Key competences for professionals working with LGBT+ families

For effective, inclusive work to take place with LGBT+ families, a number of different conditions must be in place. And while the abilities and qualities of the professionals who encounter and interact with children and parents are crucial, it is vital that we recognise that in order to achieve inclusive outcomes, not only do these professionals require adequate and appropriate training, but the encounters and interactions must also take place in the context of an inclusive and welcoming organisation.

Intellectual Output 3 (IO3) is concerned with identifying a set of key competences that will enable professionals operating in healthcare, social work, education and legal services to work with LGBT+ families in an effective, fair and inclusive manner that might sustain organisational learning in a way that fosters welcoming environments for a diversity of families and households.

With regard to the *Doing Right(s)* project, IO3 has a dual objective:
- Outlining a set of key, cross-sectoral competences for professionals working with LGBT+ families that draws on the experiences of current professionals and the approaches they take to such work, and is informed by real challenges they have encountered in the workplace.
- Setting the stage for IO4: IO3 is an important tool that will inform the design of the summer school curriculum and (at the very end of the project) a series of training modules suitable for deployment in multiple contexts. With this in mind, it is important that the evaluation strategy is developed simultaneously with the summer school curriculum.

Compiling the IO3 report is a collaborative process that has requires input from the various partners in the network. It can be broken down as follows:
1. **Data collection**. The fieldwork comprised two strands of data collection: one in the national contexts of the individual *Doing Right(s)* partners (i.e. Italy, Poland and Spain), which was designed to explore existing practices and challenges involved in professional training in family diversity and LGBT+ families; the other – conducted in the UK – analysed established training practices used with workers in a context where the legislative framework is considered to offer a high level of protection of LGBT rights.
2. **Sharing and discussing** the results of the fieldwork in Italy, Poland, Spain and UK. This took place during the LA3 in Bologna (15-19 January, 2019)
3. **Collaborative exercise involving all partners** to identify significant common areas of professional practice where the skills of professionals play a key role in the successful inclusion of LGBT+ families and their children.
4. **Work in smaller groups**, analysing the identified "areas of practice" to produce an accepted definition of each area and identify a body of underlying understandings, content knowledge and abilities that can feed into effective professional performance within the area in question, as well as providing an initial outline of possible training activities to assist professionals in becoming highly competent in the specific area. As a result of this phase, 6 key areas of professional practice were identified.
5. **Revision and further discussion**. The University of Verona team revised the list of the areas of practice and their constituent components, adding bibliographic references, before disseminating the list for further discussion. Each area is described in terms of understandings, content knowledge, and abilities (i.e. the components required to

nurture and facilitate the acquisition of competences), which will be the focus of the summer school training programme.

1. Method

1.1. Framework: backward design

The data collected in the four partner countries take the form of a corpus of descriptions of the practices employed, and the challenges encountered, by healthcare professionals, social workers, teachers, and family mediators in their work with LGBT+ families. To use this data set as the starting point in outlining a set of competences, we adopted the Backward Design (BD) framework (Wiggins & McTighe, 2004). The basic idea of BD is that the teacher, instead of designing the curriculum from a taught curriculum (McCowan, 2008) based on textbooks or favoured lessons, "derives the curriculum from the evidence of learning (performances)" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2004).

Our data are focused on practice: they contain descriptions of good practice, the challenges faced by practitioners in their everyday work, and their struggle to establish practices that are inclusive of LGBT+ parents and children. Examining this complex and multi-layered body of information, the team worked collaboratively to identify examples of "evidence of learning" (performances) that responded to the question: "what does a professional who is skilled in this area do?" These same examples will also inform the evaluation of the summer school programme, which is the objective of IO4. Indeed, according to the Backward Design model, the designer develops assessment tools and strategies before planning learning experiences, while the learning experiences themselves are developed on the basis of the target performances rather than abstract learning aims.

Our first reason for choosing BD as the theoretical and methodological framework with which to develop a training programme for professionals working with LGBT+ families relates to the specific type of data we have collected, which is concerned with professional experiences in quite a broad sense. These data are particularly useful for identifying "performances" and reflecting on "what a professional does" within a specific area of practice. However, this is not the only reason.

Given the objectives of IO3 and IO4, the Backward Design was also considered suitable because it involves a form of "purposeful task analysis" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2004) that is suitable for a heterogeneous team comprising multiple nationalities and professional and disciplinary backgrounds working together to design the curriculum. Specifically, if offers a shared base of guiding questions, such as: given a task, how do we get there? What kind of lessons and practices are needed to master key performances?

