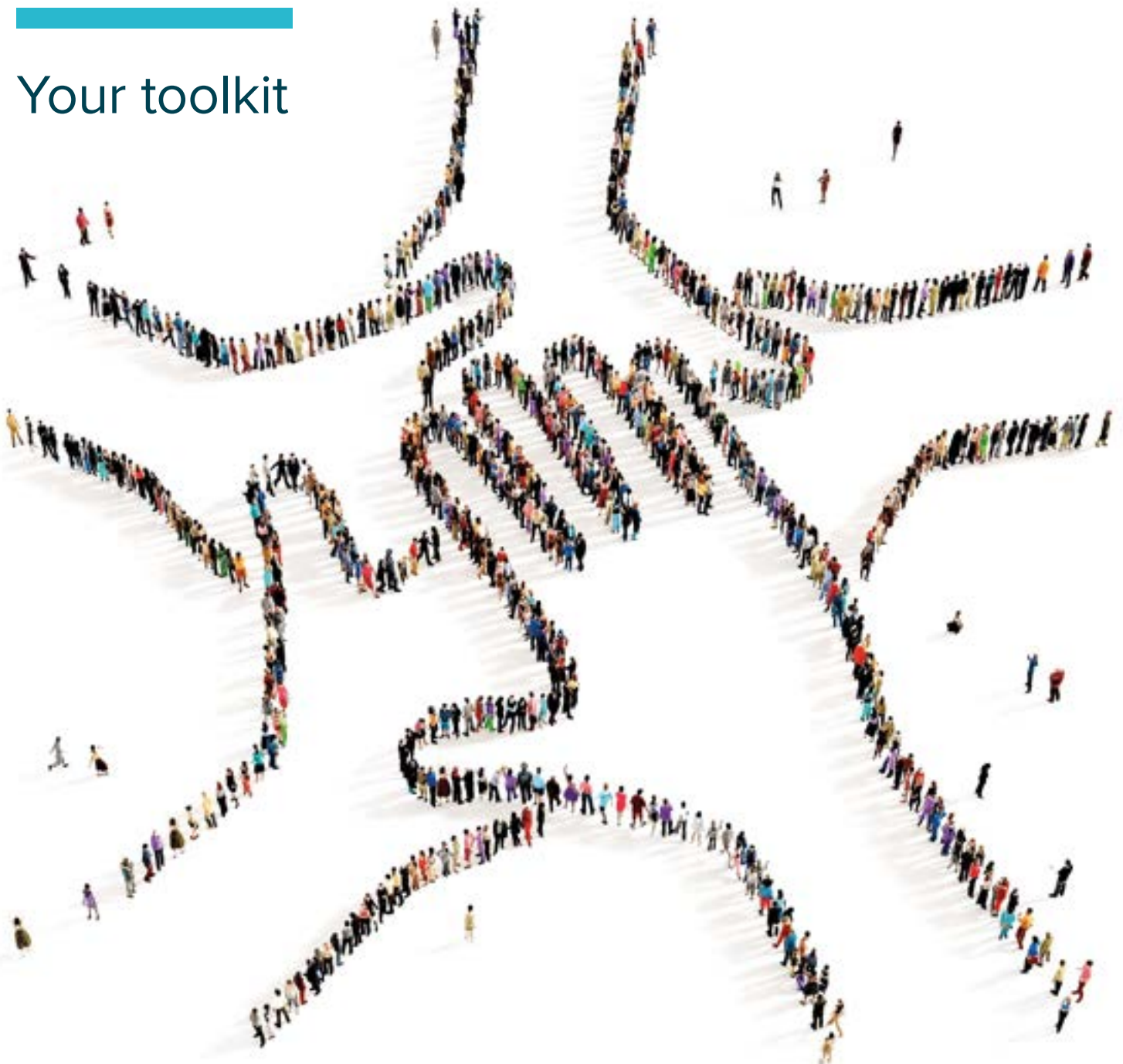




ALLYSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE

Your toolkit



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About this Toolkit

We all have a role to play in ensuring workplaces are equitable and fair environments for everyone.

Through the concept of **allyship**, this toolkit aims to help encourage and instill a sense of belonging, inclusion, and community in the work environment.

The toolkit provides practical ideas, advice and guidance to assist with promoting allyship across the workforce. People drive change, which happens one person at a time, one step at a time, one action at a time. Small changes or subtle adaptations in the workplace can make a BIG difference.

Think about...

- What challenges are faced by different individuals or groups in the work environment?
- How can issues, challenges, and barriers that employees face in the work environment be identified and tackled head-on?
- What small positive changes can be made to create inclusion for everyone?
- What can YOU do differently to create a more inclusive workplace culture and environment?

This toolkit contains:

- Information and advice on how to be an effective ally to others in the workplace
- Steps to help you create an environment where people can learn from each other
- Ideas and guidance on what you can do to create and promote allyship and inclusion
- Case studies and shared experiences to help bring allyship to life in the work environment.

Please share this toolkit widely with other managers, your peers, and colleagues to help educate and encourage allyship using a top-down approach.

Allyship in the workplace and being an ally to others is a learning process and journey. As our understanding grows, so will this toolkit.

Please tell us about your experiences of allyship in the work environment.

We'd love to hear your tips and feedback on what has worked well, and what the challenges have been. Get in touch with us at: imidiversitytaskforce@theimi.org.uk

What is Allyship in the Workplace?

“An ally is any person who actively promotes and aspires to advance workplace culture and inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that benefit people as a whole.”

(Sheree Atcheson, Global Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Peakon).

An ally will:

- Stand-up for other people, whilst ensuring that they don't speak for or over other people
- Take steps to advocate or vouch for the person who is not present in the room
- Take steps to actively support those from under-represented or disadvantaged groups

Allyship helps to create a more inclusive workplace culture and environment where everyone has a sense of belonging. It is an active process which involves being aware of how you got to where you have in life and then being an advocate for others who may not be in such privileged positions. For example, individuals who are from under-represented or disadvantaged groups.

An ally may support individuals or groups who they don't identify with. Through allyship they take positive action to provide support and ensure fairness in the workplace, so that people can overcome specific issues, challenges, and barriers in order to succeed.



Allyship promotes
diversity and
celebrates different
identities

DID YOU KNOW?

1**The word 'Ally':**

- Was first used in the English language around 1250.
- Is from the Latin 'Alligāre', which means to bind together, combine, and unite.
- Came into the English language from the French word 'Allier'.

2**The word 'Allyship':**

- In the English language dates back to the mid-1800s.
- Originally had a broader definition, encompassing the relationship or status of persons, groups or nations associating and cooperating with one another for a common cause.

3**Use of the word 'Allyship':**

- Spread more widely during the 1990s.
- Became popular after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, U.S.A in May 2020, and the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement.
- Was Dictionary.com's 'Word of the Year' in 2021.

Being aware of appreciating other peoples' experiences in the workplace helps support culture change

The Allyship Journey

By practising allyship you can motivate others, helping to contribute to a shift in your organisational culture in a way that promotes equity.

When employees see other colleagues acting as allies, they're more likely to step-up too.

THE APPROACH USED MUST BE TOP-DOWN

When work environments are more equitable, fair places to work, employees are happier, and more committed to their jobs.



Allyship is about everyone. It's about knowing your workforce and opening doors to people you wouldn't normally open that door to. And it's about setting out the table so that opportunities are fair and accessible to everyone.



Allyship is not always about having all the answers, it's about using your position to inspire and motivate others

Who Can Practice Allyship?

The answer is **all of us**. We can all be allies for each other. There are many individuals and groups who are under-represented in the work environment who may face particular issues, challenges, barriers, or potential discrimination.

Under-represented individuals or groups include:

- Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) groups
- Gender: Women, Gender Identity, Gender reassignment, Non-binary and Transgender
- People with disabilities (which may be physical and non-visible)
- LGBTQIA+ community
- People from under-represented socio-economic groups

Did you know?

There is a lack of diversity in the automotive retail sector, and a lack of women working in senior leadership roles.

Analysis of Office for National Statistics (ONS) data for the sector (IMI Diversity Task Force Report) has found that the proportion of non-white-British* in senior roles in automotive retail (5%) is significantly less than non-white-British individuals working in senior roles in non-automotive industries (13%).

The proportion of women in senior roles in automotive retail (19%) is also less than those working in non-automotive industries (39%).

Small acts of **allyship** can make such a big difference to your workplace culture and to developing inclusive environments.

People decide to become allies for different reasons. What's your reason?

Business case

Do you know that there's a strong business case for allyship in the workplace? Diverse and inclusive teams will be more productive, more creative and innovative, and more profitable.

Social justice

Do you have a need to strive for social justice in the work environment? Other people may face barriers and challenges, particularly those from disadvantaged or under-represented groups. They need someone supportive in their corner who is aware, actively listening and championing their cause.

To challenge

Do you want to challenge inequality? You could become an ally to help support others by challenging and addressing inequity in the workplace and to create equal opportunities which are fair for everyone.

