



# How to be an LGBT+ ally

## At work guidance

A Royal Holloway Equality and Diversity Guide



**ROYAL  
HOLLOWAY**  
UNIVERSITY  
OF LONDON

# What is an LGBT+ ally?

*“Allies are individuals who do not identify as LGBT and who believe that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans people should be able to be themselves and reach their potential.”*

Stonewall's Allies Programme flyer



It is not just the responsibility of LGBT+ people to strive to establish an inclusive working culture. If we want to create an environment where every individual is accepted without exception, it is important that everyone participates in achieving this.

LGBT+ allies do not need to be experts in all issues relating to LGBT+ people and communities or feel they have achieved a deep understanding of the challenges LGBT+ people may face. Allies are people who believe that all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, are to be treated with dignity and respect. Allies are willing to embark on a journey towards becoming agents of change.

## Being an inclusive LGBT+ Ally means...

- You've thought about what matters to you. You are informed by examined rather than received values, and express a sense of responsibility about stepping up as an LGBT+ ally as a result.
- Your values align with how you act.
- You are self-aware and reflective.

*Taken from materials adapted by Hannah Boschen, University of Oxford; and Sebastian Blake and Jane Butcher, Oxford Brookes University.*

# Tips on how to be an LGBT ally

## Learn...

...about the realities of being an LGBT+ person so that you feel informed and can be supportive. Educate yourself with regard to the LGBT+ community and history as this is empowering and can equip you with the knowledge required to engage in relevant discussions and disseminate what you have learned. You could start by [reading Stonewall's overview of key dates for lesbian, gay, bi and trans equality](#).

## Be yourself...

...and engage warmly with people without fear of doing something wrong as this creates distance.

## Make LGBT+ issues visible...

...by raising inclusion topics at staff meetings and being aware of important LGBT celebrations, such as, LGBT History month (February), LGBT Pride Month (June), Transgender Awareness Week (second week of November), Transgender Day of Remembrance (20 November).

## Step up and be visible...

...by using signals, such as displaying the LGBT rainbow flag on your workspace This way you are showcasing your acceptance and support. You can read [here](#) about the history and meaning of the flag. Be proud to be an LGBT+ ally.



## Listen...

As an ally, you are not expected to act as a professional counsellor. However it is important to listen to your LGBT+ colleagues and be aware of the experiences they are willing to share, and the barriers they may be facing. You may not feel that you understand all the issues, but be available to offer support when you can.

## Be respectful...

Just because someone has come out to you as LGBT+, this does not mean they are out to everyone. People's sexual orientation is a private matter and should only be discussed with their permission.

## Be aware of intersectionality....

Not all LGBT+ people have the same experiences or face the same challenges. Be mindful of the fact that people may suffer multiple levels of discrimination based on a range of background characteristics, including ethnicity, disability, mental health and others.

## Challenge...

...homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviours and attitudes, including slurs disguised as harmless banter, and negative or abusive language towards LGBT people. If you come across inappropriate behaviour on or offline, report it. Stonewall provides the following tips:

- Keep calm and say why bullying is wrong
- Try saying something like, 'stop, this is wrong' and explain why
- Make sure you stay safe and don't put yourself in danger
- Check if the person being bullied is OK
- Encourage them to report it

(From Stonewall Stand up as an ally campaign)

## Tips for supporting students...

- If the student has been bullied or harassed, they should be referred to the student Wellbeing team ([wellbeing@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@royalholloway.ac.uk)). There are both informal and formal options which can be considered and we are committed to a zero tolerance approach towards harassment and intolerance.
- If the student is distressed or having trouble coming to terms with their sexuality, they may be referred to Student Counselling ([counselling@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@royalholloway.ac.uk)).
- If the student would like to know more about LGBT+ life on campus they can be referred to the SU's LGBT+ Society (PhD students can also choose to join the LGBT+ Staff Network – [lgbt.staff@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:lgbt.staff@royalholloway.ac.uk)).
- For further LGBT+ specific support and resources you can refer the student to the London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, or telephone them yourself during a conversation with the student (0300 330 0630, <https://switchboard.lgbt>).

## Further resources...

- Staff at Royal Holloway operate an LGBT Staff network. You can find out more about the network [here](#). Alternatively, you can email the **LGBT Staff Network** and ask to become a member. LGBT+ allies are welcome to network meetings.
- Further information on LGBT+ equality at Royal Holloway can be found [here](#), including a **coming out at work guide for staff**, and one about **Transgender Equality and Transitioning at work**. Both include useful information about language and other relevant and useful issues.
- Royal Holloway has developed an **Introduction to Trans Awareness course** on Moodle. Feel free to share the link with colleagues. The course includes a section on Top Tips: How to be a Trans Ally.
- **Article** in *The Conversation* about 'Why LGBT+ inclusivity still matters in higher education.
- **NUS report** on LGBT+ Students in Higher Education.
- Stonewall's guide to supporting LGBT+ students in Higher education: Studying abroad.
- A **guide** on Coming Out as a Straight LGBT+ supporter.
- An ally's **guide** to terminology Navigating LGBT+ inclusive language.
- Stonewall's **Glossary of terms**.
- Further sources of information and support can be found on **Royal Holloway's LGBT+ equality pages**.







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