The third reason why BD is a suitable framework for the purposes of IO3 and IO4 relates to the evaluation process. With Backward Design, assessment methods are designed at the very start of the process through the identification of what is considered acceptable evidence of learning, with content knowledge, understanding, and skills connected explicitly with real-life tasks that demonstrate competence in each specific area of expertise.
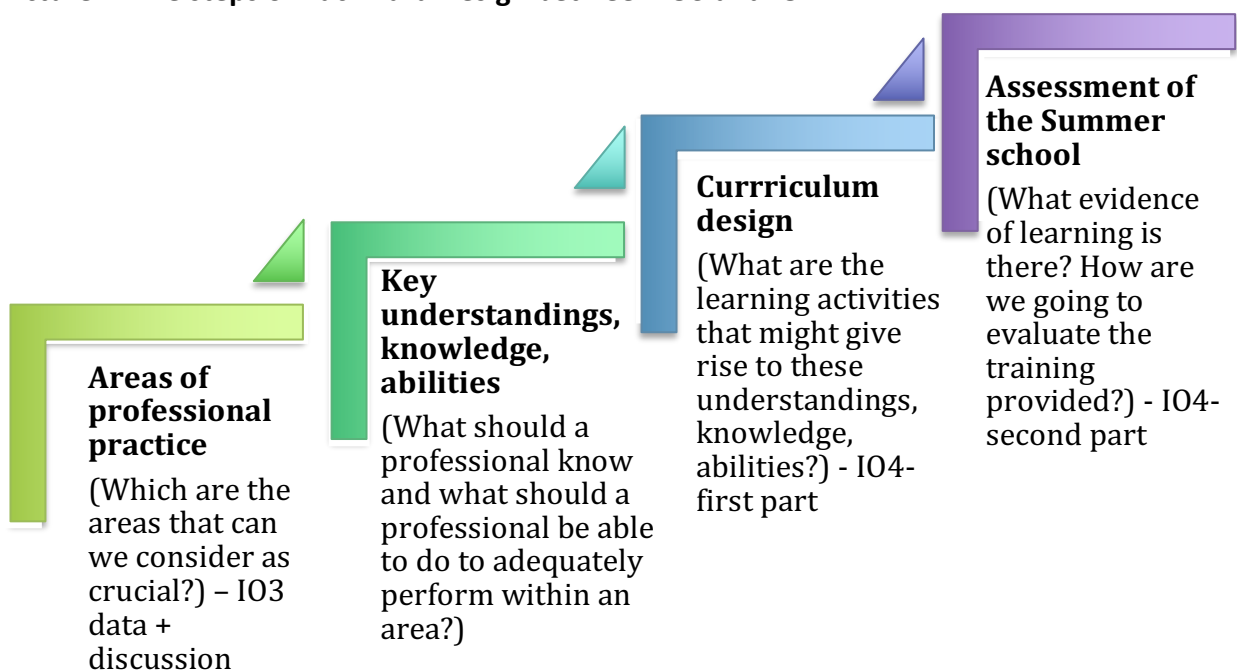
In this way, learning experiences, content, outcomes and assessment methods are closely interrelated and the evaluation plan takes shape at the same time as the training modules. The BD model therefore ensures the evaluation process is given thorough consideration, and allows a clear template for IO4 to be established at the summer school planning stage.

According to the model, curriculum design comprises three steps.
- identifying desired results
- identifying performances
- planning learning experiences

The following diagram shows how these steps were implemented in the *Doing Right(s)* workflow between IO3 and IO4.

Picture 1. The steps of Backward Design between IO3 and IO4

Areas of professional practice
(Which are the areas that can we consider as crucial?) – IO3 data + discussion

Key understandings, knowledge, abilities
(What should a professional know and what should a professional be able to do to adequately perform within an area?)

Currriculum design
(What are the learning activities that might give rise to these understandings, knowledge, abilities?) - IO4-first part

Assessment of the Summer school
(What evidence of learning is there? How are we going to evaluate the training provided?) - IO4-second part

1.2. Desired outcomes

With the Backward Design framework, the target outcomes for the training or educational programme emerge from analysing an area of practice in terms of skilled performance and all the components that foster skilled performance: understandings, content knowledge, and abilities. In this context:

- An **understanding** is a durable, transferable resource that perseveres in the participants' mindset, even if the relative content knowledge has faded. There may be different facets to this understanding. In general, understandings concern the professionals' awareness and comprehension of the ways a phenomenon can be seen and explained, broadly how it works and how it fits within a wider perspective. Understandings are supported by qualities such as reflexivity, empathy, and self-awareness.

- **Content knowledge** refers to the body of information – facts, concepts, principles etc. – which participants are expected to learn with regard to a specific area.

- **Abilities or skills** refer to the knowledge and ability to apply strategies, processes and methods within a certain area.

1.3. Data collection in the partner countries and in the UK

Italy, Poland, Spain

The fieldwork in the three partner countries was designed to collect examples of LGBT+ inclusive and anti-discriminatory experiences and approaches to working practice as viewed from the professionals' own perspective. It also sought to explore the types of learning these people have experienced in this area of their working lives, and the challenges and needs they identify at both an individual level and regarding the organisation as a whole.