***Footnote:** It is important to be specific and precise around the language we use. But one of the challenges is that the language around diversity and inclusion is in transition. Different people will have different views and opinions. Collective terms (such as black, Asian, and minority ethnic - BAME) have been approved for use by the most authoritative UK body on these issues (the National Centre for Diversity). However, in other circles use of BAME is deemed inappropriate because people want differentiation. We acknowledge that if we are speaking from a global perspective, 'ethnic minority' might not be wholly accurate. ONS use the classification 'non-white British'. We attempt to use terminology that is acceptable to under-represented groups but appreciate that some terms may be problematic. For this we apologise. We are all on a learning journey.

What Kind of Ally are You?

Allyship is about everyone working together. This could be on a one-to-one level with colleagues and peers, through to those more senior to us.

There are different kinds of allies. No two allies are the same.

Are you an ally in appearance only?	
	You are a socially moral person, you are aware of the challenges that people face in the work environment and want to do good. You are alert to prejudice, injustice and discrimination in the workplace and society, especially racism.
	But when it comes down to it, you give little support and no action. You 'talk the talk' but don't 'walk the walk'.
Are you an ally until there is animosity?	
	You are an effective ally to an individual or a group of people – as long as the going is smooth and effortless.
	However, when things get challenging and perhaps a little tough, your advocacy shrinks. This is more time and effort than you bargained for.
Are you an ally in actuality: A friend, advocate, supporter, mentor or champion?	
	You give help to others to address inequality in the workplace, so that people can compete on a level playing field. You have good intentions and are aware of other people's experiences. You have the vision that everyone should feel that they belong in the work environment and strive to make sure that you uplift the voices of others.
	You must make sure that you listen and that you don't replace the voice of others.
	AVOID 'saviour mentality'. For example, pushing for solutions that sound right for you, instead of listening to people who are under-represented or disadvantaged and following their lead.
	AVOID 'performative allyship'. This means that the actions you take and how you act are purely based on how you want to be perceived by others. For example, you might put a post on social media advocating for the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community, but you don't speak-up when you hear inappropriate comments in the workplace.

At some point we all need an ally. **An effective ally needs to be:**

- Open to the differences that others bring to the work environment. Take the time to understand a person's differences or what their individual story/journey is
- Comfortable with asking more questions to be able to better understand. It's through our understanding of identity that we can start to empathise with the experiences of others
- Able to step back and gain a broader understanding of where people are coming from in order to be able to provide the adjustment needed, so that there is fair, relevant support for everyone
- Willing to learn and unlearn some of the things they have grown to believe
- Able to question their own views and perception. Self-reflection can sometimes be uncomfortable, but it will help to expand your own perspective.

Allyship is not an activity, it's a long-term, continuous process. 'Workplace allies' can be quite visible, or they can be actively supporting from behind the scenes.

No two people or situations are the same. People with similar identities can have very different experiences, needs and expectations.

Allyship is not about stepping back; it's about stepping up. Think about the **individual** you are being an ally to and the specific barriers or challenges they face in the work environment.

When you're trying to self-advocate choose the right ally to help you.



**Who is going to bat
for you and stay and
bat for you?**

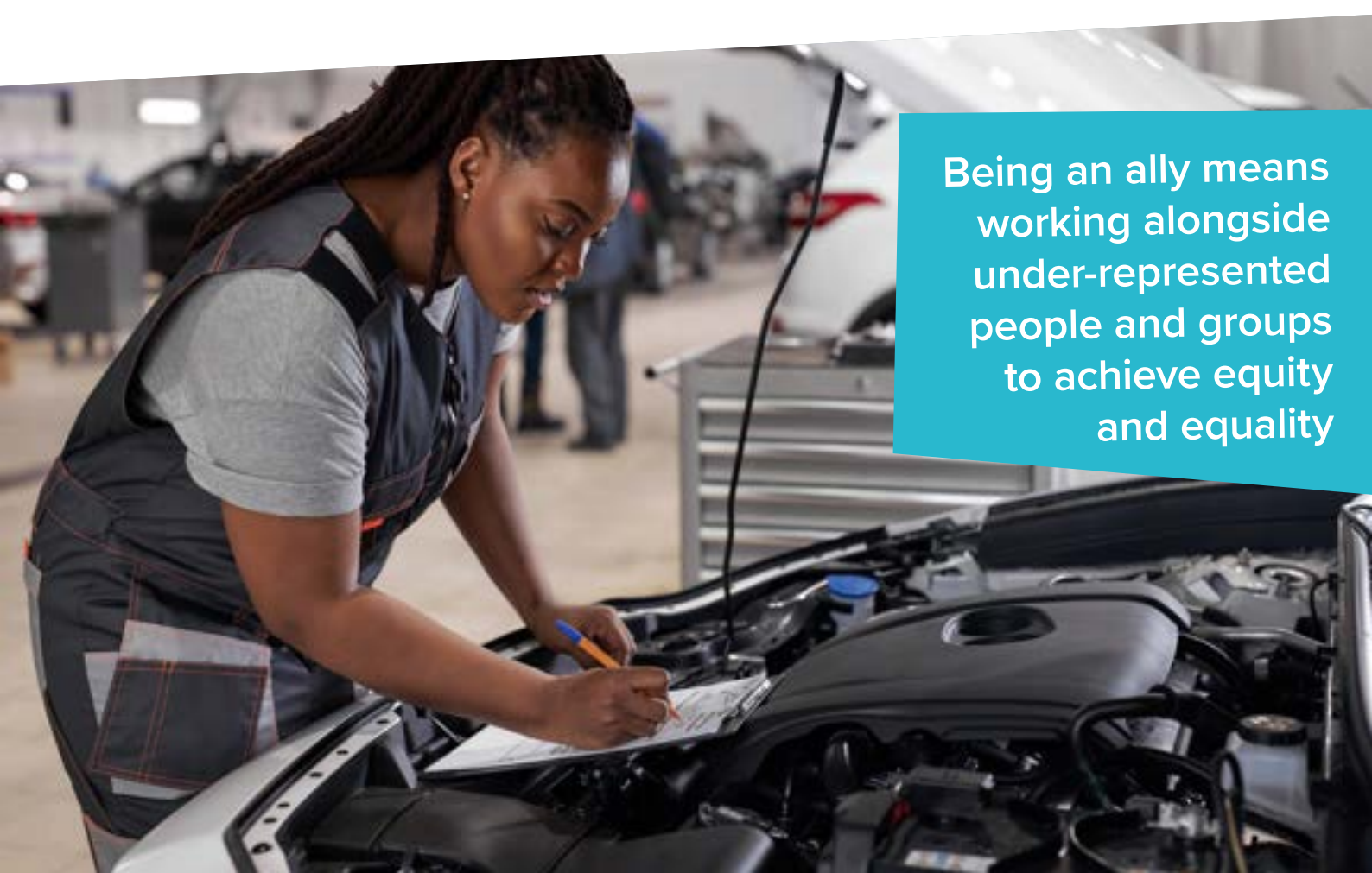
Steve, Mechanic, Wiltshire

Importance of Allyship in the Work Environment

Allyship is a powerful process because it helps to facilitate positive change and is important for the growth of an organisation.

Allyship in the work environment will:

- **Promote an inclusive organisational culture and sense of belonging**
Allies advocate for the rights of another person, so they build rapport and trust with that person. This encourages people to feel safe sharing, improving your own awareness of other people's experiences.
- **Promote behaviour change through increased awareness**
For example, employees are motivated to speak-up about micro-aggressions, bias, marginalisation, and other negative behaviours in the workplace.
- **Develop diverse leadership and management qualities**
By acting as a positive role model and demonstrating inclusivity in the work environment. Ally managers portray inclusive management strategies and will look to recruit talent from diverse backgrounds.
- **Increase employee engagement and productivity**
Through allyship there is improved collaboration and cooperation between individual employees, teams and departments. There is more innovation and creativity and better problem-solving. There is improved respect for each other.



Being an ally means working alongside under-represented people and groups to achieve equity and equality

Through allyship you will be able to:**• Promote empathy across the workforce**

Through active listening and upholding and uplifting the voices of employees who are overlooked, disadvantaged, under-represented, or marginalised.

• Improve employee retention

Staff turnover will be reduced because allyship helps people to feel comfortable in the workplace and feel that they belong. Staff are able to be their authentic selves and will want to stay with the organisation. Business reputation is improved.

• Develop emotional intelligence

Allyship helps to develop an improved awareness of the experiences of others in the work environment and through this your perception of others. You will be a good active listener and will be able to appreciate how other people feel, and this will allow you to manage relationships more effectively.

• Develop an inclusive culture

Where difference is celebrated and people are respected. An organisational culture where everyone can contribute their ideas and viewpoints without fear of being overlooked or reprimanded or belittled for doing so.

Employees will be fully involved in decision-making processes to ensure everybody is comfortable with the final decision and no-one feels overlooked. Everyone will feel included in how the organisation or business operates.



**TIME FOR
ACTION**

Getting Started: Encouraging Allyship

Allyship takes action. Not acting can be quite harmful. It can give others the perception that injustice in the workplace is acceptable, or that the existing culture means we just don't care!

Start a conversation. For example:

- If you hear negative comments or see inappropriate behaviour in the work environment, think about challenging this.
- Speak-up when you hear a person using harmful language.
- Say something when you observe stereotyping or bias.
- Recognise and respond to micro-aggressions in the work environment.



