



Be A Trans Ally At Work

An Advice Leaflet
for Usdaw Members




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Trans workers need allies. Trans and non-binary people make up a very small proportion of the UK population (less than 0.5%), but they receive a disproportionate amount of negative attention from media and politicians.

It's not always easy being trans at work. Trans and non-binary workers can often feel isolated; they may be the only trans worker in the workplace and are more likely to experience harassment, abuse and unfair treatment, just because of who they are.

In light of the recent Supreme Court judgement it's even more important that trans members know they have allies at work.





Solidarity and equality are at the heart of what we do as a union. Standing up for our trans colleagues, friends and family members means creating safe and inclusive environments where trans people feel welcome and able to be themselves.

Many members tell us they want to support their trans colleagues and the trans community, but aren't always sure where to start.

This guide is designed to provide practical tips on being a good trans ally and help you feel more confident to speak up if you encounter transphobia.

Being an ally isn't difficult, and change begins with small steps and actions we can take together.

Who is an Ally?

An ally is someone who stands up for other people who are at the sharp end of discrimination and unfair treatment – even though they don't share their experience of discrimination.

This could mean:

- A white member who speaks out against racism.
- A straight member who joins a Pride protest.
- A non-disabled member campaigning for better rights for disabled people
- A male member who calls out sexism at work.

Knowing and working with people who we see experience unfair treatment makes us, as Union members, want to do something about it.

Even if the term is not familiar to you, you may already be an ally, as Usdaw reps and members are supporting each other at work every day.

Top Tips to Be a Good Trans Ally



Read, Watch and Learn

There's lots of free information available to anyone who's interested in finding out more about what it means to be trans and how you can help to support trans and non-binary people both in and outside of work.

Some people have never met or worked with a trans person before and that means they can have lots of questions. Trans people often find themselves acting as 'spokespeople', but it can be exhausting having to constantly educate those around you on what it's like to be you.

Making the time to read, listen, watch and share information with other colleagues about what you can do to create more welcoming and inclusive workplaces for trans workers is a great way to support trans colleagues and keep yourself informed on the issues that matter to trans people.

There's a list of helpful resources and links at the end of this leaflet. You could even share this leaflet in your workplace!



Listen to Trans People

Make time to speak to and listen to your trans colleagues, just as you would with other colleagues.

Listening to how they describe themselves will help you ensure you use the right pronoun and name if you are unsure. Don't be afraid to ask a colleague what their pronouns are if you are not sure or have forgotten.

Don't worry if you realise you've used the wrong name, pronoun or terminology: just apologise, correct yourself and move on. Don't make a big deal about it but make an effort to not make the same error in the future.

Be Respectful

Always remember to be respectful of people's privacy and boundaries. Asking intrusive questions about a person's body isn't ok.

There are many topics - medical transition, life pre-transition, sexual activity - that you may be curious about. That doesn't mean it's appropriate to ask a trans person about them.

As a general rule, don't ask a trans person personal questions about their transition; for example, if they are going to have, or are having, surgery. Each person's transition is different; there is no right or wrong way to be trans. If people are happy for other colleagues to know details of their life, they will share this in their own way.

Include Trans Colleagues At Work

Be aware if trans colleagues are being treated differently in the workplace, and make an effort to include them in work and social conversations – as you would with anyone else.

Trans workers often say they can feel ignored or cut out of day-to-day conversations at work. Sometimes this can be because other colleagues don't know what to say, but they may be being deliberately excluded. Either way, it leaves people isolated.

Keep an eye out if someone always seems to be left out. Making sure trans colleagues are part of conversations and invited to events is simply good colleague behaviour. Everyone deserves to feel that they are valued at work.

Call Out Transphobia At Work

If you see or hear other people bullying, harassing or acting unkindly towards trans colleagues, speak out!

This could be someone deliberately repeating a name which they know the colleague no longer goes by, deliberately using the wrong pronouns (for example, calling a person 'he' when they have transitioned to female), making fun of the way a person looks, demanding answers to intrusive questions about their body or sex life, or making transphobic comments to their face or behind their back.

Let people know what they're doing isn't okay. You may need to remind some people that a trans person's name or pronouns have changed. This is best done in a quiet moment.

