



Toolkit:

Being an ally

This toolkit is part of an “Allyship Hub” which has been developed to support colleagues across social work, social care and health on their journey to become active allies. The Hub aims to share recommended resources, spotlight best practices and amplify voices from across the sectors.

This toolkit is an introduction to what an ally is and how you can be one, with specific examples. We invite you to use this resource for your own development, to work through with your teams or to share with your colleagues. The toolkit is in sections, so is a flexible resource you can dip in and out of, revisit and/or use in bitesize chunks! If you would like support with how to use this resource, or require a different format, please contact us at hello@leadingtochange.scot.

The toolkit includes best practice guidance from across the sectors, such as content from a toolkit created by the Equality team at the Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, research carried out by Iriss and Passion4Fusion and curated recommended resources from our own team.

We are thankful to all the authors and contributors who inspired us or helped us develop this resource alongside our community.

Allyship is a relatively new term, and we know that the concept might mean different things across locations and sectors in Scotland. However, the ideas that underpin allyship - of person-centred care, social justice and anti-discrimination and respect - are core to the values that unite our practice across social work, social care and health. Our community helped us co-create a definition of allyship for us to start with:

Allyship is the work of actively supporting and advocating for marginalized groups. Allies recognise where power is held within a system and work in solidarity and partnership with marginalised groups to amplify, empower and help drive change.

An ally is a person who helps and supports people to help ensure their basic rights and ability to be happy and successful in society. The ally does not themselves belong to the underrepresented group they are supporting, but they educate themselves and bring their backing and voice to a movement towards equity for all.

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Activity: Where do you lie on the ally continuum?

If you have never heard of allyship and the ally continuum, that's ok! This toolkit has been devised to help you understand what allyship is, and how you can become a great ally for your colleagues.

Look at the “ally continuum” on the right-hand side and think about where you are now.

As you read the toolkit, you will learn more about the topic and perhaps (hopefully!) be ready and able to progress a little further along the continuum.



What is an ally?

An ally is someone who champions underrepresented groups whilst not being a member of the group that they are defending.

For example, a white lesbian woman might stand up for Black colleagues. The white lesbian woman is using her membership of the white racial group to advocate for people from marginalised racial groups.

There's no set way to be an ally, but this toolkit will give you some ideas of how to become an effective ally.



Anyone can be an ally and you can be an ally to all groups, including Black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues, women, the LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities. By being an ally, you bring your backing and voice to the movement towards equality for all.

What is an ally?

Examples

Jennifer is white.
She can therefore act
as an ally to...

...her Black,
Asian or minority
ethnic
colleagues.

As a man in a senior position,
Priyesh can be an ally to...

...his colleagues
who are women.

Yeni, who doesn't
have any
disabilities, can
be an ally to...

...colleagues who
do.

You can also be an
ally to those within
your own community
whose experiences
differ from yours.

Joshua, a
cisgender gay
man, can be
an ally to...

...those in the
transgender
community.

How can I be an ally?

Click on the image below to watch the video.

Understand privilege.

There are many ways that some people have more “power” in our world and some people have less and this is known as privilege.

As the video explains, having certain privileges – like being white or non-disabled - doesn't mean you haven't worked for what you have, or that you haven't suffered. However, it does mean that your skin colour or your disability has not been the cause of your hardship. We also recommend you look at the “wheel of power and privilege”. Think about how close to the centre you are and how you might be able to help those further away from the centre of power.



How can I be an ally?



CASE STUDY: Iriss have co-produced a toolkit with Passion4Fusion to help support social workers in their interactions with members of the African diaspora.
You can download the toolkit [here](#).

Cultural safety builds on concepts which are inbuilt in social work and care, like cultural humility (curiosity and willingness to learn) and cultural competence (the ability to effectively work with people from different cultural backgrounds).

Cultural safety is the idea that we can deliver better care by being aware of difference, considering power relationships, implementing reflective practice and allowing the person using the service to determine whether an encounter is safe.

How can I be an ally?



Do

Attend staff network meetings and events and listen to what is being discussed.

Actively listen to your colleagues, should they choose to share their experiences.

Believe others' experiences. Don't assume something couldn't happen just because you haven't personally experienced it.