But choose your moment to do this... If you observe the use of **micro-aggressions**, don't ignore them. A useful approach might be to firstly discuss this with the person who is the intended recipient of the perceived micro-aggression.

Example: In a team meeting, Tim describes another colleague as 'a disabled person'. Immediately, another team member, Amar, jumps-in and publicly expresses that Tim's choice of language is inappropriate and suggests that they should instead use the phrase 'a person with disabilities'. However, Elsie, who has physical disabilities and who is also at the meeting, actually confirms that she prefers to be referred to as 'a disabled person'.

Do not make assumptions or speak for other people. Be self-aware and sensitive to each situation.

If a person's choice of language feels wrong, you can always discuss this discreetly with the person concerned and ask for their opinion. They might not be aware that what they are saying or doing is wrong. You can also discuss discreetly with the intended recipient.


Micro-aggressions don't always have to be called out in a public way. Express how the choice of language made you feel and seek intervention from a Senior Manager when required.

Turn micro-aggressions into micro-affirmations.

Creating truly inclusive work environments can take time. The approach needs to be top-down.

Training and awareness have an important role to play.

Does your organisation or business already have a Diversity and Inclusion Network or Forum where you can suggest training for yourself, your team/department, or those in your area of responsibility? If not, can you have this conversation with Human Resources?



How can we promote a culture where everyone belongs?

How can we effectively collaborate in diverse teams without a full understanding of all the barriers that people have?

People don't always bring their whole background stories to work. You may not be aware of the challenges and barriers they face.

So, when you are working with others, take time to build trust and rapport, try and encourage people to be open and to share their own stories if they feel comfortable to do so.

Talk to different people in the workplace.

Don't just speak to the same people, who may be in your 'in-group'. Get into collaborative spaces.

Build trust to encourage people to feel safe sharing in the work environment.

Improve your awareness about the journey of others.

Check your workplace policies and procedures.

Make work environments more equitable.

Encourage and promote culture change.

This will start to build a workplace culture where people feel comfortable sharing information. A culture where people will feel able to freely express their viewpoints and whether they face particular challenges in the workplace so that there can be a more collective focus on addressing that.

How to be an Ally in the Workplace

When organisations and businesses actively educate and encourage allyship in the workplace, diversity and inclusion grows. People can be allies to others whether they are inside or outside the work environment.

You need to be able to recognise situations that are unfair and do something about it. People should not feel alone, overlooked, unsupported or marginalised.

Think about the small everyday actions that you can take to support others in the workplace. Build a culture of belonging.

It doesn't take much for us to be there for each other. Here are some of the small ways in which you can make a BIG difference.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Attitude: Have a respectful attitude. Remove your own personal beliefs/bias(es), remain non-judgemental.

Attention: Hold full attention, use positive body language, do not get distracted. Be present in the moment.

Adjustment: Keep an open-mind. Adapt to the situation.

CREATE A SENSE OF BELONGING

Highlight the contributions of others and make sure that credit for ideas, outcomes, and achievements, are correctly attributed. Recommend colleagues who are overlooked or marginalised. Provide relevant introductions or make suggestions that can benefit deserving employees who may otherwise have been sidelined.

EDUCATE AND RE-EDUCATE YOURSELF

Allies need to listen and learn in order to be able to unlearn and relearn! You need to be prepared to make mistakes, learn from those, and then keep on learning.

Know the language that people use to describe their disability. Know how to pronounce peoples' names. Know the language that people use to describe their ethnicity or religion. If you don't know, ask the question!

GET INVOLVED

Be part of the solution by bringing your own perspective and experience to support others. Engage with your ED&I committee and/or working groups. Start new initiatives. Collectively work together to look at the breadth of issues. Encourage others to be allies.

Ask yourself – Is there an action that I can take that is responsible even if it's not totally perfect? Allyship isn't about getting an action spot-on every time. It's about acting consistently in ways that will add-up over time and that will make a difference.

HAVE A CONVERSATION

Allies need to start conversations. Open-up discussions with people who have different nationalities, people who have a background that is different to yours, and people from your 'out groups'. Don't be worried about acknowledging inequity. Check that people feel safe and comfortable sharing their stories and experiences.

"I'd like to try and gain a better understanding. Tell me more about that experience. How did it make you feel?"

"How did you deal with those specific issues and challenges?"

"What changes would you like to see put in place?"

When you identify inequities, speak to someone in the workplace that you trust. You need to have open conversations about inequities so that you can move towards challenging the existing structures and culture that has led to a lack of diversity.

Join the Diversity Task Force Members and commit to taking five key steps:



KNOW YOUR WORKFORCE

Knowing your colleagues, their background stories and experiences, helps to facilitate working together to achieve objectives. Allyship is about understanding the imbalance in opportunity and taking steps to correct that. Proactively take steps to make things fairer in the work environment.

NORMALISE ALLYSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE

Advocate for those who are under-represented or disadvantaged. Make sure teams and committees have diverse representation. If someone is being overlooked, belittled or interrupted...do something, say something! Invite people to speak and contribute. Value their contributions. Actively confront negative behaviour at work. You can intervene and change the dynamic.

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Be there for someone throughout their career; mentor them and give them opportunities to grow. Hold yourself and your team, department, workforce, accountable for creating change.

SHARE KNOWLEDGE

Different people bring different experiences, viewpoints, perceptions, skills, talents and attributes to the table. Share and appreciate these differences in the work environment.

Allyship enables colleagues to appreciate the different contributions that people bring to the workplace and gives people the confidence to share their own knowledge and experiences. Allyship helps to improve teamwork by building better relationships.



Allyship in Action: Creating an Inclusive Culture

Allyship is an ongoing practice. There's always more we can do to promote equity in the work environment.



Putting Allyship into Practice

EXAMPLE 1

Overcoming challenges relating to neurodiversity

Did you know?

Analysis of Office for National Statistics (ONS) data (IMI Diversity Task Force Report) has revealed that there are proportionately more disabled individuals in senior roles in automotive retail (15%) compared to those working in senior roles outside of the sector (12%), albeit the difference is quite marginal. However, individuals with disabilities are still under-represented when compared to 20% of the working population who are currently registered as disabled.

It appears that automotive attracts more people with hidden disabilities, such as dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and other areas of neurodiversity than other comparable industry sectors.

Many employees are hidden by organisational cultures that don't promote openness and discussion about the topic. Small changes to working practices can give the opportunity to unleash the full potential of these employees for both their own benefit and that of the organisation they work for.

This case study is taken from a real-life situation; however, names have been changed to protect the identity of those involved.

Name: Oscar Haines

Position: Marketing Manager for a car dealership

Oscar hated his school years. He was seen as extremely disruptive in the classroom and a bad influence on other learners. He had poor concentration skills, found it difficult to read and write, and was eventually kicked out of school. In his later years, Oscar was finally diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD. Oscar believes that you don't need a business case to be kind and respectful to others in the work environment.

"Everyone has strengths and areas that they can improve on. Playing to your strengths is all about understanding how best to engage with people and what you can do to get the best out of them. At school, I had ADHD and dyslexia, although this went undiagnosed for several years. Even now, for example, I can't produce or read huge reports or work through data; I'm just not suited to it, my brain doesn't work that way. However, I'm really comfortable engaging with people verbally and regularly deliver training on-site."

"The company I currently work for have recently introduced '**Inclusion Passports**'. This is a great idea for people in the workplace who are neurodivergent i.e., people who have invisible disabilities".

"These 'invisible disabilities' could be, for example, having dyslexia, epilepsy, bipolar disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Asperger's syndrome, anxiety/depression, or a personality disorder".

"People often find it difficult to talk about their neurodiverse condition in the work environment, and some people don't want to talk about it at all. Having an 'Inclusion Passport' means that your line manager, and others in your team, are aware of your condition and the challenges you face and are aware and informed about the simple steps they can take to make you feel included and supported. For example, using your preferred communication methods".

“I don’t like talking about my neurodivergence. So, the other great thing about having the Passport system in place is that when I move between different departments for example, I don’t have to keep going back to square one and having those initial conversations about my neurodiverse conditions and the adaptations that I need in the workplace”.

“By using the **Inclusion Passports** system, relevant information can be shared efficiently and discreetly to best effect”.

“Having improved awareness has also meant installing software that can help me with grammar. Small workplace changes and adaptations have made a big difference for me”.

