The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development endorses the rights of LGBTI people as human rights, which should be enforced and respected at all times.
Q. HOW DO YOU TELL IF SOMEONE IS LGBT?
It is not always possible to tell whether someone is LGBT just by looking at them. Like the rest of society, LGBT persons, as individuals, express themselves and live in many different ways. People should not be defined by the clothes they wear or how they behave, but instead by the way they feel and self-identify.

Q. DO GAY MEN WANT TO BE WOMEN; DO LESBIAN WOMEN WANT TO BE MEN?
No. A gay or lesbian person is someone who is emotionally, romantically and sexually attracted to people of the same sex, not someone who is transgender or wants to be the opposite gender. Gay and lesbian persons may dress or behave in feminine or masculine ways, respectively, but that does not necessarily mean that they want to be women or men, respectively.

Q. CAN LGBTI PERSONS BE “CURED”? 
LGBTI persons are not ill, so there is nothing that needs to be cured. Whether a person is lesbian, gay, bisexual, or non-binary, it is not possible to change their sexual orientation – it is a natural and normal part of who that person is. Likewise, a transgender or intersex person is not suffering from an illness.

Sadly, some people think lesbian, gay and bisexual persons need to be taught a lesson in how to be “real men” and “real women” by forcefully having sex with them. Having sex with a person without their consent is rape and unlawful. Sexually or physically assaulting a person to “punish” or “cure” them is a criminal act and causes serious emotional, physical and psychological harm and trauma.

Q. IS HOMOSEXUALITY UNNATURAL OR ANTI-RELIGION?
No. A person’s sexual orientation is a natural and normal part of that person. All religions and spiritual teachings preach love, tolerance and respect for all people. Many religious and spiritual leaders preach that all people are free and equal and must be treated with dignity.

In South Africa, the Constitution also protects the rights of everyone to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion. But this does not mean that they can discriminate unfairly against or mistreat others because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Q. ARE GAY MEN MORE LIKELY TO SEXUALLY ABUSE CHILDREN?
No. Child sexual abuse is a crime and is not determined by a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTI persons and their children are raised in the same ways, respectively, but that does not necessarily mean that they want to be women or men, respectively.

Q. ARE LGbTI PERSONS UN-AFRICAN?
No. Like everyone else, LGBTI persons are part of families and form families. There are many different types of families in South Africa. Some children are adopted, and others are raised by only their mother or only their father, or by their grandparents or other caregivers.

LGBTI persons also raise children and there is no evidence that being raised by gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex parents or group to which they belong– for example, an attack on a person because of their race, and the organisations listed below.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION, ADVICE OR SUPPORT?

NATIONAL HELPLINE

LifeLine SA’s Stop Gender Violence Helpline (0800 150 150) Provides anonymous, confidential and toll-free telephone counselling, support and referral services to survivors of gender-based violence. The service operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and is available in all eleven official languages.

Toll-free helpline: 0800 150 150

Web: www.lifeline.org.za

Email: LungN@lifeline.org.za

HEALTH, WELLBEING & SUPPORT OUT – LGBT WELLBEING

Offers direct sexual and mental health services, and engages in advocacy to promote the health and rights of LGBT people.

Location: Pretoria Tel: 012 344 5108

Helpline: 012 344 6500

Web: www.out.org.za

TRIANGLE PROJECT

Runs a health clinic, helpline (1pm to 9pm daily), support groups and outreach programmes as well as public education and training.

Location: Cape Town

Tel: 021 695 1475 Helpline: 021 712 6699 Web: www.triangle.org.za

Q. WHAT IS A HATE CRIME?

A hate crime is any crime committed against a person because of a particular characteristic or group to which they belong– for example, an attack on a person because of their race, country of birth, religion, sexual orientation, or the way they express their gender identity.

Hate crimes can include physical and sexual violence, intimidation or blackmail. Contact one of the organisations listed in this brochure for help if you have experienced or witnessed a hate crime based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Q. ARE GAY MEN MORE LIKELY TO SEXUALLY ABUSE CHILDREN?

No. Child sexual abuse is a crime and is not determined by a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

Q. ARE LGBTI PERSONS UN-AFRICAN?

LGBTI persons exist in all cultures including African cultures. In fact, there is a rich history of sexual and gender diversity in a number of African traditions. In many societies, homosexual and transgender persons have been celebrated and respected.