



ADVICE ON COMING OUT

WHAT'S
IN YOUR
CLOSET?

The logo for the Communication Workers Union (CWU) features the letters 'CWU' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. A stylized white wave graphic is positioned behind the 'C' and 'W'.

The communications union

'Coming out' and 'coming out of the closet' are terms used to explain telling yourself and other people about your sexuality or gender identity. Coming out can be a positive and liberating experience. It can feel great to be open, but only when you are ready. Having to live a lie, hiding one of the most fundamental parts of your life can lead to health problems, depression, lack of self confidence and self harm.

There are several stages to coming out. The first is coming out to yourself. Most people know their sexuality or gender from an early age, a frequent comment is "I've always known I was gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender/transsexual."

The biggest barrier to coming out is fear of the reaction. Imagine what it is like if your family reject you, friends ridicule you or colleagues are abusive. That fear is genuine because those things can happen.

The CWU's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Advisory Committee (LGBTAC) is made up of members who understand the issues, who work and campaign to raise awareness and provide support and a voice within the union for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender/transsexual members.

"I think my friend/colleague is gay – what do I do?" If you think that one of your members, friends or colleagues is lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender remember that they may not be ready to talk about it yet. It might be good to let them know by way of general conversation that you think it's okay and that you are supportive of LGBT people.

Let them take the lead in telling you, but if you think they may be being bullied gently try to help them to open up by showing you can be trusted. If you are unsure of what to do, get in touch with a member of the LGBT Advisory Committee.

Most of all, remember that the friend or member is the same person they've always been and can really benefit from your listening and non-judgemental support, whatever your personal beliefs.

Homophobic Bullying

Many LGBT people have been bullied at school or in other groups. It can range from being called names to being physically threatened. If you are being bullied remember you are not alone, your sexuality is part of you and nobody has the right to comment or pass judgement on you. Many employers have strict anti-bullying and harassment policies, so if you are being bullied or harassed tell your union rep or CWU head office.

You can contact a member of the LGBTAC in complete confidence.

Contact the **Equality Department** on **020 8971 7205** email **equality@cwu.org** or write to:

CWU Equality Department,
150 The Broadway,
Wimbledon SW19 1RX

Branch Equality Officer:

Contact Details:

Tel:
Email:



CLOSETS ARE FOR CLOTHES NOT PEOPLE.