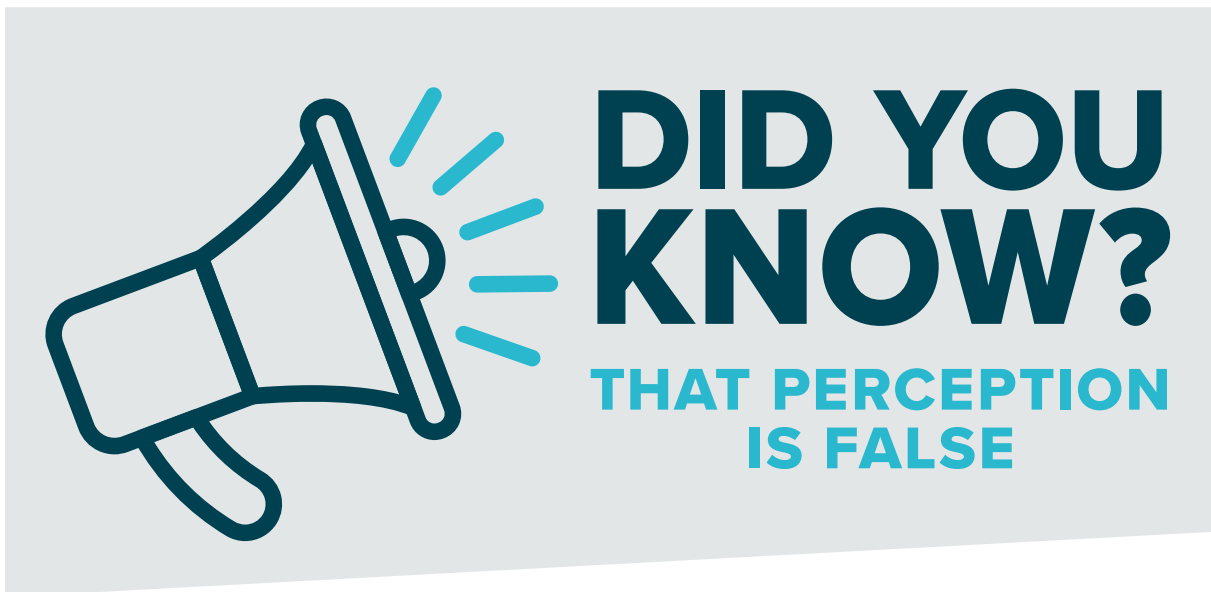
“Equality, diversity, and inclusion can’t be seen as a tick list or as a side-project that an ‘ED&I’ team of people in an organisation or business are working on. It needs to be an agenda that **everyone** in the organisation is on-board with. Developing an inclusive culture and work environment is an ongoing collaborative process which involves us all, it doesn’t have a project deadline”.

EXAMPLE 2**Do people always get what they deserve?****TRUE**

OR

FALSE?

“If a person works hard, their hard work will always pay-off and they will get what they deserve”.



In society, we like to think that if we work hard, then that is going to give us results that will pay-off i.e., the results that we get will truly reflect the work that has been put in. But this is NOT true for everyone.

New perspective

- Some people have to work a lot harder just to try to get on a level playing field with everyone else, and that’s due to specific barriers and challenges that society puts in front of them.
- Disability, race and ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, religion, and where a person lives, are all factors that can give a person more or less opportunities to succeed in work and everyday life. And this is where allyship comes in.

Know your workforce

- Do you really know your colleagues that you work with, your teammates, your workforce?
- Do you know what their challenges and barriers are, and what issues they face?
- Are you aware of who is missing from the conversation or the meeting when key decisions are being made?

Small changes, big difference

- What can you do to help that person to thrive and succeed in the workplace?

Andy Kent (Hon FIMI), a retired business owner of over 25 years, has specialised in opening doors to employing and facilitating training for people with challenges who would otherwise struggle to gain employment in the automotive sector.

Alongside all the services a customer would expect from their local garage, his business specialises in developing and installing bespoke vehicle adaptations for people who would otherwise not be able to drive.

Here, Andy shares his lived experiences of allyship in the workplace.



Each case study (**Example 3** to **Example 5**) is taken from real-life situations and experiences; however, the names and places have been changed to protect the identity of those involved.

EXAMPLE 3

The “open door” attitude to attract diverse applicants

This starts with the equity of opportunity when thinking about the job and how you are going to sell it and the people you would like to attract to apply for the job.

You must remember that you are selling the job not the title:

1. What type of person would suit this position? Could someone in a wheelchair do the job? If so, say so.
2. What tasks/activities are you going to need them to do? Could someone who has lost a limb do this job? If so, say so.
3. Will there be a lot of manual handling? If so, is it heavy lifting or small objects?
4. Is a driving licence really needed? If not, make sure you say so.
5. Is there a lot of standing or could someone do the job from a seat with a lower countertop? If so, say so.

Ensuring psychological health and safety at work

Psychological safety in the workplace is key to creating safe and healthy work environments that enhance well-being for everyone.

You must think about creating a psychologically safe working environment and this starts here; by creating trust, making sure the job requirements are clear and you are offering the job to everyone, then you will get the best.

Organisations and businesses that are committed to ensuring healthy workspaces also need to show commitment to ensuring that their work environments are equitable, inclusive, and diverse-friendly places to be.

Job Application Process

You then come to the Job Application form or CV. I personally opt for Job Applications online because you can ask open questions without being direct.

For example, “Do you have anything else you would like to discuss at the interview?” “Please answer this question.” Then leave space for the applicant to write an answer with the option of ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ tick boxes. Either answer leaves the door open to you being able to ask questions when you are face-to-face with the applicant.

It may be that you note that the individual limped when they came in or they will not make eye contact. These are not reasons for you not to make the job offer.

Reasonable adjustments

However, you may need to make reasonable adjustments. Ask questions in a way so that the applicant feels at ease, so they are able to offer information to help with the application. Create a safe space so that they are able to talk openly about any challenges.

At the end of the interview and after you have made your decision to employ, highlight that you would want to make any adjustments to their workspace before they start the job. This will give your new employee the confidence in sharing their challenges and that their issues were not a barrier to them getting the position.

Bias must not have any bearing on your decision-making process. Always remember you have two eyes and two ears, and only one mouth, therefore, you should watch and listen twice as much as you speak.

These are tried and tested ways of widening the talent pool to find and attract a more diverse group of applicants.

EXAMPLE 4

Future-proofing the team and creating the right culture

In this example, Andy shares his experience of leading and managing the team to create a sense of belonging.

Creating the right culture is all about how you lead your team and respect each other. You must remember that you are the ‘lead ally’ in your team. You are the door opener and the facilitator to make the environment one where everyone is given the help and support they need. Not forgetting that a team that feels respected, secure and listened to, is a team that will work hard to fulfil customers’ needs and achieve business goals. A happy member of staff is a happy customer, and a happy customer is a happy business!

The value of open group discussions

Team meetings that open the door to **open group discussion** are a very good way to start this process and gain the trust of your staff team.

Before team meetings, I used to set the scene with another member of the team so that they were aware that I would be opening the discussion, in this case the team member was Malik.

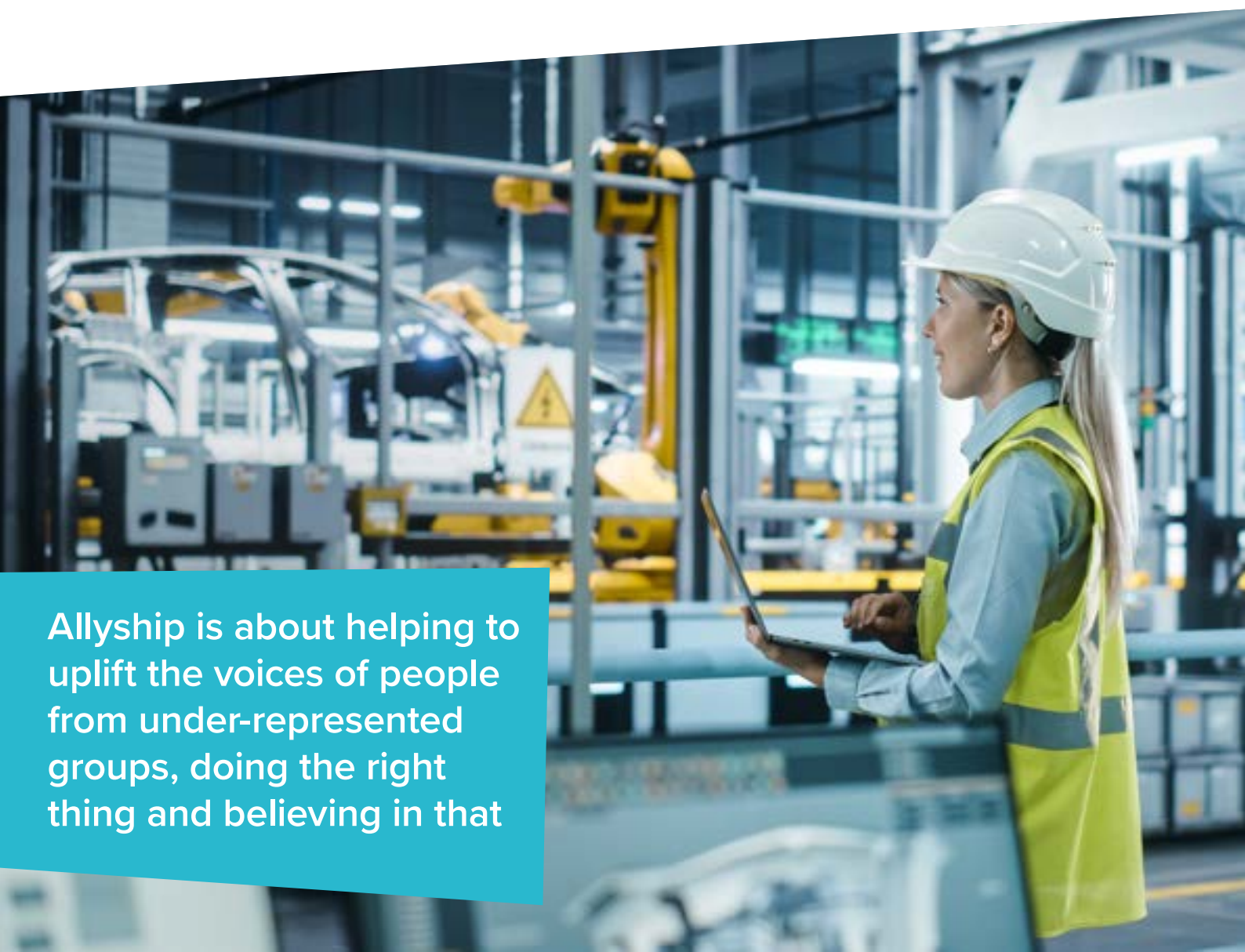
All other business was completed before starting the ‘open group discussion’ part of the meeting. And I always ensured that sufficient time was given to this part of the meeting so that it would not be cut-off short.

