

Royal College of Psychiatrists' Position Statement on Sexual Orientation

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The Royal College of Psychiatrists wishes to clarify that homosexuality is not a psychiatric disorder.

In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association concluded there was no scientific evidence that homosexuality was a disorder and removed it from its diagnostic glossary of mental disorders. The International Classification of Diseases of the World Health Organization followed suit in 1992.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists holds the view that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are and should be regarded as valued members of society who have exactly similar rights and responsibilities as all other citizens. This includes equal access to healthcare, the rights and responsibilities involved in a civil partnership, the rights and responsibilities involved in procreating and bringing up children, freedom to practise a religion as a lay person or religious leader, freedom from harassment or discrimination in any sphere and a right to protection from therapies that are potentially damaging, particularly those that purport to change sexual orientation.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists believes strongly in evidence-based treatment. There is no sound scientific evidence that sexual orientation can be changed. Furthermore, so-called treatments of homosexuality create a setting in which prejudice and discrimination flourish.

There is now a large body of research evidence that indicates that being gay, lesbian or bisexual is compatible with normal mental health and social adjustment. However, the experiences of discrimination in society and possible rejection by friends, families and others, such as employers, means that some lesbian, gay and bisexual people experience a greater than expected prevalence of mental health and substance misuse problems.

Good Psychiatric Practice clearly states: 'A psychiatrist must provide care that does not discriminate and is sensitive to issues of gender, ethnicity, colour, culture, lifestyle, beliefs, sexual orientation, age and disability' (page 12, point 13).¹ The Royal College of Psychiatrists expects all its members to follow *Good Psychiatric Practice*.

1. Royal College of Psychiatrists. *Good Psychiatric Practice* (3rd edn). Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2009.