In Italy, data were collected through interviews that involved a total of 6 professionals working in the fields of healthcare, education, social work, legal services and family mediation.

In Poland, 6 professionals from the legal services, education and healthcare fields were interviewed. Based on data from an extensive study in Poland, it was decided not to include interviews with social workers due to a lack of knowledge and experience in LGBT issues.

In Spain, a total of 13 professionals working variously in education, social work, healthcare, psychology and legal fields were interviewed.

Overall, the fieldwork phase involved a total of 25 participants in the three countries.

The interviews followed the same guide (Annexes 1-2) exploring:
- Work background and experience
- Current working practices
- Examples of significant incidents and strategies encountered
- Key areas of practice
- Learning resources in the workplace

The results were presented and discussed during *Learning Activity 3* in Bologna (15-19 January 2019) and were used as the basis for developing the set of key areas of practice that form the core of the summer school curriculum (see section 2).

UK

The UK is included in the study as an example of an LGBT-friendly regulatory framework and established practice in the provision of training for professionals working with LGBT+ families. The British government has implemented anti-discriminatory, LGBT-inclusive policies within a protective regulatory framework. For example: LGBT individuals and couples have been able to adopt and/or foster children since 2002, schools have an obligation to promote safety and wellbeing among children and young people including those who are LGBT or experience homo/transphobic bullying (Education and Inspection Act, 2006), and barriers to document change for transgender people have been removed.

In spite of this relatively LGBT-friendly regulatory and organisation framework, like many countries the UK has recently seen a backlash against this shift that has particularly affected trans people (especially trans women) and gender non-conforming children. There are also stereotypes and gender assumptions that have not been eradicated by changes to the law or approved practices.

The interviews explored existing training programmes: key issues, theoretical frameworks, teaching and learning methods, promising approaches, emerging training needs, social needs, gaps in current training practices and the challenges they entail. During the fieldwork in the UK, 6 academics were interviewed whose work focuses specifically on LGBT issues, and who have been engaged in course and curricula design at University level:

- **Stephen Hicks** – Senior lecturer in Social Work, University of Manchester. Responsible for training relating to same sex families in adoption and fostering at Manchester Municipality and on behalf of the British Association of Social Workers.
- **Zowie Davy** – Senior Lecturer in LGBTQ Research, School of Applied Social Sciences, De Monfort University.
- **Maria Federica Moscati** – Senior Lecturer in Family Law, University of Sussex. Trained mediator and consultant for the Family Mediation Council on LGBTQ issues.
- **Meg-John Barker** – Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Open University. Qualified psychotherapist and activist.
- **Maurice O'Brien** – Lecturer in Adult Nursing Equality, Diversity Lead and Director of Staff Development at the School of Healthcare Sciences, University of Cardiff.
- **Olu Jenzen** – Principal Lecturer in Media Studies, Director for the Centre for Transforming Sexuality & Gender, University of Brighton.

Interviews were also conducted with informants from 4 key organisations that provide in-service training on LGBT issues for professionals working with families:

- **MIND OUT** – LGBTQI mental health service in Brighton and Hove. Part of a national network, it was founded 20 years ago as part of the charity Mind in Brighton and Hove. It became an independent organisation in 2011.
- **New Family Social** – UK network for LGBT adoptive and foster families

- **Stonewall** – the largest LGBT rights NGO in Europe. It was founded in 1989, in the wake of the struggle against Section 28 of the Local Government Act in the United Kingdom. The aim was to create a professional lobbying group that would prevent similar attacks on lesbian, gay and bi people
- **Brighton and Hove City Council** – local authority.

The key competences that emerged from the study of the UK context were:
- Intersectional competence, in the sense of a capacity to consider the complexity of sexual and gender identity of any nature, in terms how it connects with other aspects of the individual's make-up.
- Reflexivity and critical thinking in relation to dominant sexualities
- Critical and deconstructive approaches to language and practices
- Learning to use objective scientific data about discrimination in different areas of life (health, education, labour market, etc.), hate crimes, homophobia and bullying to deliver evidence-led education and training
- The ability to question the stereotypes and assumptions held by participants in relation to sexual and gender identities as a way of challenging prejudice
- Proactivity and encouraging individual engagement with processes of change

The results of the UK-focused research were used to develop a framework in which to examine the data from the interviews with Italian, Polish and Spanish professionals; they have also been helpful in forming comparisons between the areas of practice identified, in identifying a common lexicon, and in developing new learning activities.

1.4. Workgroups in Bologna (Learning Activity 3)

During LA3 in Bologna, the representatives of the partners' network worked as a whole group to identify key areas of professional performance and select a small number of key areas to be analysed for the purpose of designing the summer school programme. The group agreed that these areas should be transnational and cross-sectoral (i.e. relate to the work carried out with families by professionals in different sectors) and address core issues while managing to form a coherent educational syllabus.

