

INTERSECTIONAL ALLYSHIP



Roundtable
LEARNINGS



Review by Alara Addi, Altogether Different Community Consultant

We were very excited to host our very first roundtable as the Altogether Different team a few weeks ago. The inaugural topic was 'Intersectional Allyship'. We spoke about how to be an ally to different groups of people, how groups are nuanced and sometimes face both discrimination and privilege simultaneously.

Our event started with a talk by our guest speaker [Rev. Andy Marshall](#), Interfaith Advisor, LGBTQ+ Advocate and Chaplain of the Royal Veterinary College. He spoke about his experiences of being an ally to students from different faiths and cultures, his thoughts on intersectional allyship and his journey of being an openly gay chaplain.

Our founder and director Charlotte Butler made a presentation on Altogether Different's take on Intersectional Allyship and how we use an empathy-building, intersectional approach in our training and consultancy.

We then had an open space and Q&A where our participants were invited to ask any questions and share their thoughts on the subject.

Throughout our group discussion, a few key points emerged as ways to engage with intersectional allyship. Here are some of our highlights from the event:

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There is a need for systemic change towards intersectional EDI initiatives.

Our participants were keen on discussing innovative ways of approaching intersectionality. They talked about how it's not enough anymore to give an EDI workshop that only addresses the needs of one particular community and neglects the needs of other communities. The systems of an organisation have to change in a way that caters this need so that intersectional allyship is at the forefront of EDI programmes.

- **Building relationships between different groups of people is key for intersectional allyship.** Rev Andy Marshall touched upon the importance of developing relationships with different group of people. He gave examples from his work as a university chaplain where he constantly builds bridges between different university bodies such as the student groups e.g. Pride, Muslim community and leadership. This allows for different groups to eventually get together at the same platform and have an understanding around same values.

- **Do the groundwork of understanding before taking action.** It is critical to understand different identities and groups before we create an action plan. This is why we prioritise empathy in our work at Altogether Different. We ask our workshop participants to complete fieldwork on a chosen inclusion topic before thinking about next steps. At the event, we also talked about the value in making our organisations understand the experiences of different people. This allows for a more holistic approach to intersectionality and to address the key needs of employees.

- **Accepting that we all have intersecting identities.** We all have different identities and belong to multiple identity groups. Race, gender, sexual orientation and nationality are among those that come to mind but there can be many more. As part of one of our activities at the event, we ticked boxes of different identity groups that matched how we define ourselves. We had a long list and many of us selected more than 10. We then asked our participants: 'What would you feel if we said that you could only choose one or limited identity in the list?' This showed us the importance of intersectional approaches in EDI work. We never belong to only one group!

Alara Adali, Community Consultant, Altogether Different