

Embedding a speaking up culture Implementing an allies programme

The need for allies – a powerful business case

- Employers need to proactively address workplace bullying and harassment. It's a moral issue.
- **Mitigating risk:** There are serious legal, reputational, business and regulatory risks as well as a human cost to inaction and complacency.
- **Maximising engagement:** There are huge gains in employee engagement and productivity through getting it right.
- Proactive steps include a clear policy or code of conduct; effective staff training; and a commitment to building a speaking up culture. Paper-based compliance is not sufficient.
- Allies provide another resource for employees to use when something's not right.

What are allies?

- Supportive colleagues who are available to listen when someone is concerned about issues around workplace behaviour, discrimination, harassment, respect and dignity at work.
- An informal point of contact for anyone who is uncomfortable about something that is happening to them, something they have witnessed, or against whom an accusation has been made.
- Trained in how to handle emotional conversations, offer a listening ear and signpost support.

Preparing to implement an allies programme

- Get senior leaders' sponsorship
- Scope the role clearly
- How will you find your allies?
- How many will you have?
- How will you support them?
- What resources might they need?
- How will you train them?
- Consider:
 - Allies' relationship with HR
 - Confidentiality and anonymity
 - Whistleblowing

It's essential to train your allies

Individuals need to be trained for the responsible, high profile role of an ally. They need to fully understand what's involved and be given the skill, confidence and ongoing support to do it well. It won't be a role that's right for everyone and getting it wrong will undermine your programme. Our training would include:

The role of the allies	Understanding the expectations, skills, and commitment required Understanding the scope of the role.
Dignity at work /working with respect	Ensuring allies have a deep understanding of your staff training on expected and appropriate workplace behaviour in your organisation.
Essential knowledge 1 – external rules (the legal and regulatory framework)	Ensuring allies understand the legal context / framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the law on bullying and harassment; and • other legal issues (whistleblowing, recording keeping and GDPR)
Essential knowledge 2 – internal rules (organisational culture and procedure)	Ensuring allies can reflect and embed the company culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the role of managers; HR; EAP in supporting appropriate workplace behaviour; and • company procedures and processes – grievances; whistleblowing; harassment; speaking up.
Unconscious bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring allies can be inclusive, non-judgemental listeners.
Skills work	Ensuring allies have the skills needed to perform the role well (listening, questioning, body language and eye contact, emotional intelligence). Exploring examples of scenarios and addressing them appropriately. Practising handling difficult conversations with live actors.