Once the key areas were isolated and selected for analysis, the *Doing Right(s)* team worked in smaller groups to identify the primary understandings, skills and content knowledge that underpin and sustain effective performance in each area. The groups also listed learning experiences and training methods that were identified as being helpful in the development of each of these competences.

With a view to carrying out "purposeful task analysis" for each area of practice, we used a template inspired by the Backward Design model (Annex 3), structured as follows:

- **Name** of the area
- **Description**. Initial description of the area and the reasons why it is important in work with LGBT+ families

- **Expert competence(s)**. The group discussed and wrote down examples of things (actions/practices) that a professional who is skilled in the area would actually do
- **Desired outcomes.** Desired outcomes emerge from analysis of the pertinent competences for the area, with a focus on:
  - Understandings that underpin each competence
  - Content knowledge
  - Skills or Abilities

2. Areas of professional practice

Doing Right(s) addresses the issue of inclusion as the result not only of individual practices but also of institutional procedures and the identity models conveyed by the structure and structures of society itself. This conception of (dis)equality reflects how closely anti-discrimination work is related to social change. Training can promote the development of tools for identifying, interpreting and counteracting the processes that lead to the social construction of inequality within professional contexts, thus empowering professionals and improving quality of care.

Desired training outcomes are identified for each area of practice by analysing the related forms of expert competence in terms of how they arise from a combination of key understandings, knowledge and abilities.

2.1. Dealing with stereotypes, social models and cultural assumptions about gender, sexuality and family

Description

The ways women and men act within society, and the ways people form families and construct emotional and sexual relationships, are often still explained on the basis of stereotypical understandings that link individuals' behaviours, attitudes or practices with biological features. Within this framework – for example – women are thought to have a natural talent for child rearing while men are considered unfit for primary care, and a family headed by a man and a woman is considered a "natural" – and therefore positive – context in which to bring up children.

Despite the ongoing change in gender relationships, the increasing diversity of family configurations and the widespread agreement in the scientific community that gender differences, sexuality and the family are the product of a process of social construction rather than an inherent part of our nature, these stereotypical visions continue to guide professional practice. This can translate into potential discrimination or non-inclusion of LGBT+ individuals and families because their life experiences do not conform to, and even challenge, prevailing expectations about gender, sexuality and the family.

To be able to work productively and fairly with LGBT+ families and their children, professionals need to manage a set of competences that allows them to overcome the models

and stereotypes they hold themselves, in their interactions with patients and/or service users and to challenge the prevailing models and stereotypes present in their work setting and in wider society. Overcoming personal stereotypes and models is crucial if the worker is to enter into an authentic relationship with patients and/or service users and address their actual needs, as failure to do so can lead to them to interpret users' needs and experiences through the prism of stereotypical assumptions.

Understandings
- Masculinity and femininity are defined by culture and society, and these definitions vary over time and from place to place;
- Families have to be understood in terms of functions and not in terms of gender roles;
- Stereotypes can produce bias and implicit norms;
- Stereotypes shape professional practice, and the language, tools and materials produced and used by professionals;
- Professionals are in a position to contribute to fostering socio-cultural change in relation to gender and sexuality equality.

Content knowledge
- The sex/gender system and the social construction of gender differences;
- Differences between gender identity, gender roles, gender expression and sexual orientation;
- The connection between the sex/gender system and heteronormativity;
- The differences between gendered parental roles and parenting functions;
- The connection between stereotypes, social models and inequality.

Abilities
A professional skilled in this area is able to:
- critically reflect on their own stereotypes and models;
- analyse how gender stereotypes shape mainstream understandings and practices in regard to families and parenting;
- transform their professional practices and work environment to minimise the impact of stereotypical notions of gender and family relationships;
- respond in an adequate manner to harmful stereotypes that might affect their patients/service users.

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2.2. Recognising complex family situations and needs

Description

LGBT+ families often present organisations and practitioners with unexpected family configurations. This can uncover a lack, on the part of these organisations/individuals, of the skills and knowledge required to properly perceive who these families actually are, how they work, and what their needs are. Rather, there is a tendency to assimilate them to traditional, heterosexual-headed models of the family. In particular, practitioners may be unaware of – or underestimate – the subtle, and even overt, prejudices that affect people in this category. One possible effect is that professionals themselves become agents of discrimination by misunderstanding the specific character and circumstances of the family.

The reasons for such shortcomings can be traced to both a lack of knowledge about same-sex parenthood and excessively simple or rigid ideas about what it means to be gay, lesbian and/or transgender. Furthermore, when practitioners come into contact with such "atypical" categories of service user, there can be a tendency to focus primarily on this single aspect of their person at the risk of undervaluing other aspects that may be shaping their existence.