Don't

Centre yourself in the conversation.

Ask people intrusive questions about their experiences or expect them to share.

Tell your colleagues how they should feel about matters relating to the group.

How can I be an ally?

Example:

Liam is in a team meeting. His colleague, Nadia, keeps trying to contribute but the others in the meeting are talking over her. Because Liam realises people have previously been listening to him in the meeting, he catches everyone's attention and says, "I believe Nadia has a point to make."



Afterwards, Liam suggests to the Chair that guidelines are implemented in these meetings to ensure everyone who wishes to speak can have the opportunity, rather than it being whoever shouts the loudest.

What is an active bystander?

Bystander

A bystander is someone who has witnessed something negative happen.

Passive bystanders

Passive bystanders are those people who choose, for whatever reason, to ignore the situation, or to do nothing about it.

Active bystanders

Active bystanders are people who do something to try and improve the situation.

Being an **active bystander** means being aware of when someone's behaviour is inappropriate or threatening and choosing to challenge it. If you do not feel comfortable doing this directly, then you can get someone else to help you (a senior manager, line manager or even another colleague or friend).

How can I be an ally?

Be proactive

Don't rely on your colleagues to share all their experiences with you. This can be a burden on them because repeating can mean reliving what could have been traumatic experiences). Be proactive.

Seek out resources and information (such as books or documentaries), so that you can be informed on the issues that are important to the communities you want to support.



Learn from mistakes

Everyone has some degree of unconscious bias, and nobody's perfect – you may make mistakes as an ally. It's important to take responsibility if you inadvertently cause harm, and to examine what happened so that it doesn't happen again.



Join an Affinity Group

Learn more about staff networks or affinity groups in your organisation and consider joining them to learn more about issues facing different communities and where you might be able to help as an active ally. If those networks don't exist yet, maybe there is a need!

How can I be an ally to...

The next slides are to illustrate how you can be an ally to specific groups of people.

Some of these tips may also apply to all groups.



If you have any ideas for further slides or if you feel a group is missing, please contact us by emailing hello@leadingtochange.scot



How can I be an ally to... those in the Black, Asian and minority ethnic community?

Avoid microaggressions

Microaggressions are often less obvious and more unintentional than overt acts of racism but have the cumulative effect of creating an environment that is more challenging and draining.

Talk to others – both allies and those with different views

Talk with other allies about how you can pool your efforts and help, but also be prepared to have difficult conversations with friends or families who have different views and ask them to rethink.

Call out racism

Our Black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues have been disproportionately exposed to acts of racism both small and large, intentional and unintentional. Calling out these acts as an ally will assist in preventing them by building understanding and make intentional acts even less acceptable.

How can I be an ally to... LGBTQ+ people?

LGBTQ+ stands for

L lesbian

G gay

B bisexual

T transgender

Q queer (or questioning)

+ The plus symbol represents other identities that may not fully identify with any of these phrases.

Confidentiality and "outing"

If someone comes out to you as being part of the LGBTQ+ community, don't share this information with other people without consent. Do not assume that because they have told you, they have told everybody.

Be aware of your language

Not everyone is straight, cisgender or both. Instead of saying "ladies and gentlemen", consider saying "everybody"; instead of asking about someone's husband/wife, ask about their partner.

How can I be an ally to... trans people?

There are some ways you can be an ally to trans or nonbinary people specifically.

Respect their name and pronouns

If you're not sure what pronouns to use for someone, ask – but consider sharing your own pronouns too. If you make a mistake, just apologise, correct yourself and move on. Don't ask trans people what their "real" name is – the name you should use is the name they have asked you to use.

Avoid making assumptions

You do not have to look a particular way to be a particular gender. Don't make assumptions about someone's gender because of the way they dress, talk or act.

Misgendering

Using the wrong name and pronouns for a trans person may happen by accident, but repeated and deliberate misgendering is a form of transphobia. If you witness this, stop the individual and ask them to use the correct name and pronouns.



Not sure what any of these terms mean? Please see [here](#) for a glossary of LGBTQ+ terms.

How can I be an ally to... disabled people?