To start, I would open the door by offering a point about myself; “As you may know I suffer from bad headaches that can lead to other things and this is why I have to take medication during the working day.” This then enabled Malik to respond in a way to open the floor to the rest of the team.

During one such meeting, Tony, a member of the team, updated us about going into hospital in a few weeks’ time for a gender-affirming procedure. Tony asked which toilet facility to use on return to work.

I had never been in this situation before, so I opened it up to the group. It was very quickly resolved by the other females in the team, “The ladies of course!” That was set then, and everyone was happy, and it made Tony feel comfortable about being welcomed back to work with open arms.

This open discussion also made other team members feel that they could share issues without retort, recrimination, or fear of being belittled in any way. It meant that we could also deal with some small reasonable adjustments quickly, as the team worked collaboratively together to resolve some of the smaller issues among themselves.

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a white hard hat and a high-visibility yellow safety vest over a light blue shirt, is standing in a factory. She is holding a laptop and looking towards the left. The background shows industrial machinery, including a yellow robotic arm and metal structures, with a car chassis visible in the distance.

Allyship is about helping to uplift the voices of people from under-represented groups, doing the right thing and believing in that

Making reasonable adjustments in the workplace

For example, other reasonable adjustments that were made included:

- 1. Desk height.** Sam wanted to get her wheelchair closer to her desk. Within two days Ali had made some desk risers to lift the desk to a height that allowed Sam to get her wheelchair further under her desk.
- 2. Screen placement.** Donovan's eyesight was deteriorating, and hwe was awaiting an operation. Donovan asked if there was a way to get his screen closer to the front of the parts desk, because by the end of each day, he was finding it hard to see the screen. As a quick fix, the screen was put on some books and then onto a bracket so he could adjust it to suit his individual needs.
- 3. Managing neurodiverse conditions.** We had three team members who had dyslexia and it was brought to my attention that other members of staff were helping them to write their job cards. I was aware of this as we had made lists for each person with the spelling of words that they commonly used in the workplace. The list was in two columns; the first column with the word spelt how they saw it and then the second column gave the correct spelling. We also found that there were other common words that these team members were having issues with, so we worked closely to support them.

These were simple adjustments that enhanced the working life and practices of our staff, creating a real sense of trust, respect, inclusion, and belonging. And in-turn this meant happy customers and a happy business!

Sharing views and experiences

Other issues were openly shared during this discussion and in subsequent team meetings too, because the work environment and team culture made staff feel valued and listen to. Staff reported that they found the meetings interesting, engaging and relevant, and they didn't mind if timing ran over, as they felt they were getting things done.

Having an 'open group discussion' part to our team meetings allowed us to plan for the future too. Sometimes the issues discussed were outside of the work environment but influenced work life. This meant that we needed to assist in trying to find a resolution for the member of staff. In most situations like this, it would be a case of working with the individual on a one-to-one basis to gain resolution, as opposed to involving the whole team.

An example of this is when a member of staff told me about their colitis, which is a condition that can be masked when it's in remission. However, at other times this condition can be a huge issue. You might ask yourself "Why?" When you have colitis and/or you are in a wheelchair your stomach does not work in the same way, and without putting too fine a point on it the smell can be very strong, which can and does influence using the facilities at work. Particularly if the facilities are not situated in the right position in the building and have poor ventilation. Therefore, the situation with the toilet facilities needed to be planned for and funded. However, as this situation was actually impacting and affecting three members of staff in the team, we needed swift intervention. **Example 5** takes you through our next steps.

A lot of managers show signs of allyship, but they miss the vital points of listening to and acting on what their staff have to say. Remember that your team members are your greatest allies, and you should take the time to carefully consider their shared input.

If a member of your staff team is below par, there is often a reason for it. Have you ever taken the time to ask them why this might be? Are they really "fine"? Do you really know your workforce?

EXAMPLE 5

Knowing your workforce and supporting your staff

Here, Andy highlights the importance of supporting employees, and how implementing reasonable adjustments can make such a big difference to how people react in the work environment.

As outlined in 'Example 4: Future-proofing the team and creating the right culture', a lot of adjustments are cheap and only take a little time to implement. That said, there are also some reasonable adjustments that cost both time and money.

However, in most situations, you can get help with the costs from 'Access to Work', a government grant scheme which supports disabled people in work.

Firstly, you must:

- Identify the need for assistance
- Next, identify the resolution
- Obtain two quotes to carry-out the work
- Then find the funding
- And finally have the work done.

**You are not going to be the best person to carry out all or any of these functions...
So where do you start?**

Talk to members of staff who are directly affected by the issue to identify exactly what the challenges are.

In this case it was Sam, Sue, and Don, (two are wheelchair users and one had colitis). The main issue surrounded their embarrassment when they needed to use the toilet facilities, and one team member had the issue of not being able to always clean themselves properly afterwards.

We needed to find a solution, and this is when we contacted Access to Work. They put us in touch with a company who were able to advise us on the solutions. This company talked to the staff involved, to make sure that they didn't need any other help. Some companies will also take the time to talk to the whole team individually (if they and you have the time), and as long as they are in receipt of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) you will get assistance with the cost from Access to Work.

If Access to Work is unable to assist because someone has not claimed PIP, then there are other organisations who might be able to assist instead.

For example, individuals working in the automotive industry can approach BEN, or if the person concerned has been in the Armed Forces, then there is the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA).

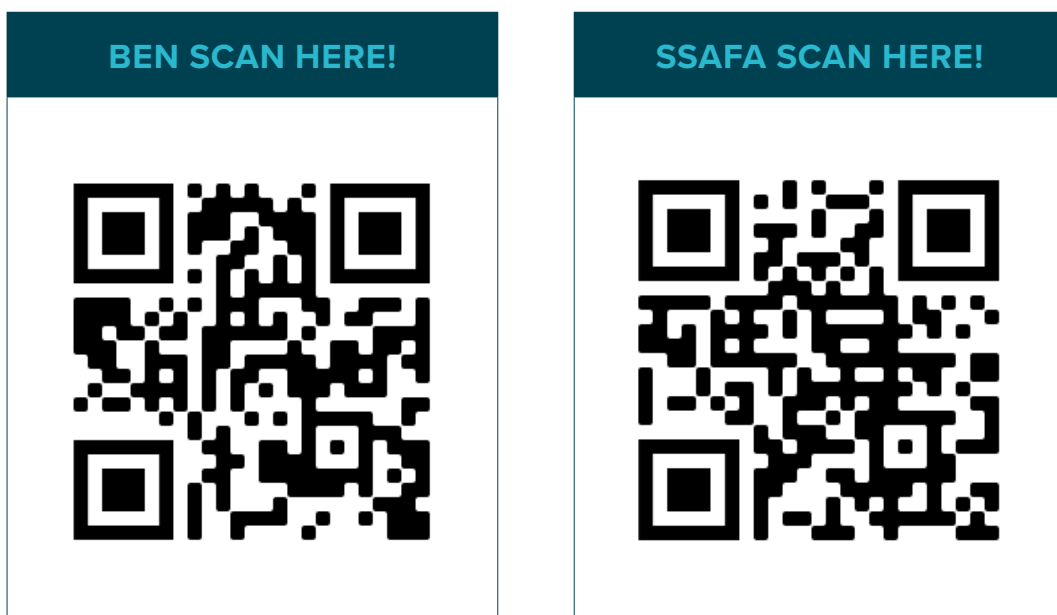
Before you start looking for the funding, you will need to find companies who can carry-out this sort of work. The company that Access to Work puts you in touch with will normally help you with this.

Then once you have the funds in place you can go ahead with the work. In most cases, you will need to pay for the work upfront before you can claim the funds. Some suppliers will wait until you have been paid.

The resolution to our situation was to install a toilet facility that had a built-in wash and dry function and a strong extractor fan that ran as soon as someone entered the facility, and which stayed on for up to five minutes after vacating the facility.

Other things to think about when it comes to toilet facilities is whether you have someone in your team who has toilet urgency. If so, then that person will need to be working on the same floor as the toilets, but not just outside them.