When encountering a family situation, practitioners who have not received adequate training will tend to impose a heteronormative framework based on a binary model of gender identity. This can result in them using non-inclusive language, disregarding specific needs or failing to provide appropriate resources (i.e. connecting LGBT+ families with other groups or NGOs), excluding LGBT+ people because they (the practitioners) lack the tools and resources to address their needs. They may also be incapable of recognising non-inclusive practices that arise within the heteronormative framework.

Understandings
- The social roots of heteronormative framework and its ability to assimilate family diversity.
- The inherent violence of such processes of assimilation.
- The importance of the language in identifying and addressing families' specific needs.

- That that we all harbour prejudices and stereotypes, and how these can affect our understanding of the needs and circumstances of specific groups and individuals.

Content knowledge
- The plurality of LGBT+ families, the diverse configurations they can adopt and how they are formed.
- The latest research on issues of parenting.
- The specific needs of children and parents in a range of different parental arrangements.
- Different forms of discrimination in group situations, with an understanding of issues around bullying in particular.

Abilities/Skills
A professional skilled in this area is able to:
- be empathetic, tolerant and open-minded.
- listen to what members of a family are actually saying, in order to understand their needs and circumstances.
- identify and apply appropriate strategies to address different family needs.
- influence other professionals and organisations to develop a better to understanding of all forms of diversity and the needs of diverse groups and individuals.
- activate a network of professionals in cases that present a complex set of needs.
- negotiate delicate issues that arise in regard to families and children (i.e. the origin/parentage of children of same-sex parents, or with a trans parent, etc.).
- be able to manage group situations effectively (i.e. intervening in cases of bullying in the classroom).

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2.3. Creating welcoming environments

Description

Visibility is a key issue for LGBT+ families, especially when there is a risk of being left feeling invisible or being stigmatised when they are "seen". For example, parents often make decisions about how and when to become visible as a same-sex couple, and this process is often based, at least partly, on the risk of not being welcomed and fully accepted in certain contexts. In countries where LGBT+ parents and their children do not enjoy legal and social recognition, families can be pushed to invisibility and experience **minority stress**. Invisibility as a family is a barrier to building a relationship with professionals that is based on mutual trust and a sense of authenticity. It can also have a negative impact on children, who don't feel free to talk openly about their family with teachers and peers. But even in contexts where LGBT+ families are recognised and widely accepted, service providers may rely upon heteronormative practices, settings and tools that are based on a standardised image of the "family". This can make it more difficult for family members to feel secure and at ease when they engage with the service, and may affect the process of disclosure. Silencing diversity and ascribing value to only one family model has been considered a form of **microaggression** in that it can have a range of negative impacts on parents and children, particularly in terms of the feeling that the (social/educational/healthcare etc.) service or institution with which they are dealing "sees" them, or lacks the language and conceptual apparatus with which to recognise them as the family they are.

It is therefore not only important for professionals to exhibit a welcoming attitude towards people as individuals, but also for the service to present itself as an open and safe space that includes all forms of family.

"Creating welcoming environments", as an area of professional practice, consists of proactively organising spaces, tools, language and practices according to an inclusive framework in such a way that they encourage open communication with the members of different families. To ensure that all families feel comfortable using the service, special attention needs to be given to making sure that the ways staff – and the service as a whole – present themselves, and the materials they use, reflect family diversity, for example, using visual materials that include representations of family diversity, making sure that there are

books on family diversity in the organisation's library and that documents and forms (leaflets, questionnaires, registration forms etc.) are designed in an inclusive way and use inclusive language. In a welcoming environment, family diversity is openly talked about and there may be visible signs of welcome for LGBT people, such as posters, rainbow stickers and/or images of diverse families. The ways the service collects information about a family's background and the way interviews are conducted can also contribute to creating a welcoming environment. This level of complexity means that all members of staff (from the people that provide the first point of contact to those at management level) need to be suitably trained and made aware of the importance of creating welcoming environments, and that dealing with LGBT+ families is not just the responsibility of one person or team.

