

How to support BAME colleagues in the workplace

There has been increased media coverage in the past few months of incidents of police brutality and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) communities across the globe. This has led to the rise in protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, and international discussion around the subject of race inequality.

We are all likely to have been affected by recent events in some way. Whether it be emotionally from hearing the news, more actively if you've chosen to protest, but no more intimately than if you are a member of the BAME community. It can be difficult to understand—and impossible to empathise—with how a friend, colleague or employee is feeling in light of recent news.

There is more we can all do, however, to actively show our support and be allies to our BAME communities. Below are some ways in which you can support your colleagues and employees in the workplace:



Reach out and check in

Ask how they are really feeling and offer your support. Be considerate that they may need to take some personal time to be with family and process their feelings. Accommodate last minute leave requests, or allow compassionate leave, if you can.



Listen

Listen, above all else. If a colleague feels comfortable and wants to share their experience, then really listen to what they say, hear their experience and respect how they feel. Take the opportunity to learn and build a better understanding.



Recognise your own privilege

Many of us take our privilege for granted on a daily basis and may not even be aware of it. Take the time to stop, think and really reflect. This is key to understanding the struggles of your BAME co-workers.



Get talking

Start conversations with friends, family and colleagues even if these feel uncomfortable. Use the knowledge you've acquired to have informed discussions without judgement, educate others and continue your learning.



Educate yourself

Notice where there are gaps in your knowledge and understanding, and be active in filling them. We live in an age where it couldn't be easier to find resources, so take the opportunity to learn and build on your awareness of important issues.



Enforce zero tolerance

Communicate that racism will not be tolerated and empower staff to speak up when witnessing any form of racism in the workplace. Silence is covert complicity, so if you hear what may seem like a flippant remark it is crucial not to turn a blind eye.



Be proactive

Initiatives such as an office book club encourage open and honest discussion around the subject of race. When buying anything for the office, be aware of where you're buying from and consider making a conscious effort to buy from local, BAME businesses. These are all active steps towards being a better ally for your BAME employees and co-workers.



Be mindful of your language

We can be led by the media which may use language to shock and grab attention. Words such as "riot" and "looting" are emotive, with implicit violent connotations. It's important to be aware of how valid the use of these words truly is and their impact. Consider what you say and challenge others when using language you deem to be inflammatory and careless.