

# Open dialogue guide





# Open dialogue guide

This guide is designed to help you prepare and host an open dialogue session.

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The objectives of an open dialogue session

These sessions allow colleagues to share experiences, insights and points of view. It is an opportunity to learn and understand the different experiences of colleagues. These are intended to create a culture of open and honest discussions to build greater inclusion and diversity within your organisation

### Objectives

Share experiences and insights and the personal impact the working culture this has on colleagues

Give colleagues the opportunity to connect and share diverse perspectives

Use these internal dialogue sessions as a starting point for building greater understanding of each other and creating greater inclusion

### Outcomes

Greater understanding of where focus is needed to create inclusion and better support colleagues

Amplifying the voices of all colleagues. Provide platform for underrepresented groups to have a stronger voice

Drive change and identify tangible actions which will bring long lasting impact



## A structure for the dialogue

Below is a flexible structure for how you can start, facilitate, and close the session. The suggested timings below are for a 60-minute session.

### Intro 10 minutes



<sup>a</sup> Have clear aim for the conversation. Create space to set the context for conversation and ensure alignment amongst group

Set an agenda for discussion while providing opportunity for others to highlight what is important for them

Encourage openness and honesty, without putting pressure on particular individuals to speak. Create a space where everyone feels comfortable to share without fear of reprisal

Share format and process for conversation

Offer opportunity to ask any questions on process to ensure everyone is clear and can participate

### Exchange 40 minutes



Share stories, open accounts and ask open-ended questions to encourage colleagues to share their feelings and experiences.

Ask questions that provoke reflection and thought.]

Encourage others to share their personal observations, insights and experiences.

Welcome diverse perspectives and create a safe space for dialogue.

### Close 10 minutes



Ensure that dialogue seen as a continual process. Focus further on the action to be taken to create positive change.

Thank colleagues for their time and for opening up to each other.

Agree any commitments or actions you will take as a result of the conversations. Be clear on what next steps will look like

Share resources and materials that will help colleagues to continue on the journey

Update on wider initiatives taking place and how individuals can connect

Share opportunities for further conversations or forums to ask more questions



## Questions to ask

Open questions are a perfect way to get the dialogue going. Here are some sample open-ended questions you can use to steer the conversation. You do not have to use all these questions. These are here to simply get the conversation started.

It is likely that some of these questions may make us uncomfortable. These conversations should make us feel vulnerable and challenge us. They are designed to help us understand how we can be better individuals, better leaders, and a more inclusive organisation.

How far have we progressed on the journey to create inclusion in our organisation?

How are you impacted by the current culture of the organization when it comes to equity inclusion and diversity?

What is important for individuals and teams to understand to help drive greater inclusion?

What changes do we need to make to ensure we have true equity diversity and inclusion?

What support is needed to implement necessary changes and actions?

What is working well for us? How can we leverage our capabilities to drive greater action?

Key principles  
for a meaningful conversation

# Build belief

When we build belief, we create space for individuals to show up and communicate in an authentic way

Everyone in the room should feel they have the space to share, listen and learn.

As hosts we should build belief that there is an authentic space for everyone to share. Allow others to find their voice. Aim to talk for less than 25% of the conversation.

Learning comes from around the room and the insights of the group. Ensure that individuals feel comfortable sharing and know they will not be critiqued for their ideas. Ask follow-up questions. You do not need to have all the answers.

Stay engaged throughout the conversation. Do not feel the need to continually fill the space. Allow moments for reflection and thinking. Focus on actively listening during the discussion.

Key principles  
for a meaningful conversation

# Recognition

It's important to recognise the role we all play in holding meaningful conversations while understanding our different attributes, experiences and circumstances.

Openness and transparency will build trust and confidence in having a more meaningful conversation

Understand that participants will have different experiences, backgrounds and starting points. Welcome diverse views and thinking

Acknowledge where challenges show up in the organization and the impact that it has on different individuals

Take accountability for the language we use and personal ownership over the actions that we take.

Key principles  
for a meaningful conversation

# Aims

Clear aims and objectives from the outset will ensure dialogue has a purposeful outcome and impact

Set out clear aims from the outset for a meaningful conversation.

Share core aims and outcomes for the session and resultant outcomes

Provide space for others to share what they would like to get out from the conversation

Regularly check in with the aims to ensure conversation is on track or whether there is a need to change direction



Key principles  
for a meaningful conversation

# Vulnerability

Modeling vulnerability allows us to build connection with others and create a greater level of trust, understanding and confidence in each other.

By showing vulnerability we are opening the door for individuals to be their authentic selves and to create a psychologically safe environment

Share a story or situation that impacted you regarding equity, diversity and inclusion

Be comfortable sharing when you do not have the solution or answer and still on the 'learning journey'

Think of an important learning moment you have had in relation to inclusion and diversity  
(e.g. Learning from a mistake you've made, gained insight from others).

Key principles  
for a meaningful conversation

# Empathy

Empathy is the ability to recognise, be aware of, and share the thoughts and feelings of another person.

Show empathy to connect with and support others in your conversations

Acknowledge the perspectives of others. Actively listen to their stories and put yourself in their shoes.

Treat others with respect. Play back what you hear with mindfulness and reverence. Be mindful of how you respond to people. Treat everyone as an equal and be respectful of all opinions.

Listen beyond the words. Watch non-verbal cues and refrain from making assumptions on what another person is thinking or feeling.

## Challenging situations.

Like in all conversations, we may come across challenges.

Here are some tips for challenging situations we may face when having a conversation around inclusion and diversity

Of course, all conversations are different and there will never be a blanket way of dealing with different conversations.

However, some basic principles alongside the tips from the BRAVE model can give us a foundational approach to tackle these situations should they arise.

### Potential situation

People are being quiet and not contributing to the discussion.

One person (or a group of people) is dominating the conversation.

People are disagreeing.

Someone asks a question you don't know the answer to.

Someone says something along the lines of, "All lives matter."

People ask about plans to address diversity at Organisational level

### Best practice

Invite people who have been silent to share their perspective. You can also encourage employees to use other tools (chat box, emoticons, annotate, text tools) during the conversation to share ideas, thoughts, or questions.

Thank people for contributions and open up space for other views and inputs.

Share that difference of opinion is welcomed. However, the aim is not to win an argument but to be open to different approaches and ways of thinking

We should not feel the pressure of having to have all the answers. It is okay to say that you don't know and that you will get back to them. It is also a good idea to open the difficult question up to the group and get their responses.

Emphasize that this is a Human Rights and Equality issue, not a political issue. State that systemic racism is not a debate but a reality.

Be open on the initiatives taking place at present. Where there are gaps do share this also and where individuals can get involved or add value. Where possible share the progress being made and invite others to share constructive views and insights to help move forward.



## Objectives

## Structure

## Key principles

## Challenges

## Resources