Understandings
- There are many different families and ways to build a family
- The connection between the way a service presents itself and the users' experience
- That heteronormativity is prevalent and often dominant both in everyday experience and in professional practice, and that it can negatively affect non-normative people

Content knowledge
- Family as a cultural and historical product; changes to the make-up/meaning of "family" and current family configurations
- LGBT+ inclusion as a basic human right
- Recent data from research into the experiences of LGBT+ service users
- LGBT+ population and minority stress
- What heteronormativity is and how it informs language and practice
- Models of LGBT+ family inclusivity: affirmative models, anti-bias approaches, critical reflective practice

Abilities
A professional skilled in this area is able to:
- locate appropriate materials and support
- assess current materials (registration forms, leaflets, signs, working tools, books and guides...) in terms of language, images, implicit models etc.
- assess current working methods (e.g. interview guidelines, reception protocols, unquestioned routines…) in terms of language, norms, implicit models etc.
- produce inclusive materials
- develop and assess inclusive working methods (see also unit below)
- share related knowledge and encourage the use of inclusive strategies in the workplace

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2.4. Implementing inclusive strategies

Description

International guidelines encourage workers who engage with other people in the course of their work to ensure they do so in a way that is rooted in recognition and respect, regardless of the users' background, identity, social condition, sexual orientation or beliefs. An inclusive workplace and inclusive working practices require the proactive promotion of a responsive

environment where professionals recognise the complexity and intersectionality of the diversity of individuals and families, and take action to address homophobia, racism and all other forms of discrimination.

By implementing an inclusive approach, service providers are protecting basic human rights. Translating the principles of recognition and respect into organisational structures and working methods assists professionals in building relationships of trust and authenticity with service users. By acknowledging and reflecting the diversity and changing nature of society, inclusive practices can ensure the service is accessible to all.

Professionals with expertise in inclusion are able to: critically assess current strategies in terms of possible shortcomings relating to the diversity of family life and family configurations (e.g. celebration of mother's day, the use of genealogical trees, the collection of personal and family history etc.); listen to LGBT+ users' experiences with a view to understanding how the service's current practices meet their specific circumstances and needs; use users' accounts as a knowledge-source and a resource for professional growth; and develop, evaluate and consolidate new strategies.

Understandings
- That services are dynamic entities that should change to better reflect society and respond to emerging needs
- The complex nature of parenting (including personal, social, cultural aspects)
- That parenting cannot be assessed entirely on the basis of a single aspect
- Human identities should be understood in terms of their intersectional nature
- Discrimination is rooted in LGBT+phobic bias
- Professionals have an essential role and responsibility in the creation of inclusive environments

Content knowledge
- Recent data from research looking at LGBT+ families and their children
- Definitions of family and parenting that encompass different cultural perspectives
- What heteronormativity is and how it informs language and practice
- Ethical guidelines from social, educational, healthcare professions: the duty to welcome, respect and take care of all identities
- The processes at work in discrimination, how they occur and the impact they have
- Models of LGBT+ family inclusivity: affirmative models, anti-bias approaches, critical reflective practice

Abilities

A professional skilled in this area is able to:
- learn from the stories of the people who attend the service;
- recognise the multiplicity and intersectionality of the constituent aspects of human identity;
- assess current working methods: analyse language, materials, strategies, guidelines, procedures and their effects in terms of creating or eliminating barriers to inclusion and participation;
- develop, disseminate and implement LGBT-inclusive strategies in their own workplace;

- identify and consult appropriate sources of guidance and practical assistance.

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2.5. Using data to support practice and finding information

Description

Practitioners are often required to contribute to expanding and updating the theoretical frameworks and methodological tools that relate to their professional practice. The knowledge they acquire in this process can help to motivate them in their professional work, and can inform their choices and practices, which they are able to consider in terms of the wider context.

There are a number of reasons for taking the time to study what academic and scientific research, international policies and professional guidelines have to say in terms of developing and maintaining inclusive practices.

First, even in societies with relatively high levels of awareness of LGBT+ issues, the way these issues is understood can be profoundly influenced by stereotypes and prejudices, with the result that many people lack accurate, factual knowledge of the subject. Providing correct information and describing things clearly, using appropriate language is a first important step on the path to empowerment.

Secondly, professionals such as educators, teachers, psychologists and social workers will typically develop ways of working on the basis not only of the theories and guidelines imparted to them in training, but also on the basis of their own experiences and those of colleagues. In this sense, professional practice is not simply the application of knowledge, but also the acquisition of new knowledge. Professionals who work with LGBT+ families are often required to innovate and develop novel solutions that allow them to fulfil their function more effectively. New practices can be informed by research, and may need to be justified using rigorous data.

Thirdly, more and more practitioners working with LGBT+ people and their children find themselves dealing with criticism, not only from parents and service users, but also from their colleagues, managers and supervisors. When practices are based on accurate, rigorous data, professionals are protected and empowered. Not only will they be able to justify their choices, they will actually be more effective in their roles.

Understandings
- That the practices and actions of individual professionals are not simply a question of chance or isolated personal choice, but rather, typically draw on a shared knowledge base and guidelines set down by professional associations or networks.
- The distinction between prejudices and social/religious beliefs on the one hand, and forms of knowledge based on empirical data.
- That professionals need to be prepared to face a multiplicity of situations.
- Awareness of the limits of theoretical understanding and interpretive frameworks.