Understand hidden disabilities

It's not always immediately obvious that someone has a disability – just because someone doesn't use a cane doesn't mean they're not visually impaired, and some people may require mobility aids on some days and not on others.

Respect their bodily autonomy

People who use wheelchairs may see it as an extension of their body. Just as you wouldn't touch someone's hair without asking, don't attempt to interact with someone's mobility aid or wheelchair without permission. This includes guide dogs.

Avoid patronising behaviour

Before you congratulate a disabled person on something, think – would you do the same for a colleague without a disability? What is the reason you are congratulating them? A colleague may be an inspiration for the work they do – but not just for coming to work.

How can I be an ally to... people of faith?

Acknowledge different holidays

Be mindful of different religious or spiritual holidays when planning important meetings or events. Avoiding all of these may not be possible, but you can acknowledge clashes and offer accommodations.

Support flexible work schedules

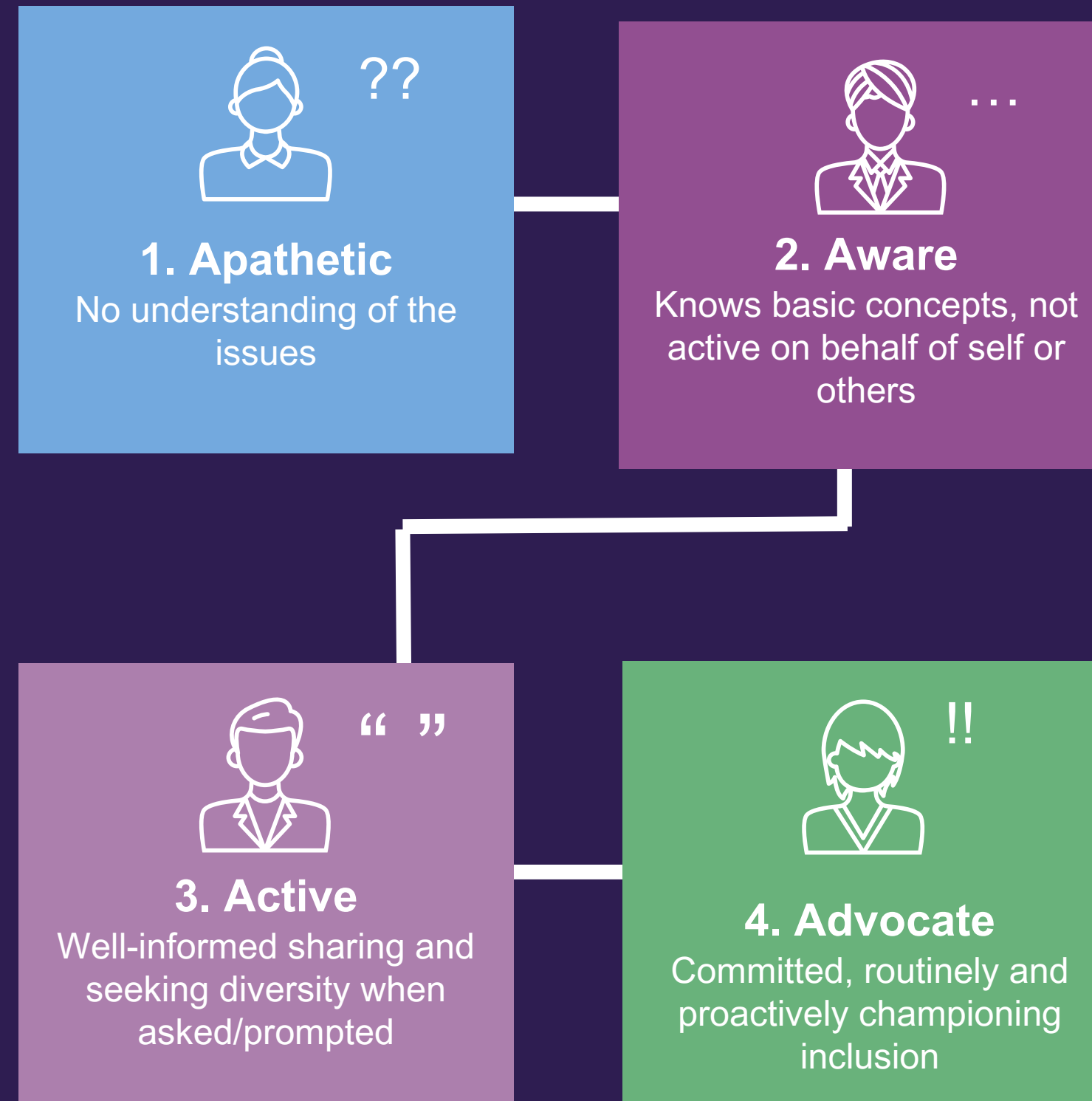
Consider that some colleagues may participate in daily or weekly prayers for which they will need time and an appropriate space. Normalise blocking calendars and be thoughtful when planning meetings.

