

DE&I Coffee Break

Briefing notes – October 2023



For the sake of privacy, no names will be present on this briefing.

This month saw the LGBTQ+ and Allies Network answering your questions:

How can we stop people asking 'curious' questions about our sexuality at work?

We must all remember that the workplace may not be an appropriate place to ask such questions. When we consider that not everyone is able or comfortable with being their authentic selves in the workplace – some colleagues come to simply do their job and leave, never discussing their home life, children, hobbies or interests.

If you are one of these individuals and you feel someone has been inappropriate in asking private questions, please do advise them that you aren't comfortable discussing such topics and that they should either speak to us, LGBTQ+ and Allies Network.

Additional advice provided on the call was to not assume you know the reasoning behind the question – the questions may be related to their children, own feelings or on behalf of someone less confident. Their intent may be education led.

All allies, consider: if you overhear someone say something you feel is inappropriate to a colleague, should you feel comfortable maybe ask them if you can help instead.

We within the Network are working towards creating an open culture where we are welcome to be our authentic selves (should we wish). We are also creating educational information and support for all, so that day by day we all grow and learn together.



How can we have conversations / educate some of the older generation that struggle to understand LGBTQ+ topics and community members?

A Network member explained that when talking about LGBTQ+ topics with their aged parents that they find relating the topics to something that their parents understand or is personal to them, helps making it more accessible.

Another said that holding these conversations with empathy in mind, explaining that it is ok to not know or understand but trying to find out and accept that things change and adapt will help further the conversation.

Additional advice provided was to keep patience in mind, stay positive and kind, allowing them to process the information in their own time.

Also, speaking with clarity, pride and concise language will help broaden their understanding and normalise the conversations and topics.



With the current onslaught towards Trans people's rights through political legislation and media coverage. How can we support our trans friends and family members?

Firstly, addressing transphobia, if / when you see / hear it, will help people understand that those kinds of behaviours and thoughts are not welcome within the workplace.

Secondly, normalising things like pronouns within the workplace will help provide an inclusive mindset and culture.

We can also sign petitions against exclusive legislation and write to our local Governing Representatives demanding better support and inclusion for all.

Regarding single sex spaces, it was mentioned that Neil deGrasse Tyson (American Astrophysicist) has been challenging the mindset around separating toilets and sporting events by gender and suggested that toilets / changing rooms could be unisex cubicles to provide inclusive spaces, and maybe sporting events could be allocated by weight, speed or hormone level categories – his main messaging was: if the current system doesn't work for all, why don't we redesign the system?

It was asked if DS Smith could:

- include a statement during recruitment interviews about our 'Diversity, Equity & Inclusion' intentions – setting an inclusive landscape and mindset earlier.
- design all new or revamped sites to have inclusive spaces for all, not just females and males assigned spaces, and lastly,
- provide guidance for Line Managers to understand the best way to support those transitioning or who have transitioned within the business.

All great things for us to consider as a business.