If you are ever involved in the planning of renovations or a new build, make sure the toilets are not situated just outside of the offices, as it can make even the most relaxed individual feel very anxious about using the facilities.



Small changes can make such big differences to how people react in the work environment

Have you ever been given a clipboard with the clip on the left? If you're right-handed, you probably didn't notice, but for someone who is left-handed it is a pain as you have to try to write over the clip or get told by the office that you should not mess with the way they are, when you change it over. This issue could be resolved very easily by having boards with a neutral clip.

Get to know your team

Take the time to listen twice as much as you speak. You will pick up on so much more and your staff will think so much more of you for doing this.

Your organisation or business can help with signposting staff to outside charities and resources for other levels of help, especially when it is more direct individual support that is needed.

Remember, you can't be everything to all people and when you don't have the answer tell the person and show them you care by putting them in touch with someone who can assist.

The help may be closer than you think. For example, if you have a Human Resources Department, they may be able to provide help and support, or will be able to point the person in the right direction.

As a manager, you should always follow-up to make sure the person is getting the targeted help and support they need, and if not find out why this is.

This is true allyship, you can be the person to take it to the next level, you have got this far. Don't think about the **"We should have..."** (i.e., the past), instead you should think about the **"What If..."** (the future).



For further guidance and recommendations, please access the IMI's Diversity Task Force Report. We encourage all automotive businesses to review these recommendations in the context of their own journey.

SCAN ME



Allyship Shared Experiences

EXAMPLE 1

Encouraging Allyship in the Work Environment



Acorn Training Ltd are a national training provider who deliver apprenticeships, adult learning, employability programmes, justice services, and skills and career development. The vision of the organisation is to ensure safe and secure futures for everyone to succeed in life and work, no matter their differences and backgrounds. Gareth Saldanha-Fallows founded Acorn Training in 2008.

In 2021, Acorn Training won Network of the Year Award, and by being shortlisted as a finalist at the World Skills UK Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Awards, Gareth was recognised as a role model for his work championing equality, diversity and inclusion. He is a Fellow of the IMI.

Here, Gareth talks candidly about his experiences growing up, the challenges he faced about being able to openly declare his sexuality, and the importance of allyship in the workplace.

My career journey

When I was 16 years old, my parents found out that I was gay. They didn't react well, and I moved out of the family home. Through the Potteries Young Homeless project, I ended-up sharing a house with three other young men. I stayed there for about 9 months; it was a very frightening time for me. Their lifestyles were chaotic, which made it a stressful experience, for example, one of them was a heroin addict.

At 18 I got my own council flat and started the process of re-settlement. My education had suffered and so in 1999, I studied an extra year to achieve my A' Levels. I knew that I had an interest in business studies and education.

In 2001, I completed my degree in Business & IT Education at Manchester Metropolitan University, gaining Qualified Teacher Status so that I could teach in secondary schools. The first year of my degree was subject knowledge-based and then in year two and year three it was school work placements.

I had a rocky time with the work placements; with issues around being a gay teacher and not 'being out', meant that I wasn't able to behave in an authentic way. You need trust to be able to truly open up about your sexuality and your feelings. I found that there was a professional me, and a personal me. I had to change my own behaviour to fit in with the work environment i.e., I acted more 'butch', and having to do this impacted on my self-confidence and my motivation. I couldn't be my authentic self because on a daily basis I was so worried about being bullied and was afraid of retribution.

On my last teaching work placement which was in a Catholic School, I had a bad experience; I was victimised and bullied by the Headteacher. I later found out that she had a gay son and was taking her contempt of her own situation out on me. I decided that teaching in schools was not for me and looked for something else.

I started teaching in a Further Education College, supporting adult learners with Maths (as part of the Functional Skills agenda). I then worked for the Learning & Skills Council in Staffordshire as a Basic Skills Coordinator, developing strategy to improve Maths and English. And when

I was 23, I took a role as Skills for Learning Manager in a college, managing Maths and English. The College went through a restructure, and I became Head of Faculty, which was a lot of responsibility. My role included coordinating Business Studies, IT, Sport, and Key Skills.

I spent a couple of years working in the Head of Faculty role, and then started working in the private sector (Carter and Carter) – which was a cultural shock! I'd been working in education for quite a while and found that the private sector was much faster paced. But I also found that people were more understanding about my sexuality... being gay became less of an issue for me in the workplace.

The private training provider who I was working for went into administration and was bought out by Newcastle-Upon-Tyne College. During this time, I got a promotion and moved into a Senior Leadership role, and I started to consider my next career move. I decided to take voluntary redundancy and it was at this point that I knew I had the confidence and inspiration to use my experience to create my own business. As well as gaining teaching experience, I had the experience of administration and funding of education. It was serendipity that my career journey had given me these opportunities.

In February 2008, I started Acorn Training Ltd. There have been peaks and troughs in the business, but I now employ over 160 staff across 11 training centres, which are mainly based in the Midlands. Acorn Training offer training and apprenticeships, employability programmes, and the organisation also supports ex-offenders. We deliver training in 19 prisons across the Midlands and North East, helping to create further opportunities for people.

Allyship in action: Developing a values-based approach to recruitment

I was always scared of declaring my sexuality to others so openly, but since declaring my sexuality on our webpage, I've learned not to be afraid and have experienced the positive side of this.

We looked at our own recruitment process, we wanted to promote an inclusive workspace for potential applicants joining the business. So, we started to adopt a more values-based approach to recruitment. For example, being much more inclusive in our advertising text, welcoming and highlighting the opportunity for applicants to visit us, and exemplifying inclusivity with a standard top and tail on adverts.

By adopting this new approach, we have been able to attract a more diverse workforce, enriching our existing workforce and reinforcing our inclusive values and ethos. We've recruited four new LGBTQ+ employees and people are more open about being able to talk about their sexuality or that of their friends or family, citing that they want to work for Acorn Training because they can see we're inclusive. Our organisation provides a safe and secure place for people to work, to be themselves, and to thrive.

Allyship is about nurturing people

A member of our team, Louise, is a lesbian woman. Acorn Training have championed Louise as a role model. For example, in Manchester last year she was a finalist in the Queer Student Awards. This support and recognition have helped to build Louise's confidence and helped her to feel special. People with differences need to be able to feel special! We've recently nominated Louise for another local business award, she didn't win it, but the process of representing the business has been such a positive and rewarding experience for her. Building her self-esteem and knowing that she is recognised and valued.

Our organisation creates opportunities for people to create and share stories

If you look at organisational culture, it's about signs and symbols. Our processes and our core values create a family feel. We've implemented steering groups to help bring people together from across the company. For example, we have groups for Menopause, Safeguarding, Sustainability, and Equality & Diversity. Through these steering groups, people can develop and share their interests, and develop Acorn's values. This approach minimises the opportunity for subcultures and silos to develop. For the groups to work, it's important to ensure leadership and management buy-in, so we make sure that leaders go along to these meetings. There needs to be that demonstration of 'buy-in'.

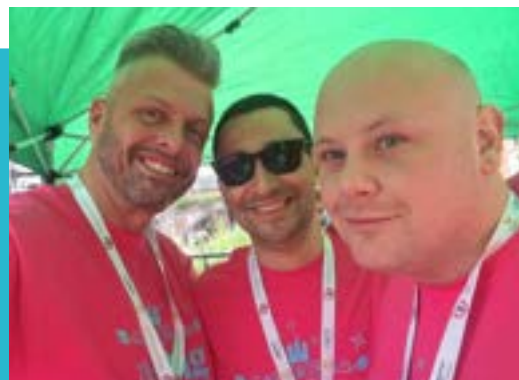
Allies are trusted role models

It's important that people have a trusted role model or ally, someone who they can approach for advice and support. For example, I received a message the other day from an ex-member of staff who told me that their daughter (who is trans), was feeling suicidal, and who in the community should they speak to? In a situation or crisis, people need someone trusted that they can turn to. It's important that people are able to share their experiences and stories with others. This gives realness.

At some point in our lives, we all need an ally

When I was interviewed at Stoke-on-Trent College by the Adult Education Manager, Nell, I felt so comfortable at interview that I came out. Nell's reaction was extremely supportive and positive. That meant that from day one of being in the job role, I was able to be myself and was therefore able to give my best.

Nell saw something in me, she gave me coaching and mentoring opportunities, and offered career guidance. Nell championed me for much of my career. I was on an equal footing from the start. I didn't need to pretend anymore, which was a huge weight off my shoulders. I was just able to get on and do a good job.



Being an ally: appreciating different viewpoints and perspectives

Our Operations Director demonstrated allyship by fasting for Ramadan so that they could gain an appreciation of that experience through the day. A month of fasting actually made them feel very tired! Through this experience, they were able to gain a shared understanding and had improved awareness of perspectives of staff from the Muslim community who observe this holy month. Being an ally to others shows that you care.

An effective ally needs to:

- Be able to challenge the status quo and to challenge any negative behaviours
- Have high emotional intelligence – so that they can pick-up on the behaviours of others and how others may be feeling
- Have the ability to understand how their own behaviour impacts on the behaviour of others
- Be a good listener
- Be able to appreciate what makes a person unique, what makes them ‘them’? And to celebrate that and make the person feel included.

