

# Being an Ally to BAME People

The need for BAME allies is incredibly important across education, working life and beyond.

BAME people continue to fight every day against racism, and heal from the effects it has had on their lives. Great allies can support them, however, and help dismantle the ways in which our institutions and culture are deeply rooted in oppression. Being an ally doesn't necessarily mean you fully understand what it feels like to be oppressed. It means you are taking on the struggle as your own. One of the first steps towards being an effective BAME ally is understanding white privilege.

## What is white privilege?

White privilege exists because of historic, enduring racism and biases.

Privilege, particularly white, is hard to see for those of us who were born with access to power and resources. It is very visible for those to whom privilege was not granted.

White privilege is an institutional (rather than personal) set of benefits granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions. One of the primary privileges is that of having greater access to power and resources than people of colour do; in other words, purely on the basis of our skin colour doors are open to us that are not open to other people.

White privilege should be viewed as a built-in advantage, separate from one's level of income or effort. White privilege doesn't mean your life isn't hard. It means your skin tone isn't one of the factors making it harder.

As allies to BAME people, there are things you can do **actively** to show your support for your colleagues, friends and family:

- Do the research by educating yourself about systemic racism and familiarising yourself with race and ethnicity issues within the workplace and society. By educating yourself you can undo your own learned behaviours and better challenge those around you.
- Listen and learn - When BAME people voice concerns, vent about issues they face or discuss oppression, you should be taking notes. Understand that these concerns are not a personal attack, and trust the experiences of those who are oppressed.
- Don't make assumptions about BAME people, their lives, their problems or their situations. Listen to BAME people. Never assume you know best - there's a big difference between being a white ally and a white saviour. Don't speak for BAME people, but instead make sure you're making the space for them and their own voices.
- Extend your knowledge by having a one-to-one conversations with a BAME colleague or friend and discuss how you could best support them.

- Ensure your HR recruitment methods are inclusive – look at language, anonymised CVs, language used etc. Guarantee that unconscious bias training is available for all line managers and candidate interviewers as a baseline.
- If you find yourself in all-white social circles associated with work where there is diversity, then make an effort to better involve BAME people. Be mindful of cultural differences as being ignorant of these can automatically exclude people, e.g. non-drinking etc.
- If you hear or encounter derogatory, racist remarks – **call it out**. Use your position to challenge this unacceptable behaviour – it should not be the sole responsibility of BAME people to challenge racism. Remaining silent makes you part of the problem.
- Start in your home - confront racist family members, call out problematic language and microaggressions even when it's uncomfortable and there are no BAME people around to be offended. They'll be more open to listening to you , and it will give you the opportunity to effect real change.