Be inclusive when planning team events

Recognise that not everyone will drink alcohol, eat certain foods or celebrate the same festivals. Try to mix up social events and consider running events that build community by learning about different faiths and cultures.

Moving up the ally continuum from awareness to advocate

So where do you now feel you are on the allyship continuum? Are you apathetic, aware, active, or an advocate?



Allyship in summary



Further Resources

To Read

[How to promote an anti-racist culture in social work - Community Care](#) (10+ minute read)

[How to be an ally in the workplace: 13 ways to do it | \(ted.com\)](#) (10 minute read)

[Information for allies | Royal College of Psychiatrists \(rcpsych.ac.uk\)](#) (5+ minute read)

[Ally Model of Social Justice in Social Work | Encyclopedia of Social Work \(oxfordre.com\)](#) (1 minute read)

To Watch and Engage

[NHS and Care Volunteer Responders | Supporting Health & Social Care](#) (5 minute watch)

[Insights Pack - Allyship: Understanding and Contributing to an Inclusive Workplace](#) (7+ minutes)

[Allyship: Understanding and contributing effectively to an inclusive workplace](#) (46 minute watch)

[Cultural Humility | Turas | Learn \(nhs.scot\)](#) (1hr 45 minutes to complete)

To Listen

[Joy Warmington on anti-racism and courage | The King's Fund \(kingsfund.org.uk\)](#) (32 minute listen)

[Racism in social work - Community Care](#) (34 minute listen)

[Leading With Empathy & Allyship | Podcast on Spotify](#) (podcast series)



Allyship voices from across the sectors

We want to highlight and promote the voices and experiences of diverse leaders at all levels including those working at frontline / grassroots levels. We aim to celebrate diverse leaders who can act as role models for other aspiring, diverse leaders.



[Access our Diversity blogs](#)

Closing Thoughts

Allyship is a proactive, ongoing, and incredibly difficult practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person of privilege works in solidarity and partnership with a marginalised group of people to help take down the systems that challenge that group's basic rights, equal access, and ability to thrive in our society. (Rochester Racial Justice Toolkit, 2020)

We hope you have found this toolkit useful! We would love to hear from you if you have feedback, questions or suggestions. You can email us at hello@leadingtochange.scot.

There is more information and further resources on our [Allyship Hub](#).

For now, we will leave you with these reflective questions...

**Where do you think you are on your own allyship journey?
Can you think of any examples of good allyship you have seen in your workplace?
What is one action you will commit to take in your journey to becoming an ally?**

Feedback

Let us know what you thought of this resource by completing this [MS Teams form](#).



Allyship Toolkit



Credits

This toolkit was brought to you by Leading to Change.

Please send any feedback or suggestions to hello@leadingtochange.scot

This toolkit offers a spotlight on best-practice resources and we would like to thank the following for their contributions:

- **The EDI team from Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust (Olayinka Iwu, Olivia Cummins and Dorothy Heydecker) for generously allowing us to use sections of their toolkit (identified by their logo).**
- **Hannah Martin and Helene Rodger and the teams at IRISS and Passion4Fusion for their research on cultural safety and their toolkit.**
- **Popular content shared within the Leading to Change community, such as John Amaechi's TedEd video and Sylvia Duckworth's illustration of the 'Wheel of Privilege'.**
- **Blog contributors to the Leading to Change Diversity Blog Series.**

Many thanks to all those involved!