How can an organisation or business encourage allyship?

It’s about creating opportunities to develop networks within an organisation. For example, think about who you socialise with over tea or lunch breaks. Do you only mix with people from your ‘in-groups’? Or, do you make an effort to speak to people who have different backgrounds, different interests and experiences, or people who are from different groups to your own?

Create opportunities for people to come together across the business. Use the ‘onion model’ of communication. First layer; perhaps talking about yourself and your family. Second layer; talking about your interests. Third layer; talking about your background experiences and your challenges. And so on, until you reach the core, where you can talk about emotional things and make an emotional connection with others. It’s through this process that people develop a sense of trust and belonging. Networking helps people to communicate within and across the business. And networking groups help people to develop and strengthen positive working relationships within and across the business.

For networking to be successful, people need to have a safe space in which they feel able to speak-up and share their stories and experiences. Creating safety is about clearly establishing ground rules and identifying expectations. People need to be able to consider their own behaviour and how they interact with others.

How full is your red balloon?

This can be a 15-minute activity. Feeling deflated? At the start of your working day, blow-up a red balloon. Then during your working day, let some air out of the balloon every time you feel that there is an issue, or that you’re demotivated, or if you’re feeling upset about something. Ask others, ‘How full is your red balloon today?’ The idea is to have a full balloon at the start of the day and a full balloon at the end of the day. This activity helps to create stories, it helps to create the culture.

The 'Manager's Mask'

We have an away day for all new managers, and one of the activities we do is the 'Manager's Mask'. At Acorn Training, you wear your manager's mask. During the activity, everyone gets creative, and people produce their own mask! It's a powerful reminder not to allow your own behaviour to impact on others' behaviour or to damage the reputation of the company.

During the activity, participants think about a typical day and the challenges they might encounter. How do they feel during interactions with customers, other staff, key stakeholders etc? Participants create their 'manager's mask' to challenge and counter these issues. It's a reminder that Acorn Training is a positive and inclusive place to be, so they can be positive to others.

Through this activity, managers develop an understanding of emotional intelligence and have an opportunity to reflect on and adapt their own behaviour. This activity improves awareness and creates allyship.

Are there any barriers to allyship?

- It's important to have leadership and management buy-in
- A safe culture is needed so that people feel able to challenge
- Working in silos creates unhealthy subcultures (which can lead to bullying)
- Lack of awareness, lack of education.

People's own lived experiences can also be a barrier to allyship. There needs to be understanding that through their own backgrounds and past experiences, some people may have had their fingers burned. The challenges and barriers that they've faced may be due to a protected characteristic.

Empathy and understanding are needed. People may have experienced closed doors in the past. They may have fears around disclosing something about them due to trauma that they've experienced in the past.

Three steps that employers could take to create a true sense of belonging in the work environment?

- 1. Create a safe working environment, with internally generated values that everyone can contribute to and buy into.** Create the safe space which allows questions to be asked. Ensure strong leadership buy-in.
- 2. Establish a culture of respect and accountability.** Where people can challenge and learn together. What is right? What is wrong? What can or cannot be said? Develop people's awareness of emotional intelligence.
- 3. Celebrate difference.** Facilitate opportunities in the workplace for people to have discussions. Make the discussion about difference something that is able to happen. This gives people the opportunity to ask questions in a respectful but curious way. People need to feel comfortable and able to ask questions, because they might not have experienced that difference before. It's about understanding what is appropriate to ask others and having the opportunity in the workplace to ask those questions in a secure and safe way.

EXAMPLE 2

Allyship in Action – Education, Accountability, and Awareness



My career journey

I've got an interest in Sociology and Psychology and I've always worked in diversity and inclusion. At university I initially planned to study Sociology but switched courses to study a degree in Media. My dissertation examined the impact that media has on communities to create change.

From university, I went on to work for a Community Media Radio station, on a placement which was supported by ITV. This role gave me the opportunity to create and be involved in a number of different community and talent programmes. From there I then joined ITV and did various roles around diversity and inclusion, community and charitable giving, sustainability and talent development.

My career journey continued as I then moved to Yorkshire Water, where I worked for a couple of years, implementing learning and development programmes for various under-represented and systemically excluded communities. After that, I worked for National Express, where my diversity and inclusion role focussed heavily on customer inclusion and accessibility.

I've been working as Head of Diversity and Inclusion at Sytner for just over a year.

In my spare time, I'm undertaking two voluntary roles; Harrogate Skills 4 Living, which is a charity that provides care, support, and accommodation to people with learning disabilities and autism in the Harrogate District. And I also volunteer for GIPSIL who work with children, young people and families in the most disadvantaged communities in Leeds to realise their potential.

Here, Jodie shares her own personal experience of allyship in the workplace and the importance of educating others and raising awareness.

How would you describe what allyship is?

Allyship is taking ownership and accountability for your own learning, and educating yourself. Then applying and putting that learning into action and proactively working towards creating a better world where everyone can thrive.

Knowledge is power! Sharing ideas and information is key to unlocking that power. Education provides huge insight which can then help drive people forward to want to create change in the work environment.

How do we stop people from being passive?

People should feel that there is a level of injustice in the world and should be proactively pushing to help change that through work and effort. It's not enough for people in the workplace to just be 'good people', we need more than the bare minimum. We need people to be proactively involved in dismantling systems of inequality. We need people to give commitment to learning about different events, injustices, discrimination and so on. Work and effort to educate...

It's important to remember that everybody is different and people like learning/educating themselves in different ways. My 'go to' is books! I have an amazing library and I love reading! But if you don't like to learn in this way then find the best option for you. Whether that's educating yourself through films, networking groups, via online social media groups, or podcasts etc.

What core behaviours or attributes are needed to be an effective ally?

- Who are you championing? How do you know that you are supporting people in the way that they want to be supported?
- Listen to the voices in a room; whether that's in a team meeting, or externally at a conference event:
 - Notice under-representation
 - Query why that is?
 - Who has been excluded from the conversation?
 - Draw attention to the current situation
 - What changes can be made?
- Develop awareness so that your own behaviours do not impact negatively on others.
- Try to understand how the team works best and get to know your colleagues. For example, would the team work better if the company could consider introducing flexible working?
- When you have got something wrong, own up, apologise and learn from it.
- Listen to feedback and be open and honest with others.
- Be accountable for your own actions and the language that you use.

Allyship in action in the work environment: Education – Accountability – Awareness

Consider how you communicate with others and how others in the workplace communicate with you.

Have accountability. Learning how to apologise can have a big impact on a situation or context and can help to change behaviour.

Be really open to feedback; in particular, any feedback which relates to your own actions or own behaviour. Do not get defensive about the feedback you receive. Appreciate how hard it can be for people to bring the feedback to your attention. Demonstrate commitment to change and that you can do better.

Acknowledge if you're not receiving any feedback. If that's the case, consider why this might be? Do people feel safe, secure, and comfortable so that they are openly able to share their experiences and discuss their feedback with others?

People need to feel comfortable and psychologically safe in the work environment to be able to share their experiences, opinions, and give open and honest feedback. Creating these spaces is really important.

People trying to educate others about their behaviour; that's practising allyship. Allyship is about raising awareness, sharing voices, and learning from that. For example, there's a group on Facebook, "You Might Wanna Learn More About Trans People." Cis people can join but they can't comment on posts for the first couple of hours, we have to just listen and learn. It's a great way to really pause and de-centre yourself. It's simply a space to learn, reflect, and take the information in and appreciate people sharing their lived experiences. I love that as a concept.

Amplify the voice and champion those who are under-represented or systemically excluded; uplift and support their ideas. This can make a significant difference. Develop self-awareness and be conscious of not merely repeating the views of people who are in your 'in-group'.

How can an organisation or business encourage allyship?

1. Education: Define what that means, set expectations, and explore how educational initiatives can be achieved across the business. There needs to be senior leadership buy-in. Everyone needs to be able to get onboard.
2. Once defined, give people the tools to practice allyship. And be able to call-out and challenge others when negative behaviours or other traits are observed.
3. Develop self-awareness across the workforce. For example, through 360° feedback, and feedback on behaviour, and examine the impact that this has had.

Are there any barriers to allyship?

Being a 'good person' isn't enough; this is a passive perspective. A person can be unconsciously incompetent, it can also lead to lack of commitment for change and lack of senior leadership team buy-in. We need people to proactively create inclusive environments.

Three steps that employers could take to create a true sense of belonging in the work environment?

1. **Ask people if they feel included.** A specific inclusion survey may be needed for this, with outcomes split by (for example); Physical and Non-visible Disabilities; Race and Ethnicity; Gender and Sexual Orientation.
2. **Understand how each person feels in the sector.**
3. **What do people need to feel included?** Put those support needs into action.

EXAMPLE 3:

Supporting Women in Automotive



My career journey

It was by accident that I found a career in automotive. I was one of those people who really didn't know what I wanted to do. I come from a background where I was supposed to do law and when that didn't work out, I found myself working for a company called National Service Network. That's where I first met Kevin Finn, who is the IMI's chair. In fact, he was my first boss in the automotive world!

