

**Sheffield
Hallam
University**

**LGBT+
ALLIES**

AT SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY



Welcome from Professor Alison Metcalfe,
University Leadership Team (ULT) Champion for LGBT+ staff

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THANK YOU FOR JOINING THE LGBT+ ALLIES GROUP AT SHEFFIELD HALLAM.

Sheffield Hallam University makes equality, diversity and inclusion a central tenet of its organisation through its central strategy which focuses on 'transforming lives'.

Allies of LGBT+ people should never underestimate the significant difference they can make to LGBT+ people's lives through positive support. This involves recognising that individuals deserve respect and equality, able to be themselves openly and honestly with their colleagues, without fear of their reactions.

One of the hardest things many LGBT+ people find difficult, especially early in their lives, is the need to keep 'coming out' i.e. telling another person; family, friend, colleague or acquaintance that they are a LGBT+ person. It takes courage and resilience to be so open especially as others' can be less than accepting and even harshly negative.

During my lifetime, the acknowledgement and openness with which LGBT+ people can live their lives without fear of retribution has changed beyond anything most LGBT+ people of my generation and before, ever imagined. Sexual orientation and gender identity was rarely discussed and if it was, it was often in derogatory terms. There was even sometimes physical and psychological abuse of those who identified as different from what was considered the heterosexual 'norm'.

The growing number of allies have transformed LGBT+ people's experience. From my own experience, having the acceptance and care of friends and colleagues for most of my adult life enabled me to be the person I am today. You should never underestimate what you give to LGBT+ people by being an ally and an advocate for them. I know many LGBT+ people are enormously grateful - allies have helped transform our life experiences.

In deciding to become an ally for LGBT+ you are contributing to a major societal change, creating a safe environment where all colleagues feel valued and empowered. Having an open culture where colleagues can be open about who they are improves people's work performance and engagement with the organisation. We can all champion this change and improvement to the equality in the workplace, and on behalf of LGBT+ colleagues I wish to thank you for agreeing to tackle homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

Together we can continue to transform LGBT+ people's lives, where there are no assumptions about sexuality or gender identity and individuals are valued as a person and for the contribution they make, to society and the university.

I look forward to working with my University Leadership Team (ULT) colleagues on your behalf to continuing to build a university and a society where all people can be honest about who they are and what they want to achieve personally and professionally.

There is a dedicated Allies page on SIGNAL's blogsite where you can find LGBT+ related information and resources and we will look to include an online forum where there can be a dialogue between all relevant parties to ensure we all support LGBT+ staff.

Alison Metcalfe
*Pro Vice Chancellor for Health & Wellbeing
LGBT+ Champion*



SIGNAL IS THE STAFF NETWORK FOR LGBT+ STAFF AT SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY.

It provides a forum for staff who identify as LGBT+ to get together, and also advises the University on policies affecting LGBT+ staff. We coordinate and support activity and events on campus and in the city to recognise and raise awareness of LGBT+ issues. We are passionate about setting up an allies programme at Sheffield Hallam.

WHAT IS AN ALLY?

An ally is an advocate, supporter and friend. Someone that stands up for their colleagues and helps to create a working environment where LGBT+ people feel welcomed and included. An ally stands up for and champions LGBT+ equality and challenges homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

An ally is someone who believes that LGBT+ people should experience full equality in the workplace. Good allies recognise that LGBT+ people can perform better if they can be themselves and allies use their role within an organisation to create a culture where this can happen. Some LGBT+ individuals fear that if they come out, their good relationships with colleagues will change and their colleagues may treat them differently. Allies help to create a safe environment for everyone to be able to bring their entire selves to work.

Allies can see and influence how the day-to-day experiences of being out as LGBT+ at work actually plays out.

At work it matters because

- One in five (19 per cent) lesbian, gay and bi employees have experienced verbal bullying from colleagues, customers or service users because of their sexual orientation in the last five years
- One in eight (13 per cent) lesbian, gay and bi employees would not feel confident reporting homophobic bullying in their workplace
- Over a quarter (26 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bi workers are not at all open to colleagues about their sexual orientation
- Half of trans people (51 per cent) have hidden their identity at work for fear of discrimination
- More than a third of trans students (36 per cent) in higher education have experienced negative comments or behaviour from staff

Allies really can make a difference, so please get involved.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN LGBT+ ALLY AT SHEFFIELD HALLAM

By signing up as an ally you are committing to the following:

Be visible

The single most important thing you can do as an ally is make yourself visible, so everyone knows that Sheffield Hallam is a workplace where people can spend energy being themselves, not hiding it. There are lots of things you can do to show your visible support. You can wear the rainbow lanyard or pin badge and you can use our email signature. Being visible means that LGBT+

colleagues know that you are positive about LGBT+ inclusion, whether they're a new starter or someone who you have known for a long time.

Avoid making assumptions about someone's orientation or identity

This can be hard to remember, but can make a real difference to people. It's as simple as remembering to ask 'do you have a partner?' instead of 'do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife?' Do not make assumptions about the pronouns that an individual

wishes to be known by, ask them. Do not assume that all LGBT+ colleagues have had a negative experience.

