champions program

Resources



Australia HR Institute
[35 tips to help improve diversity & inclusion in your workplace](#)



Diversity Council Australia.
[Diversity & inclusion allyship and champions](#)



Government of South Australia
[Healthy Workplace Toolkit](#)



LGBTIQ+ Health Australia. [Silver Rainbow factsheet series](#) including [LGBTI 101](#), [Trans and Gender Diverse Older People](#), [Intersex Older People](#) and [Ageing, Older People Living with HIV](#) and more



[List of LGBTIQ+ organisations](#)
Refer to the LGBTIQ+ Health Australia members directory for community-controlled organisations across Australia.