That was an eye-opener for me. The company was one of the first garage network service providers in the UK and came about because of the Block Exemption Regulation, where they realised there was an opportunity in the market to help business save money by using independent garages for fleet work.

I was part of the bookings team, providing a vehicle booking service from fleet drivers and booking their vehicles into independent garages across the UK.

I'd come from a call centre background and one thing that was very uncomfortable for me was hearing the phones ringing. So, I made it my personal objective, in-line with a call centre mentality, to pick up that phone within three rings. But the company just exploded. We were so busy. I found myself assisting the garage authorisation team as well. That was an eye-opening experience for me! I didn't even know how to drive at the time, and I was talking to mechanics about taking their request for repairs. Trying to relay the message accurately and putting it into the IT system; I'm not going to pretend I didn't make any mistakes, but it was all part of the learning curve! I very quickly realised that I was really intrigued by the design and workings of the vehicles and the more I immersed myself, the more my interest grew.

I'm now the Key Account Manager for UK and Ireland for Brembo and I've been with them for about two years. I was approached by Brembo after an IAAF event. I'd always been aware of them and really admired the brand from afar. I mean, who doesn't?! So, by chance I had some conversations where they liked what I was doing such as the best practice seminars and they wanted to transfer some of that over to Brembo. Honestly, I couldn't say 'yes' quick enough!

For me, it's a fantastic brand. It's a global leader and technological innovator of braking systems for automotive vehicles. It designs, develops and manufactures braking systems and its components, supplying the most important manufacturers of cars, motorbikes and commercial vehicles worldwide, as well as clutches and other components for racing.

Quality is a top priority for Brembo. We wouldn't have won more than 500 titles in motorsport if we didn't produce a top-quality product.

How can an organisation or business encourage allyship?

I would really love to see more people like me in the sector. I certainly get ‘impostor syndrome,’ especially because of the way that my career in automotive has evolved. I did the work first and then got my qualifications. When I speak to other people like myself, they’ll say things like, “Oh my goodness, I don’t know how you can do that Siti!”

As a woman in automotive you do need tenacity. I think it’s important that everyone can see people like themselves in automotive to be inspired to join. I get embarrassed by being featured in magazines or promoted but I know how important it is.

I appeared in a magazine when we were doing the AutoInform Roadshow in Ireland and I saw my picture on the front cover. I really didn’t like being on the front cover, but I know it’s important to have more visibility of different types of people doing this role.

Diversity of gender and culture is more visible in the media and on TV now and it’s important to show the next generation of people who look like me or have similar backgrounds to me that they can have a great career in automotive too.

“You can’t be it if you can’t see it,” is often used but my nervousness about putting myself out there is because I don’t conform to the ‘norm’, so there can be negativity.

I like how the brand actively takes part in projects to seek out new talent, for example. There’s lots of great stuff going on in the background. I’m always delighted that when I’m taking a factory tour there are female engineers showing us around.

Allyship is about supporting people

Throughout my career, I’ve been fortunate to have had many people support me and I’ve had some great mentors. The one that sticks in my mind is the late Steve Fisher, who was MD of Apac. He was a true gentleman. He recognised my skills and took me under his wing and helped me develop. He inspired and motivated me.

The industry is competitive and can be aggressive and despite this Steve always conducted himself in a professional and gentlemanly manner and I loved that about him. Regardless of gender, he inspired professional behaviour and proved that you can make a difference by behaving like that. Before I met him, I thought you could only get on if you behaved in the stereotypical way, but Steve showed me that wasn’t the case. It’s the way I like to carry myself. It’s how I conduct myself with my customers and colleagues.

Someone else who inspires me is Hayley Pells (now Policy Manager at the IMI).

I suppose I’m inspired by people who are successful in their own right, but are a little bit different, and who are doing things the right way.

Are there any barriers to allyship?

It’s unusual to see people like me in garages. It’s even more unusual to see people like me providing technical support. There are a few of us out there but we’re still a novelty.

Most people make a judgement based on first impressions. Decades of stereotypes are ingrained in people but what I’d like to say to them is to be a bit more open and certainly more tolerant. Rather than jumping to conclusions, at least have a conversation with the person rather than letting their physical appearance dictate what you think of them or what they’re capable of.

In the technical field, there are so very few females, and we all specialise in different fields so there's a sense of camaraderie between us. We lean on each other for advice. In a technical role, my knowledge and experience are constantly tested and challenged. It's like having to prove yourself all the time. So, it's really important to have good support around you.

Three steps that employers could take to create a true sense of belonging in the work environment?

- 1. If I could help change anything it would be the first impression stereotypes.** I always want to apply my knowledge to assist someone and just want people to set their assumptions aside. I can't tell you how much time I waste trying to convince some people that I know what I'm doing when I'm just there to help! Also, there's a lot of anxiety for people like me to join the industry. When I talk to some of my friends about the things I see and hear they'll ask me how I cope with it all. But if I can help give women who are interested in joining the industry the benefit of my experience and ways to deal with situations then that would be awesome.
- 2. Appreciate different perspectives.** It's important to have different points of view. I'd like to show people how great it can be when you work together. I think it's an important story to tell.
- 3. Offer mentoring and establish networking or other support systems.** I've found that people are willing to be mentors and that other women in the sector support each other. It's like a close-knit family. We all understand what the challenges are, but we work to build each other up because of the experiences we've had.

Change isn't going to happen overnight. There have been many times when I've been upset by a situation. But I'm resilient and can move on. I've learned to treat negativity as character development and remember that other peoples' comments aren't a reflection on me, they're a reflection on them.

Allyship builds rapport, respect, and trust with others, promoting a sense of belonging

Vocabulary Checker

ADVOCATE

A person who publicly supports or recommends or champions a particular cause. They give support to another person or group to help them to express their viewpoints and to stand up for their rights. For example, being an advocate for people from under-represented groups.

ALLY

Someone who supports those from under-represented and/or disadvantaged groups. With the aim of creating fairness and inclusion in the work environment.

ALLYSHIP

Through allyship, allies take positive action to provide support and ensure fairness in the workplace, so that people can overcome specific issues, challenges, and barriers in order to succeed. Allyship helps to advance workplace culture and inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that benefit people as a whole.

BIAS

A prejudice or tendency for or against a person, or a group of people, or an idea or belief. Biases are usually unfair and are often based on stereotypes, rather than on valid information or experience. Biases are usually learned, although some biases may be innate. Bias can develop at any time in a person's life.

EQUALITY

Ensuring equal rights, access and opportunities, and that everyone is treated the same. Equality and equity both promote fairness.

EQUITY

Achieving fairness by treating people differently depending on their individual needs. Equity is about finding solutions to address the imbalance. By treating people equitably, equality can be achieved.

LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

Acronym used to describe Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual or Ally, + other non-heterosexual people.

MARGINALISATION

Treating an individual or a group of people as insignificant. Marginalisation is a form of social exclusion.

MICRO-AFFIRMATIONS

Are small, subtle acknowledgements of a person's value and accomplishments in the work environment. Micro-affirmations can make a big difference to how people feel. They can take the form of words, gestures, or actions.

Examples: Learn employees' names and don't use shortened versions without the person's consent. Acknowledge and appreciate people, value and thank them for their contributions. Actively listen and believe what people have to say about their experiences. Give positive recognition to a person for their work on a project or task. Use respectful and inclusive language.

MICRO-AGGRESSIONS

Are also known as 'micro-inequities'. These are small, subtle insults that often happen more than once, and are based on stereotypes. Micro-aggressions can negatively affect a person's sense of belonging. They are small slights that are cumulative and have a big impact. The recipient will not feel welcome, seen, valued, or respected in the work environment.

Examples: Being frequently talked over in a team meeting. A team member may barely be able to get a sentence in without someone else jumping in first. Or, a person may present a valid idea, which isn't acknowledged until it is presented by someone else (perhaps someone from an 'in-group'), and then it becomes a "great idea".

PREJUDICE

Pre-conceived opinions about an individual or a particular group of people that are not based on experience or valid reasoning/knowledge.

STEREOTYPE

Having fixed beliefs and assumptions about an individual or a group of people based on their particular characteristics. For example, their gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion.

Further Resources

ARTICLES	SCAN ME
Allyship in the Workplace	
Six Tips for Being a Good Workplace Ally	
What is Allyship? A Quick Guide	
Why Male Allyship Matters	
10 Ways to Step-up as an Ally to Non-binary People	
IMI ED&I RESOURCES HUB	SCAN ME
Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Resources Hub	

SHORT FILMS	SCAN ME
<p>How to be a Good LGBTQ+ Ally (5-mins)</p>	
<p>What are Micro-aggressions? (2-mins)</p>	
<p>What is Privilege? (4-mins)</p>	
<p>Why Diversity and Inclusion is More than Someone's Job Title (12-mins)</p>	
<p>Allyship in Practice (3-mins)</p>	

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**Diversity
Task Force**



**Committed
to making
positive change**

DIVERSITY | EQUITY | INCLUSION

**Become an ally and
show support for
an inclusive and
diverse workforce**

**Sign your pledge
and commit to making
positive change**



To find out more or to get involved, contact the IMI Diversity Task Force at imidiversitytaskforce@theimi.org.uk

#CommittedToMakingPositiveChange



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