



Civil Service LGBT+ Network



The term **'ally'** describes people who support and act to advance LGBT+ equality.

Allies are essential to help create inclusive and supportive workplace environments for **LGBT+ employees.**

In the Civil Service LGBT+ Network, we want everyone to feel included and valued for who they are. We know that LGBT+ Civil Servants may feel less included and more at risk of discrimination than their cisgender and heterosexual peers.

However, cisgender and heterosexual/straight Civil Servants can act as allies to support LGBT+ colleagues, raise awareness and encourage equality in the workplace.

Likewise, being an ally is not limited to being cisgender or straight. LGBT+ colleagues can act as allies to each other, for both those who identify the same as them or differently from them.

Why do we need allies in the workplace?

The '[Civil Service statistics: 2019](#)' reported that the Civil Service headcount for 2019 was 445,480. Below are the statistics based on sexual orientation¹:

- Reporting rates for sexual orientation have increased from 38.1% in 2015 when it was first collected, to 57.2% in 2019.
- Of which, 4.9% identify as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or recorded their sexual orientation as 'other' (LGBO) in 2019, up from 4.6% in 2018.
- This has increased every year since data on sexual orientation has been captured in these statistics, and is up 1.2 percentage points since 2015.

According to Stonewall's 'LGBT in Britain - Work Report 2018'²:

- More than a third of LGBT staff (35 per cent) have hidden that they are LGBT at work for fear of discrimination.
- One in eight lesbian, gay and bi people (12 per cent) wouldn't feel confident reporting any homophobic or biphobic bullying to their employer.
- One in five trans people (21 per cent) wouldn't report transphobic bullying in the workplace.
- Almost a third of non-binary people (31 per cent) and one in five trans people (18 per cent) don't feel able to wear work attire representing their gender expression.
- Nearly two in five bi people (38 per cent) aren't out to anyone at work.

¹ Note - The percentages stated here exclude those with an unknown sexual orientation and those that have elected to not declare their sexual orientation. Also, the Civil Service does not currently collect data on gender identity in a consistent way. Civil Service HR is currently working with the Government Equalities Office and the Office for National Statistics to develop standardised questions to collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity, for inclusion in internal systems such as HR systems for government employees

² [LGBT in Britain - Work Report](#) is Stonewall's report based on YouGov research with 3,213 LGBT employees, revealing troubling discrimination in Britain's workplaces.

What can allies do?

Avoid assumptions

Avoid making assumptions about a person's sexual orientation and/or gender.

Avoid assuming a person's pronouns - instead ask a colleague their pronouns and use the correct pronouns when referring to them.

Avoid assumptions about a person's relationships - using neutral language such as 'they' or 'partner' instead of 'he/she' or 'boyfriend/girlfriend' can be helpful.

Don't assume you know someone's experiences and/or oppressions based on restrictive stereotypes.

Even if you identify as LGBT+, don't assume you know someone's experiences and/or oppressions based on your own.

Don't assume that all LGBT+ people are out. Remember that people are at different points of coming out or transitioning - so respect people's privacy.

Be aware that a person's sexuality, gender identity and gender expression may vary and not correspond.

Educate yourself

Read stories online or in books to gain an understanding of LGBT+ history, legislation and people's lived experiences of discrimination and equality.

You can even educate yourself by watching films that detail LGBT+ history, legislation and people's lived experiences of discrimination and equality.

Allies should inform themselves and seek sources of information independently rather than assuming minority colleagues are there to inform them.

Understand that different identities come with individual challenges.

Learn the differences between lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans as well as queer, intersex, asexual and pansexual along with gender fluid and non-binary identities.

Learn and avoid inappropriate questions and discriminative language.

Understand and learn the difference between someone's sexual orientation and gender identity.

Recognise the importance of using people's correct pronouns - 'she/her', 'he/him' and 'they/them'.

Understand that everyone has different experiences that come with different advantages and disadvantages.

Learn about intersectionality, whereby people face dual discrimination and inequality because of more than one factor, such as: sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender re-assignment, race, class disability, or religion & beliefs.

Understand your privilege

Understand and recognise what privileges you hold as heterosexual and/or cisgender person that an LGBT+ person might not (considering intersectionality).

Understand and recognise that you can never know how someone else's discrimination and inequality feels, but you can use your voice to raise awareness of LGBT+ issues.

Understand your own unconscious bias.

Do not deny people's experiences or feelings just because they are not things you have experienced or felt.

Be mindful that not all LGBT+ people have the freedom to be out due to certain circumstances.

Even if you are out and proud, remember that others may not be free to do the same.

Listen

Consider your own behaviour; ask for feedback, reflect, adapt and learn how to behave in ways that invite people in, instead of pushing them away.

Listen with an open mind and don't restrict people's experiences to stereotypes to help create an inclusive and safe space for LGBT+ people.

Be okay with not always being part of the conversation, as well as being prepared to be there for the good times *and* the bad.

Listen then respond to LGBT+ people's requests.

Don't assume you have enough knowledge or understanding to speak *for* the community. Listen, learn and speak to LGBT+ people to find out what changes they want, *then* act.

Take action

Make space so that the quiet/unnoticed/missing voices can be heard.

Sign petitions to help demand LGBT+ inclusion and change.

Support LGBT+ events (e.g. Pride) by attending, volunteering, raising money or helping advertise (e.g. sharing posts online).

Speak up

Be a voice for the LGBT+ community when they aren't in the room, including being prepared to challenge homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

Challenge constructively when you see something going wrong – an inappropriate comment or an interaction that is failing to build relationships.

Follow the appropriate bullying and harassment procedure if you become aware of homophobia, biphobia or transphobia.

Act at work

You can join and support your department's LGBT+ Network and take-action in solidarity *alongside* your LGBT+ colleagues.

You can be visible and encourage work to be a safe space by attending LGBT+ events, wearing a rainbow lanyard or putting posters up.

Make a habit of introducing yourself with your pronouns, not just in LGBT+ specific situations.

Use neutral language such as 'they' and 'partner' to avoid excluding people from the conversation.

Add your pronouns to your email sign off or note that you are an ally/member of your LGBT+ Network to help make people feel comfortable.

Highlight key LGBT+ dates in your department's newsletters and other communications.

Run events in your office to mark key LGBT+ dates or raise money for LGBT+ charities.

If you set up an event, be mindful that people may not want an LGBT+ event in their calendar as they are not out at work. Therefore, set the calendar invite as private to prevent any risk and to help make LGBT+ people feel safe.

If you email LGBT+ Network members, be mindful that people may not want others to see their email address in a LGBT+ email as they are not out at work. Therefore, blind copy them in to prevent any risk and to help make LGBT+ people feel safe.

Share and raise awareness of LGBT+ events in your office and department. You may make someone feel more comfortable at work, or you may encourage someone to attend who otherwise wouldn't have.

Encourage change if there aren't LGBT+ policies or training in place to help raise awareness and tackle discrimination.

Start a network if there isn't one already.

Encourage conversations about LGBT+ issues to promote inclusion in the office – there may be someone around you who isn't out, and this could make them feel supported and comfortable at work.



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