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EAP
Newsletter

Pride; identifying and developing LGBTQIA+ allies in the workplace

June is Pride month – a month dedicated to celebrating LGBTQIA+ communities all around the world. But Pride doesn't have to just be about big celebrations, parades or big colourful marches. Rather support can start much closer to home. Find out what Pride is all about and how you can celebrate it with your colleagues, friends and families below.

Pride is celebrated every year in June to commemorate the Stonewall Uprising. The Uprising, sometimes called the Stonewall Riots, were a series of demonstrations in 1969, led by members of the LGBTQIA+ community, in response to a police raid at the Stonewall Inn in New York City. The Stonewall Uprising is thought to be the birthplace not just of Pride month, but of the Gay Rights Movement. These riots were very important protests that took place in 1969 in the US. They helped to enhance many individuals' rights who identify as LGBTQIA+.

Do you know how the rainbow flag became a symbol of LGBTQIA+ pride, and indeed what it stands for?

Well, it all goes back to 1978, when the artist Gilbert Baker, an openly gay man and a drag queen, designed the first rainbow flag. The flag was also created to celebrate and proclaim visibility for the LGBTQIA+ community. Baker later revealed that he was urged by Harvey Milk, one of the first openly gay elected officials in the U.S., to create a symbol of pride for the gay community. Baker decided to make that symbol a flag because he saw flags as the most powerful symbol of pride. Baker saw the rainbow as a natural flag from the sky, so he adopted eight colours for the stripes, each colour with its own meaning (hot pink for sex, red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, turquoise for art, indigo for harmony, and violet for spirit).

Since then, the original eight-striped rainbow flag has been adapted and many identities now have their own pride flag. In 2021, The Pride Progress Flag, designed by Valentino Vecchietti was released. This flag contains six rainbow stripes in a nod to the original pride flag, as well as the yellow and purple intersex flag, the white, blue and pink stripes of the trans flag, and black and brown stripes to represent the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people of colour. The flag continues to be updated to include all communities.
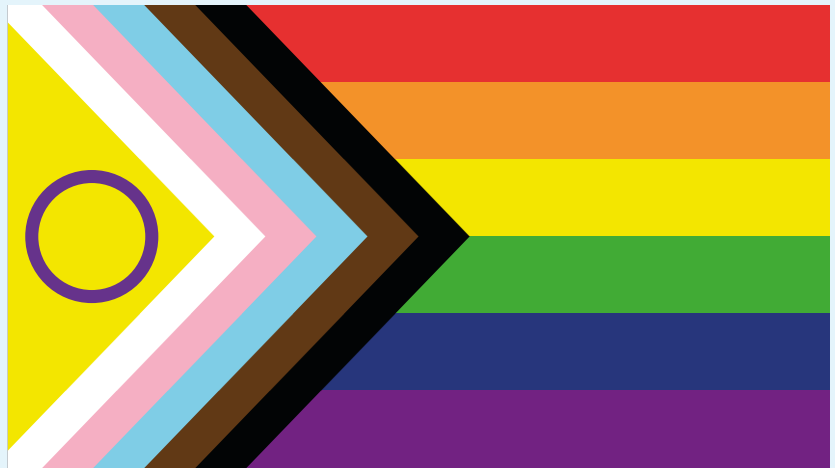
Pride is a celebration of people coming together in love and friendship to show how far LGBTQIA+ rights have come. It is about acceptance, equality and celebrating the work of LGBTQIA+ people the world over – but there is so much more to be done. Sadly, homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia (as well as a general prejudice towards all members of the LGBTQIA+ community) are still very much present and impacts so many people. You only have to look at the data below to see the extent of the issue.
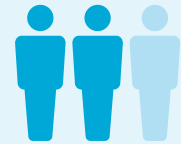
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Members of the LGBTQ+ community are **at greater risk of experiencing hate crime** compared to heterosexual people.
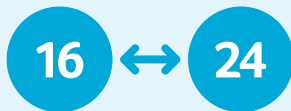
68%

68% of LGBT+ young people say their mental health has 'got worse' since the pandemic, compared to **49% of their non-LGBT+ peers.**

3X

LGBT+ young people are **three times more likely** to self-harm.

