

8 February 2024

LGBT+ History Month: health inequalities and the need for unions

This year's theme is "Medicine - Under the Scope".

LGBT+ History Month is celebrated in February each year. The [2024 theme of Medicine - #UnderTheScope](#) celebrates LGBT+ people's contribution to the field of medicine and healthcare in the past and today.

We remember trail-blazing figures such as Sir Ewan Forbes, a Scottish trans man and GP who legally re-registered his birth as male in 1952; Cecil Belfield Clarke, a Black doctor and Pan-African campaigner who had to hide his gay relationship due to the criminalisation of homosexuality, and Sophia Jex-Blake, a lesbian doctor who as part of the "Edinburgh Seven" fought for the right to an education and became the first practising woman doctor in Scotland.

LGBT+ people currently face barriers to medical treatment and suffer from related disadvantages. Heterosexist assumptions about LGBT+ people's sex lives mean many Gay and Bi+ men are unable to donate blood, and a disproportionate number of Lesbian and Bi+ women feel put off from having smear tests.

LGBT+ people are more likely to have mental health issues, alcohol and drug dependencies (often as a coping mechanism for this disproportionately poor mental health), increased rates of cancer, diabetes and poorer general physical health than non-LGBT+ people.

In May 2020, the [LGBT Foundation published Hidden Figures: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on LGBT Communities](#). The research revealed the effects the pandemic had on the lives of LGBT people in areas such as mental health, isolation, substance misuse, eating disorders, living in unsafe environments, financial impact, homelessness, access to healthcare, and access to support. Health inequalities placed LGBT+ people at heightened risk of dying from Covid, although the lack of LGBT+ monitoring means there is a lack of data to show the real impact.

LGBT+ workers report increased levels of bullying and harassment at work, and increased levels of financial insecurity. Health inequalities and discrimination place LGBT+ workers at particular risk of facing formal attendance procedures at work, as well as the need for protections against workplace discrimination and harassment. Being a union member will give you help and support with these issues.

Getting help and getting involved

- PCS Proud aims to be an active LGBT+ network to provide guidance and support to reps handling LGBT+ issues. We encourage LGBT+ members to [register for PCS Proud](#). Email proud@pcs.org.uk for more information.
- Tell us what you are doing to celebrate LGBT+ History Month by emailing editor@pcs.org.uk
- Use social media hashtags #LGBT+HM2024 and #UnderTheScope
- [Visit the LGBT+ History Month website](#) for more information.