

BRIEFING

RACE AT WORK CHARTER COMMITMENT SIX – SUPPORTING INCLUSION ALLIES

The definition of allyship from the Oxford Dictionary: ‘Active support for the rights of a minority or marginalised group without being a member of it’.

Background

In 2021, we added allyship questions to the Race at Work survey for the first time. The findings demonstrate that employers must tap into the energy and enthusiasm of the inclusion allies in their organisations. We saw the first bold demonstration of support following the death of George Floyd as White and Black people in the UK stood together to say that change is needed; 9,450 of the comments were on allyship alone.

For example, 39% of White employees said: *“My organisation supports employees like me who want to take part in race and ethnic diversity and inclusion activities.”* This indicates that the commitment to supporting Black employees as allies is burning as bright as it was in the shocking summer of 2020.

Inclusion, belonging, and voice are key components of any workplace to ensure that your employees feel valued. 26% of White employees say that they would like more support from their employers to promote race equality and inclusion.

A rapid review of some of the comments in the Race at Work 2021 survey comments from Bain and Company found that the most desired forms of support for Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse respondents include:

- Senior support and leadership, training

- Updated policy and processes
- Raising awareness / open discussions and events

“SENIOR LEADERSHIP COULD DO MORE TO PROMOTE AND VOCALLY ALLOW THESE CONVERSATIONS TO TAKE PLACE IN ‘WORK TIME.’”

MIXED, FEMALE, 30

Allyship top of mind for White respondents

26% of White respondents said that they wanted more support on allyship from their organisations.

“I’D LIKE TO SEE MORE THAT CAN BE DONE TO SUPPORT ALLYSHIP SO THAT THOSE IN MARGINALISED GROUPS DON’T FEEL LIKE THEY HAVE TO DO ALL THE WORK TO MAKE CHANGE.”

WHITE, FEMALE, 27

“WHITE COLLEAGUES ARE FORBIDDEN FROM SITTING ON THE RACE AND EQUALITY WORKING GROUP, OR FROM JOINING THE MEETINGS (BY THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP PERSON WHO RUNS THE



ALLIES

GROUP). THIS ENTIRELY SHUTS DOWN ALLYSHIP.”

WHITE, FEMALE, 42

“LAST YEAR, LOTS OF WORK WAS DONE AROUND TALKING ABOUT RACE AT WORK. I THINK THE NEXT STEP IS TO REALLY WORK ON BUILDING OUR ALLY NETWORK AND PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR EVERYONE TO SUPPORT THOSE FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS TO OURSELVES, E.G. CALLING OUT MICROAGGRESSIONS IF WE SEE THESE IN THE WORKPLACE.”

WHITE, FEMALE, 30

“I REPORTED THE INCIDENT TO A HIGHER MANAGER, AND I JUST GOT IGNORED.”

WHITE, MALE, 59

“THE SUPPORT APPEARS TO BE THERE, BUT UNTIL PEOPLE HAVE EDUCATED THEMSELVES, AND HAVE A TRUE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN ALLY, IT'S DIFFICULT TO STATE WHAT SUPPORT I OR OTHERS NEED.”

PAKISTANI, FEMALE, 29

Some practical ways that employers can support allies is to provide:

- safe spaces for allies to share challenges and good practice ideas and stories;

- support for allies with guidelines on active bystander actions and interventions; and
- clear policy guidance, setting out your organisation’s commitment to listen, support and act to enable allies to increase their impact and effectiveness.

BITC has produced some resources to support employers and their employees to be better allies.

[Racism and inappropriate behaviours – 5 actions for allies](#) June 2020

[BITC Race at Work Black Voices Report](#), August 2020

[Anti-racism and allyship in the workplace a brief guide](#). August 2020

[Race at Work Charter Report](#) 2020

[Black Talent Allyship](#) May 2021

BITC's expert Inclusion Advisers deliver a range of workshops and training sessions for our members on topics as such as allyship, bias, bystander intervention and intersectionality and privilege. In addition to helping our members progress against individual charter commitments, our Inclusion Advisory team can also work with you to embed the commitments as part of a review of your wider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy. To find out more contact advisory@bitc.org.uk.

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