Over two thirds of LGBT+ young people say they have experienced suicidal thoughts and feelings.

16 ↔ **24**

Younger people (aged 16 to 24 years) were most likely to identify as LGB in 2019.

1 in 3

33% of the LGBT+ community said they had experienced suicidal thoughts and feeling in relation to their body image.

35%

35% of people who identified as bisexual have experienced suicidal thoughts and feelings due to their body image.

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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.

How you can become an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community at work

When employees bring their true authentic selves to work, they will be more productive and engaged. As such, we all need to do our bit to ensure our workplaces are safe and supportive places for people to be open about their gender and sexuality if they wish to.

Here are five ways to help make your work environment more LGBTQIA+ inclusive:

1 Avoid assuming someone's orientation: You can't know a person's orientation until they tell you. When you incorrectly assume someone's orientation by using language like "so do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend" you create a situation in which a person is either pressured to come out to you in a way that might not be comfortable for them, or they go along with your assumption to avoid awkwardness. As such, try to use gender neutral language like "do you have a partner" to be more inclusive to everyone.

2 Use gender neutral language until you know a person's correct pronouns: Using gender neutral language will reduce the risk of misgendering someone and allow them to open up to you in their own time.

3 Normalise sharing pronouns with colleagues and clients: Offering your pronouns when you introduce yourself creates a natural and non-invasive way for others to do the same. However, it's important to remember that not everyone will be comfortable sharing their pronouns and that's okay. You may wish to include your pronouns when you introduce yourself in a meeting "Hi my name is Kelly, and my pronouns are She/Her" and/ or you could add your pronouns to your email signature.

4 Get involved: As much as possible, engage in how your workplace is celebrating Pride month and other awareness events. You might like to join the LGBTQIA+ network as part of the community or as an ally, and where possible contribute and learn through the resources posted on your internal intranet.

5 Keep learning: Terms and definitions evolve to become more inclusive and reflect shifts in awareness. There are numerous great resources across the web that explain and define updated terms and explore the changes in meanings of old terms. The Stonewall Glossary of Terms is a great place to start.

Be inclusive in your recruitment process at work. Make sure your membership forms are inclusive and include options such as transgender / gender fluid / gender neutral / non-binary as options to select for gender identity.

Try this today: **Support workplace LGBTQIA+ community events and become an ally.**

Being present at conversations about inclusiveness, attending networking events and support groups and just being open in communicating your enthusiasm means an awful lot to the community. At work you might wish to celebrate LGBTQIA+ History month in February and Pride month in June by running workshops, creating displays, or watching LGBTQIA+ films. The opportunities to show your support are endless.

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Pride is all about being proud of who you are, no matter who you love.
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We all have a shared responsibility.

We can all play our part in the diversity agenda. Why not encourage your employer to be more LGBTQIA+ inclusive?

You could do this in many ways such as feeding back to your employer if you don't think their current policies are currently LGBTQIA+ inclusive. You could also become an ally to your LGBTQIA+ colleagues by reporting any discrimination, harassment or abuse in your workplace (from either customers or other members of staff) on their behalf.

You could also consider working with others in your workplace to set up an LGBTQIA+ network group if one does not already exist or you could encourage your employer to join Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme. Find out more about that here.

TOP TIP: When a new person joins your team, take the time to check what pronouns they want you to use and offer yours too. Be sure to ask everyone in the team and never single out anyone.

And finally, our tip of the month; the one thing we ask you to do today if you do nothing else…

Speak out: If you have a conversation with someone and it concerns you, elevate your reports to the appropriate person and make a plan for dealing with them. Actions should have consequences, and you need to make it clear that discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated. When we witness discrimination in the workplace, it can be very uncomfortable and it's much easier to pretend you haven't heard, or just simply to say nothing. We all need to do more to support each other and have the courage to speak up when we see or hear discrimination.