Strategic allyship framework

Make it matter

skillsforcare

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Research shows that allyship is most impactful when allies are active, aware and committed to enhancing inequity and injustice. Strong allyship helps shape organisational and team cultures that are genuinely inclusive.

By adopting a strategic approach, both organisations and individuals can cultivate a culture that actively reduces behaviours harmful to people and their wellbeing, while fostering environments where everyone feels valued and supported.

The benefits of having a strong allyship strategy are:

- Increased productivity
- Greater success in attracting and retaining diverse talent
- Enhanced employee engagement
- A more inclusive workplace

At Skills for Care, we define allyship as taking action to support and advocate for others, creating inclusive workplaces where everyone feels safe, valued and empowered. It's an ongoing commitment to equity, inclusion and belonging that benefits individuals and the whole organisation.

Make it matter

1

Define and understand allyship

Establish a shared definition of allyship within the organisation that reflects inclusion, support and advocacy for protected and marginalised groups and anyone seeking and needing support.

Educate staff about what allyship is and why it matters through workshops, briefings and internal communications.

Analyse

and look at various definitions of allyship that already exist and review if any of the definitions are ones your organisation would like to adopt. Alternatively, you can develop one of your own.

Plan

and co-create the definition with all your staff and senior leaders and look at ways you can communicate this definition across your organisation.

Do

deliver the definition through multiple channels from including in policies to looking at how you add this as a value and practice across your organisation.

Review

after 12 months. Review the impact of the definition and whether your staff understand what allyship means. This could be done via a survey, conversations, team meetings 1-2-1, objectives etc.

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2

Culture and readiness assessment

Evaluate the current organisational culture around allyship. Use surveys, focus groups and interviews to assess staff understanding and attitudes towards allyship.

Identify gaps and opportunities for development.

Our positive culture toolkit can support you at different stages of your workplace culture journey to establish, maintain and improve your workplace culture so that it's inclusive, compassionate and collaborative.

Analyse

using existing organisational methods to test the culture of allyship within your organisation and the readiness for staff to adopt as everyday practice.

Plan

how you will address the results gathered to ensure that your organisation's culture is in a state of readiness for allyship.

Do

address how you're going to embed this as part of your organisational culture.

Review

after 12 months. Review your organisational progress.

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Embedding Allyship culture in the organisation

Build on the insights gained from your culture and readiness assessment to actively embed allyship as a core part of everyday organisational life. This involves addressing identified knowledge and behaviour gaps through intentional development, clear expectations, and sustained engagement so that allyship is consistently practiced across the organisation.

Analyse

gathered evidence of the state of your organisation's culture, you are now aware of the gaps in your colleagues/staff knowledge around allyship.

Plan

and develop for how you're going to address this through transformative development programmes for your staff.

Do

engage your staff in a programme of training that addresses the behaviour and the values you expect around allyship.

Review

in 12 months. Look at the progress made and what other interventions may also be required.

4

Leadership commitment and sponsor

Engage and educate leaders to embed allyship by including them on the leadership development programmes.

Ensure leaders model inclusive behaviours.

Hold senior leaders accountable for allyship-related goals.

Analyse

and identify all policies, strategic documents and branding in which allyship can be included.

Plan

at the next review period of all relevant policies and strategic documents building commitment to allyship. Plan allyship related branding and messaging for emails signatures.

Do

identify an allyship sponsor amongst the leadership team to hold leaders and the organisation to account for the embedding of an allyship culture.

Review

in 12 months time. Review with the sponsor evidence of change and redo culture survey.

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5

Learning and development strategy

Develop a comprehensive learning strategy to embed allyship across all levels. This could include:

- Training delivered by e.g. equality, diversity and inclusion, unconscious bias, microaggressions and allyship training. Skills for Care runs a building allyship programme that gives people the awareness, confidence and practical tools they need to be effective allies for equity and inclusion at work and beyond.

- Skill-building workshops that help staff to role play and develop advocacy, have a voice and the tools and techniques to respond/reply and support.

- Ongoing learning through reflection sessions and as part of line management conversations.

Analyse

and develop a long-term strategy around building allyship into your organisation values and learning and development strategy.

Plan

the impact you're trying to achieve. Aiming for SMART objectives around your learning and development goals across your organisation.

Do

deliver meaningful interventions such as all staff meetings, role play, workshops, lunch and learn sessions that provide staff with tools and techniques with a 2 year timeframe to transform your organisational culture.

Review

your progress each year and address if you're not meeting your objectives.

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6 Mentorship and sponsorship

Implement a sponsorship and/or reciprocal mentoring programme where leaders actively support and advocate for under-represented staff. A sponsorship programme is a professional relationship where a senior leader helps a junior leader grow in their career by opening doors to new opportunities, make introductions across the organisation and wider networks, as well as providing guidance to help them reach their full potential.

Analyse
how you support and sponsor staff development in your organisation.

Plan
at developing a sponsorship programme that allows under-represented staff to develop their leadership skills and practice.

Do
launch a mentoring and/or sponsorship programme. This can be small scale through a pilot to give you an opportunity to review and implement change. Work with your staff to better understand what their needs are around mentoring and sponsorship.

Review
your mentoring and sponsorship programme with continuous feedback loop from those who enrol on the programme. Examples of establish mentoring schemes including:

- Traditional mentorship
- Reciprocal mentoring to provide leaders with insight into experiences of diverse staff and others.

Framework built around protected characteristics

Ensure allyship initiatives are inclusive of all protected groups under the Equality Act 2010 e.g. race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, etc.

Complete an equality impact assessment to regularly review initiatives for intersectionality and inclusivity.

Analyse

how your initiatives are being experienced for all protected groups under the Equality Act. What more can you do to ensure that those from protected groups are supported and included in allyship.

Plan

initiatives that support each group so that every feel included and it creates a sense of belonging.

Do

run a series of initiatives that are wrapped around those from protected groups and allies.

Review

the impact of the change on your organisation's culture after 12 months.

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Operational integration

Embed allyship into line management responsibilities as part of performance and development processes.

Integrate allyship into organisational values, strategic plans, policies, procedures and practices

Analyse

all your policy and procedures and whether your organisation and strategic plans align to your strategic allyship framework.

Plan

the outline and share the expected behaviours from your staff far and wide across your organisation.

Do

embed this as part of your values and behaviours moving forward.

Review

as part of your wider staff engagement embed review of the strategic as part of regular practice.

Continuous improvement

Establish mechanisms to monitor, review and evaluate the impact of allyship initiatives.

Analyse

your key performance indicators (KPIs) and how you can align your allyship framework.

Plan

regular staff feedback and check-ins, focus groups to explored lived experiences of allyship.

Do

acknowledge and learn from mistakes to foster a culture of growth and responsiveness. Our positive culture toolkit can help you learn how to foster an inclusive workplace culture.

Review

as part of continuous improvement look at areas of improvement and lessons learned as part of the process.

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Communication and engagement

Work collaboratively with staff to track progress and ensure shared ownership of outcomes.

Analyse

how you want to engage and communicate with staff to track progress and ensure shared outcomes are communicated.

Plan

your communication and engagement strategy for embedding your strategic allyship.

Do

look to celebrate successes and share positive impact stories across the organisation and with those who draw on care and support.

Review

as part of a continuous process to communicate your challenges and successes.

Gold thread principle

Make allyship a golden thread that weaves through every aspect of your organisation.

Allyship should be embedded within your culture, values, and ethos - living and breathing throughout your organisation. Every member of staff should understand how allyship is reflected in your policies and procedures, reinforced through ongoing staff development, and made visible and implicit to those outside your organisation.