Content knowledge
- Basic and advanced information about sexual orientation, gender identity and the ways LGBT+ families function;
- European and international policy guidelines and directives relating to the civil rights of LGBT+ people;
- National laws;
- Professional guidelines and codes of ethics;
- Useful sources (database, journals, websites) of information and resources.

Abilities
A professional skilled in this area is able to:
- be assertive;
- argue a position across different domains (i.e. scientific vs religious);
- explain single actions as components of a process and find solutions in case of ideological, cultural, religious conflict;
- encourage other people to consider scientific arguments and data, rather than framing issues relating to LGBT+ families in terms of religious positions and popular perceptions;
- distinguish between reliable and non-reliable sources of information.

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2.6. Dealing with restrictions and obstacles

Description
Legal rights and protections for LGBT+ parents and their children vary greatly across the different countries in Europe, ranging from situations where LGBT+ families are granted the same rights as those headed by heterosexual couples, to those where they have no recognised legal rights; for instance, in certain countries, the parent without a biological bond to the child(ren) is not recognised legally as their parent.

In addition to questions of legal recognition, social stigmatisation and homophobia are still present in every country and deny LGBT+ families full equality and social inclusion. For instance, even in countries where the rights of same sex parents are recognised, educational materials and the paperwork in schools may not reflect or consider diverse family configurations. LGBT+ families thus have to deal with obstacles and challenges on a daily basis in their battle to be fully recognised as a family.

Given this scenario, professionals need to be aware of the challenges and obstacles LGBT+ families face and capable of developing effective strategies to overcome them and foster inclusion and equality. "Dealing with restrictions and obstacles" is an area of professional practice in which the professional is required to develop both awareness and a set of tools to negotiate the legal constraints on LGBT+ parenting rights and address the homophobia and stigmatisation that may be present in their working practices and environment.

Understandings
- That laws and rights play a crucial role in family wellbeing;
- That language, and the content of documents and other materials can reflect and perpetuate a heteronormative vision of the family;
- That health, education and social services have a role to play in bridging the equality gap and fostering change in society.

Content knowledge
- The legal situation in regard to LGBT+ rights across Europe;
- European data on discrimination and social exclusion on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity;
- Best practices for services that can foster legal and social change at European level.

Abilities
A professional skilled in this area is able to:
- recognise discriminatory practices, whether they originate in legal or regulatory provisions or in societal biases or prejudices;
- develop situation-specific strategies to overcome obstacles and discrimination that take into account both the needs of the family and the legal framework.

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2.7. Networking

Description
In the wake of the first wave of the gay and lesbian movement in the 1970s, dozens of LGBT NGOs were established across Europe. In recent decades, these organisations have played a crucial role in disseminating information about the LGBT community among the general public, identifying the needs of LGBT people and developing effective tools to tackle discrimination, homophobia and social exclusion and promote change in terms of both legal rights and the attitudes of the wider society. This has happened both at a national level, in the various countries in the EU (each of which has its own unique circumstances), at a Europe-wide level, thanks to the creation of transnational networks.

LGBT NGOs can thus be considered a key ally for people who work with LGBT+ individuals and families insomuch as they can be used as a resource for professionals to increase their own knowledge, but also provide a network with a wide range of expertise to which services can refer as and when is required. Like all families, LGBT+ families have multi-layered needs and face different experiences that cannot always be addressed effectively by a single professional. As an area of practice, networking covers a set of competences that enable a professional to develop inter-professional networks – of individual practitioners and LGBT NGOs – in which they can find information, expertise and practical support for their own work, but which can also provide a support network for the service users themselves.

Understandings
- The professionals' awareness of their own competences but also their limitations, in terms of both knowledge and expertise, and the extent of existing networks;
- That the needs of LGBT+ families are multi-layered, and that professionals may require additional support to meet these needs;
- That LGBT NGOs are a key resource in improving working practices and ultimately meeting the needs of LGBT+ families.

Content knowledge
- The functioning and main characteristics of LGBT NGOs in their own country
- The functioning and main characteristics of European LGBT networks
- Examples of good practice in networking between professionals, NGO and public administrations in Europe.

Abilities
A professional skilled in this area is able to:
- identify the most appropriate NGO or expert to compensate for gaps in their own knowledge and/or support them in case of need;
- build effective relationships both with the LGBT community and other professionals in different fields;
- use their own resources and activate a network of contacts to meet the needs of families.

