



LGBTQIA+ in the workplace; how to foster a culture of inclusion at work

Inclusion is the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities and members of other minority groups.

With inclusion as an objective, you are much more likely to see greater diversity in the workforce, fair treatment and greater equality of opportunities.

Over a third of LGBTQ+ people still feel they must hide who they are at work, that is according to Stonewall, 2018. Here are five simple ways to become an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community in the workplace...



1. Be honest and accountable

No one is expecting you to be an expert here, so be honest with your colleagues and admit when you've previously made mistakes or when you don't understand something. Others will almost certainly be in the same boat and appreciate your honesty. Wanting to learn, educate and grow through open communication is appreciated and shows that you are truly looking to be an ally.



2. Be open to learning, and relearning

Remain open to continually learning what it means to be an ally to LGBTQIA+ people in the workplace. This includes listening, being honest and speaking out. Take time to familiarise yourself with LGBTQIA+ inclusive language, learn and understand the different terminologies and use gender-neutral language.



3. Be an advocate in the workplace

Advocate for an inclusive environment by encouraging others to do the same. Likewise, try to pick up on potentially derogatory language. Reach out and encourage colleagues including senior leaders to be vocal champions for inclusion and celebrate this within your workplace.



4. Listen to others

Take a step back and ensure you're centring the voices of LGBTQIA+ people. It's important for allies to use their voice to stand in solidarity, but it's equally important to know when not to take up space. The more we listen, the more we'll understand.



5. Practice ally-ship all year round

While June is Pride Month, LGBTQIA+ people face stigma, discrimination and oppression 365 days per year. Ensure your allyship extends throughout the entire year. You can continue to support your colleagues and educate yourself no matter what. Everyone deserves to, and needs to be at the table.

Three LGBTQIA+ changemakers you need to know about



Maureen Colquhoun

The first Member of Parliament (MP) to be openly gay was a woman. Although Maureen was married to a man when initially elected, she ended up moving to London with her female partner in 1976. At present, 60 MP's are said to openly identify as LGBTQ+.



Justin Fashanu

The first Black footballer in Britain to achieve a £1 million transfer fee when he signed for Nottingham Forest in 1981. Nine years later came an even more seminal milestone, when Fashanu became the first professional footballer to come out as gay.



Lady Phyll

Phyllis Opoku-Gyimah, aka 'Lady Phyll', is a key figure when it comes to the intersectionality of LGBTQ+ and Black Lives Matter activism. She is the co-founder of UK Black Pride, a movement dedicated to LGBTQ+ people of African, Asian, Caribbean, Latin American and Middle Eastern descent.

Know your terminology: LGBTQIA+

Lesbian

Gay

Bisexual

Transgender

Queer or questioning

Intersex

Asexual or allied

+ Pansexual, asexual and omnisexual



LGBTQIA+ is an inclusive term that includes people of all genders and sexualities, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual, and allies. While each letter in LGBTQIA+ stands for a specific group of people, the term encompasses the entire spectrum of gender fluidity and sexual identities.



Try this today: Dig a little deeper

Learn about the history: The LGBTQIA+ community has a rich history. Familiarise yourself with key LGBTQIA+ events such as the 1969 Stonewall Riots, the first Pride march and the World Health Organisation's recent declassification of same-sex attraction as a mental illness.

Diversify your social media: Follow and engage with the plethora of LGBTQIA+ thought leaders, educators and content creators who share how to be a better ally.