Challenging transphobia can't be left to trans workers alone. We all need to do our part in challenging transphobia and changing attitudes to make work a safe and inclusive environment for trans people. Speak to your rep or official if you need any support raising an issue at work.



Support Better Rights for Trans People

Sign a petition: Signing a petition is a really quick and simple way to lend your support to an issue and join a call for change. Keep an eye out for petitions online that are calling for improvements to trans workers' rights and encourage others to sign too.

Write to your MP: If you have a bit more time, you could think about writing to or emailing your local MP to ask them to support any upcoming bills in Parliament that are calling for better rights for trans people. Your MP is elected to represent you and the people in your community, so letting them know what you think can help to guide the way they vote in Parliament.

Raise Awareness

The more people understand and know about trans rights the better.

Many companies have a policy setting out support for trans workers, along with bullying and harassment policies that make it clear that anti-trans behaviour or comments are unacceptable in the workplace. It's worth checking your employer's policies and making other colleagues aware. If there isn't a policy, you could suggest your employer might want to look at introducing one, with the support of your rep or official.

Holding a workplace campaign is a great way to raise awareness. Usdaw has campaign packs available, raising awareness about LGBT+ rights at work. The packs include leaflets about LGBT+ rights, including information for trans workers along with posters and freebies. Packs are free for reps to order from the Usdaw website.

You could also arrange to attend a local Pride protest with other colleagues. It's a fun and inclusive way of making a visible show of support for trans workers and LGBT+ rights.



What does it mean to be trans or non-binary?

Trans: Trans (or transgender) is a term used for people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex that is written on their birth certificate. For the majority of people, their gender identity matches their birth sex, but trans people identify with a gender that is different to the one on their birth certificate and affirm their identity by transitioning from male to female (trans women) or from female to male (trans men).

Non-binary: Gender is often referred to as 'binary', meaning two - and most people, including most transgender people, will be either male or female. The term 'non-binary' refers to people who don't class themselves as either exclusively male or female. Non-binary identities are varied and people can use many different terms to describe themselves. Non-binary people may use 'they/them' pronouns instead of 'he/him' or 'she/her' when referring to themselves. They may also choose the gender neutral prefix 'Mx' instead of 'Mr' or 'Ms/Mrs'.

Find Out More

Usdaw Advice Guides for members. Available online or as paper copies to order:

- *Changing Gender - Understanding the Issues (Leaflet 424):*
www.usdaw.org.uk/424
- *LGBT+ Rights at Work (Leaflet 337):*
www.usdaw.org.uk/337
- *Rights for LGBT+ Parents (Leaflet 372):*
www.usdaw.org.uk/372

TUC, How to be a Good Trans Ally At Work: www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/Trans_Ally_Guidance_2019.pdf

Transforming the Workplace: A TUC Guide for Trade Union activists on supporting trans members:
www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Transformingtheworkplace.pdf

The Trevor Project guide to being an ally to trans and non-binary young people: www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/a-guide-to-being-an-ally-to-transgender-and-nonbinary-youth

Stonewall, The truth about trans: www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/lgbtq-hubs/trans-hub/the-truth-about-trans

LGBT Foundation, A Guide to Being a Trans Ally: <https://lgbt.foundation/help/a-guide-to-being-a-trans-ally>

Amnesty International, Gender Identity for Beginners: A Guide to Being a Great Trans Ally: www.amnesty.org.uk/LGBTQ-equality/gender-identity-beginners-guide-trans-allies

Usdaw wants to thank the TUC and acknowledge its guide on 'How to be a Good Trans Ally At Work' which formed the basis of this leaflet.

More Information

Usdaw Nationwide

Wherever you work, an Usdaw rep or official (Area Organiser) is not far away. For further information or assistance, contact your Usdaw rep or local Usdaw office. Alternatively, you can phone our Freephone Helpline **0800 030 80 30** to connect you to your regional office, or visit our website: **www.usdaw.org.uk**

You can also write to the Union's Head Office. Just write **FREEPOST USDAW** on the envelope and put it in the post.

Join Usdaw

You can join online at:
www.usdaw.org.uk/JoinUs



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What Happens Next

Once we process your application, you will receive a membership card with our Helpline telephone number and a New Member's Pack giving details of all the benefits and professional services available to you.



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