

## Positive Inclusion Award Entrant: Key Assets



As a children's services provider, Key Assets has taken note of worrying statistics in relation to bullying, self-harm and suicide of LGBTI youth.

It is also concerned about reports of discrimination in the workplace and so in 2015, developed its first LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersexual), Inclusion Strategy, to encompass staff, foster carers, children and young people and their families.

Key Assets is a not-for-profit foster care agency providing family placements for children and young people. The organisation operates from its office in Manukau to support carers in the North Island from Tai Tokerau to Tauranga and also has a home-based social worker in Christchurch. Key Asset's employees, foster carers and the children/young people in its care come from a diverse range of countries and many differing backgrounds and include people who are part of the LGBTI community.

The first step of the strategy was to ensure Key Assets' policies and procedures were inclusive. This was implemented through leave policies, bullying, harassment and discrimination policies, and induction and recruitment practices.

All staff are informed of the organisation's policies and procedures as part of its induction framework implemented across the business.

Completion of the organisation's Understanding Diversity and Inclusion module within its online learning platform is mandatory during induction. This training also enables Key

Assets' Social Work and Youth Work teams to better support foster carers and the children/young people in their care who identify as LGBTI.

As a result of the training and policies, Key Assets believe its carers and staff feel more supported which results in greater stability and less turnover. Staff also feel they have been trained appropriately and have the resources available to them to provide the support that is required.

Staff engagement certainly reflects a positive work environment. A recent staff wellbeing survey showed that 91 per cent of employees feel respected at work, 83 per cent are content with how they are treated and 75 per cent are flourishing at work.

From a foster carer recruitment point of view, positive inclusion of those who identify as LGBTI has benefited Key Assets greatly. We are able to recruit carers from a broader community base, some of whom may not have been included as eligible to foster by other NGO's. This also allows us to provide greater flexibility and support in terms of placement options for children and young people.

"As an inclusive employer we are regarded highly by LGBTI candidates as they know that Key Assets is a supportive employer that provides a safe and secure work environment that has a zero tolerance for bullying, harassment and discrimination. We can also attract top candidates who may have worked elsewhere save for the fact that the other organisation/s are not as inclusive," Key Assets HR Manager Leanne Mills says.

"Once on board, employees have Key Assets' commitment to positive inclusion. They can be who they are 100 per cent of the time. Comfortable to talk about their wife/husband/girlfriend/boyfriend regardless of whether they are same sex in just the same way our straight staff do. There is no need to second guess themselves during discussions around the lunch table or make up covering stories for fear of being outed. Everyone is treated equally and with the same respect regardless of their sexual or gender orientation," says Leanne.

The organisation celebrated IDAHOT, (International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia) this year as well as Wear it Purple Day, (which celebrates rainbow young people).

Support of positive inclusion at Key Assets runs from the top down. Its Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer of Key Assets International, the group of companies to which Key Assets belongs, are a gay woman and a gay man. Both are actively out at work, write regular blog posts on LGBTI inclusion on our intranet and support all of our diversity and inclusion activities.

As Director for New Zealand, Angie Simpson is a high level supporter of positive inclusion and role models behaviours and best practice to staff.