Get to know the issues

If they are happy to, make time to talk to LGBT+ colleagues, students, family and friends about their experiences, as well as staying informed about LGBT+ issues. There are number of ways you can do this. You can read articles and information, attend ally or SIGNAL events or use the resources section on the SIGNAL website: blogs.shu.ac.uk/signal. We'll help by sending you regular email updates. You can also visit external websites such as stonewall.org.uk or transequality.org. The more active you are as an ally, the more people you'll meet and the more you'll learn about the LGBT+ spectrum, it's constantly changing. If you have any questions, please email SIGNAL at lgbt@shu.ac.uk

Don't 'out' people without their consent

Coming out is personal and different for everyone. Some people are out to the world, others only come out to a select few. It is not your place to divulge someone else's sexual orientation or gender identity, unless you have their consent to do so. Coming out can be hard enough, choosing who to come out to is another dimension of this. Even if you are well intentioned, it is not your story to tell.

Embrace things even if you don't fully understand them

Every person is different and that means we all come across things that we might not understand or that are new or different to us. It's okay to not fully understand a person's identity as long as you don't judge them – curiosity will get you further than judgement.

Challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language and behaviour

In the workplace, this kind of behaviour tends to be subtle. It can be someone saying "that's gay" or deliberately misgendering someone but it could also be someone being treated differently, or comments being made behind someone's back. It's hard to speak up in these circumstances, but if you do it can make a huge difference to our working environment. If you are unsure about how to challenge this openly or you feel unconfident, talk to your manager or another colleague to see if they can support you in challenging inappropriate behaviour. If you feel unable to do this personally then escalate this to SIGNAL, or the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team

in the Directorate of Human Resources and Organisational Development. If you feel unable to challenge the behaviour personally, they will do this themselves (to find out the the contact details for these people please see the SIGNAL website blog, shu.ac.uk/signal).

Before challenging the inappropriate behaviour, you should also check to see if the person affected is okay and ask if they feel that it was inappropriate, as people can have different opinions on what they find offensive.

Everyone at the University is expected to behave in a way that is aligned to the [dignity at work policy](#).

Champion being an ally and get others involved

It is really important that as many people as possible across the University are aware of the allies programme, what it means to be an ally and why this is important in promoting an inclusive workplace. Encourage members of your team or other colleagues to get involved as an ally by promoting and talking about the allies programme and events they can get involved in.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The list below includes some of the most common terms used when people talk about their sexual orientation or gender identity. However, this is not an exhaustive list and more information and the latest version of this glossary can be found at [stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms)

These terms relate to a person's sexual orientation – their emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to another person.

ALLY

A (typically) straight and/or cisgender person (see definition on the next page) who supports the LGBT+ community. It could however be a bi person being an ally to their lesbian colleague.

ASEXUAL (OR ACE)

Someone who does not experience sexual attraction.

BISEXUAL OR BI

Refers to a person who has an emotional and/or sexual orientation towards multiple genders.

COMING OUT

When a person tells someone/ others about their identity as a LGBT+ person. This is something LGBT+ people do again and again as they “come out” to different people throughout their life.

GAY

Refers to a man or woman who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards the same sex. Also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality. Some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian.

HETEROSEXUAL/ STRAIGHT

Refers to a person who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards people of the opposite gender.

HOMOSEXUAL

This might be considered a more medical term used to describe someone who has an emotional romantic and/or sexual orientation towards someone of the same gender. The term ‘gay’ is now more generally used.

LESBIAN

Refers to a woman who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women.

LGBT+

The acronym for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and any other non-typical orientation or gender.

OUTED

When an LGBT+ person's sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed to someone else without their consent, as opposed to the individual coming out.

QUEER

In the past a derogatory term for LGBT+ individuals. The term has now been reclaimed by LGBT+ young people in particular who don't identify with traditional categories around gender identity and sexual orientation, but is still viewed to be derogatory by some.

The terms below refer to a person's gender identity, that is, their internal sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else (see non-binary below). Individuals may identify differently to what's on this list and a person's gender identity and pronouns may change over time.

CISGENDER OR CIS

Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.

INTERSEX

Non-typical hormonal, chromosomal or physical features for their sex.

NON-BINARY

An umbrella term for a person who does not identify as a man or woman exclusively.

SEX

Assigned to a person on the basis of primary sex characteristics (genitalia) and reproductive functions. Sometimes the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are interchanged to mean ‘male’ or ‘female’.

TRANS

An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) Transgender, Transsexual, Gender-queer (GQ), Gender-fluid, Non-binary, Gender-variant, Genderless, Agender, Nongender, Third gender, Two-spirit, Bi-gender, Transman, Transwoman, Trans masculine, Trans feminine and Neutrois.

TRANSGENDER MAN

A term used to describe someone who was not assigned male at birth but identifies as a man. This may be shortened to trans man or FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male.

TRANSGENDER WOMAN

A term used to describe someone who was not assigned female at birth but identifies as a woman. This may be shortened to trans woman or MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female.

TRANSITIONING

The steps a trans person may take to live in the gender with which they identify. Each person's transition will involve different things. For some this involves a medical transition, such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to have this. Transitioning also might involve things such as telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