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OSSERVATORIO LGBT - www.osservatoriolgbt.eu
OSSERVATORIO NAZIONALE SULL'IDENTITA' DI GENERE - www.onig.it
Centro Risorse LGBTI - http://www.risorselgbti.eu
Arcigay - www.arcigay.it
Famiglie Arcobaleno www.famigliearcobaleno.org
Rete Genitori Rainbow www.genitorirainbow.it
Agedo www.agedonazionale.it
Movimento Identità Trans – www.mit-italia.it

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Tęczowe rodziny - teczowerodziny.org (strona z materiałami o teczowych rodzinach)
Kampania Przeciw Homofobii - kph.org.pl (ogólnopolska organizacja LGBT)
Akceptacja - akceptacja.org.pl (organizacja rodziców osób LGBT)
Fabryka Równości - fabrykarownosci.pl (organizacja LGBT z Łodzi)

Fundacja Trans-Fuzja - transfuzja.org (organizacja działajaca na rzecz osob transpłciowych)

Grupa Stonewall - grupa-stonewall.pl (organizacja LGBT z Poznania)

Kultura Równości - kultura.org.pl (organizacja LGBT z Wrocławia)

Lambda Warszawa - lambdawarszawa.pl (organizacja LGBT z Warszawy)

Polskie Towarzystwo Prawa Antydyskryminacyjnego - ptpa.org.pl (organizacja profesjonalistów na rzecz prawa antydyskryminacyjnego)

Stowarzyszenie Tęczówka - teczowka.org.pl (organizacja LGBT ze Śląska)

Tolerado - tolerado.org (organizacja LGBT z Trójmiasta)

Towarzystwo Edukacji Antydyksryminacyjnej - tea.org.pl (organizacja profesjonalistów na rzecz edukacji antydyskryminacyjnej)

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Queerowy Maj (Kraków)

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ANNEXES

1. Interview guide for professionals working with LGBT+ families

AREAS	QUESTIONS
Introduction/warm-up	Describe your organisation and your job
Overview of work with LGBT+ families (*Secondary questions to keep in mind and to ask if needed*)	Describe your experience of working with LGBT+ families - What does this work involve? - What are the main things you are trying to achieve in this work?
Account of early experiences and initial exploration of background	Can you describe the first time you met an LGBT+ family as part of your job? - At the time, did you have previous experience or knowledge about working with LGBT+ families and related issues? - If so, from where? (training, personal experiences, colleagues, media…)
Description of current procedures/practices	How do you usually approach the work you do with LGBT+ parents and their children?
Narrative of critical incident(s) and personal/professional resources (to let implicit aspects emerge – evaluation of the situation, visions and principles guiding action, perspectives on key difficult issues, self-evaluation…)	Can you describe a particularly challenging situation you have encountered? - Why was it challenging for you/your organisation? - What did you think? - What did you do? - What/who was helpful for you in that situation?
Identification of key areas of practice and the learning process	What are the most important things that are useful in your work with LGBT+ families, from your perspective? - how did/do you learn them?

(Focusing on established "best practices")
Description of the main sources of learning and learning process
	How did you learn to successfully work with LGBT+ families? (professional training, personal experiences, key mentors, other resources…)
	    - What was particularly useful for you in order to learn this competence?
	    - What/who are your main resources if it happens to have doubts or troubles dealing with a case?
	    - How do you keep up to date in this area?

2. Interview guide for coordinators of services working with LGBT+ families

AREAS	QUESTIONS
Introduction - warm-up	Describe your organisation and your professional position
Overview of work with LGBT+ families and current working practices (*Secondary questions to keep in mind and to ask if needed*)	Describe your professional experience with LGBT+ families - What does your service/organisation do to include LGBT+ parents and their children?
Account of early experiences and initial exploration of background	- Can you describe when and how the issue of dealing with LGBT+ families emerged? - Was it a case of a top-down approach (i.e. some guidelines and/or action plan) or bottom-up (i.e. a family came to the service and "forced" it to deal with the specifics of their circumstances)?

Narrative of critical incident(s) and personal/professional resources
 	
(to let implicit aspects emerge – evaluation of the situation, visions and principles guiding action, perspectives on key difficult issues, self-evaluation…)
	Can you describe a particularly challenging situation that your service has had to deal with?
	    - Why was it challenging for your organisation?
	    - What did you do?
	    - What was helpful in that situation?

Identification of key areas of practice and the learning process	- What are the most important things that are useful in your work with LGBT+ families, from your perspective? - Was your organisation able to learn these lessons? How did it manage (or fail) to do this?
(Focusing on established "best practices") Description of the main sources of learning and the learning process	- What did you do to ensure your employees learned how to work successfully with LGBT+ families (professional training, personal experiences, key mentors, other resources…)? - What was particularly useful in acquiring this competence? - Based on your experience, what are the main obstacles that training programmes have to overcome?

3. Backward Design Planning template
Area of professional practice:
_____

Short description: what is it? Why is it important for working with LGBT+ families?

What is it?   Why is it important?

Examples of concrete actions a professional who is skilled in this area does

Key understandings that sustain this expertise	Desired results: A professional who is highly effective in this area…	
	What does (s)he know?	What is (s)he able to do?

Learning Plan: possible learning activities that can be used for training in this area

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Innovative tools for professionals working with LGBT families

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