
Left Out of Decisions

When decisions are made without your involvement | A practical workplace wellbeing guide for employees, managers and supporters

Space to Breathe Therapy | Workplace Wellbeing Collection

Why being consulted matters

Being included does not mean having the final say in every decision. It means receiving relevant information, having a meaningful opportunity to contribute where appropriate, and understanding why a decision has been made. When decisions affecting someone's role are repeatedly made without them, the impact can extend beyond inconvenience.

An employee might discover that their duties have changed after colleagues have already agreed the new arrangement. Another may find that meetings about their workload happen without their input. Someone else may be informed about changes to their working hours only after the plan has been finalised. Each event may have an explanation; a repeated pattern deserves attention.

What exclusion can look like

- Changes to your responsibilities are agreed without asking how they will affect existing work.
- Meetings about a project you deliver take place without you, followed by instructions to implement the outcome.
- Your accessibility or support needs are discussed without giving you an opportunity to explain what works.
- Colleagues receive updates about changes before you do, despite your role being directly affected.
- Your suggestions are requested but consistently ignored without explanation or feedback.

A balanced way to understand events

Not every meeting requires every employee, and confidentiality or operational urgency may limit participation. A single missed invitation does not prove deliberate exclusion. Look at the relevance of the decision, whether the omission repeats, what information was available, and how the organisation responds when you ask to be involved.

Key distinction: You may not be entitled to decide the outcome, but you can reasonably ask how your views will be considered when a change directly affects your work.

The questions to start with

- What exactly was decided, by whom, and when did I learn about it?
- How does this decision affect my work, responsibilities, wellbeing or adjustments?
- Was there a clear opportunity to provide information before the decision?
- Has this happened before, and have I asked for clarification?

Understanding the impact

The cumulative effect of feeling unheard

Confidence, anxiety and belonging

When decisions repeatedly happen elsewhere, a person may begin to question whether their experience is valued. They may stop volunteering ideas, become reluctant to ask questions or worry that important information is being withheld. A lack of clarity can also make routine work harder: someone may be held responsible for outcomes they were not involved in planning.

Over time, uncertainty may contribute to self-doubt, frustration, vigilance around emails or meetings, withdrawal from colleagues, or attempts to overcompensate by constantly checking for updates. Some people notice tiredness, disrupted sleep or physical tension. These responses vary and do not establish a diagnosis.

Neurodivergence and communication differences

For some autistic or ADHD employees, being informed only after a change has been agreed may add processing, planning and executive-function demands. Sudden changes to priorities can disrupt carefully established systems. Indirect or inconsistent communication can make it difficult to know when input is welcome. Experiences are individual: the useful question is what information and participation arrangements help this person work effectively.

Masking can add another layer. Someone may appear agreeable in a meeting but need time to process information, formulate questions or explain why a decision creates a barrier. Written agendas, advance notice and opportunities to respond after meetings can improve access.

Disability and reasonable adjustments

If decisions affect a disabled employee's duties, working environment, hours or agreed support, their knowledge of the barriers they face is especially relevant. Employers in Great Britain may have duties to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 where the legal criteria apply. Appropriate consultation can help identify workable options; adjustments should not be based on assumptions about a diagnosis.

An employee might ask: "Before the rota changes are finalised, could we review how they interact with my agreed adjustments and discuss workable alternatives?"

When a decision cannot be shared fully

Some decisions involve confidential staffing information or matters outside an employee's remit. A manager can still communicate what is known, what is not shareable, how the change affects the employee and whether there is a route for raising practical concerns. Respectful explanations can reduce uncertainty without breaching privacy.

Small steps that can restore clarity

- Request an overview of the decision and its practical effect on your role.
- Ask who owns the decision and how relevant input is collected.
- Explain a specific consequence rather than assuming harmful intent.
- Agree how future changes will be communicated and reviewed.

Having the conversation

Practical language for employees and constructive responses for managers

Behaviour - Pattern - Impact - Request

Behaviour: Describe what happened without speculating about motive.

Pattern: Explain whether similar experiences have occurred.

Impact: Describe the effect on tasks, confidence or wellbeing.

Request: Ask for a specific, workable change.

Example: "The last two decisions about our team's priorities were made before I was asked for input. I then had to change work already underway, which affected my deadlines. Could I be included in the planning discussion, or given a chance to comment on the proposal before it is finalised?"

Scripts to adapt

- When you discover a decision afterwards: "Could you explain how this change was agreed and what it means for my responsibilities? I would appreciate being consulted on similar changes in future."
- When your suggestions seem unheard: "I shared some concerns about the proposed approach. Could you let me know whether they were considered and what informed the final decision?"
- When you need processing time: "Could you send the proposal in writing before the meeting? I can then provide more useful feedback."
- When adjustments may be affected: "This change could affect an existing adjustment. Can we review the practical impact together before it starts?"
- When you have raised it before: "We discussed my involvement last month. The same issue has happened again. Can we agree a clear process and a date to check whether it is working?"

If the first conversation does not resolve it

Keep a factual note of the decisions, dates, people involved, what was communicated and your requests. Follow up in writing to confirm what was agreed. If exclusion continues or you believe it is linked to discrimination, seek appropriate support through a manager, HR, a trade union representative or ACAS. Consider organisational grievance procedures where relevant. Avoid collecting private documents you are not authorised to access.

Making a difficult meeting accessible

- Ask for an agenda, a written summary or a support person where appropriate.
- Prepare two or three examples and one realistic request.
- Request time to process unexpected information rather than agreeing immediately.
- Agree who will do what, by when, and when the arrangement will be reviewed.

Guidance for managers and organisations

Inclusion requires more than an invitation

A better management response

An employee saying “I feel left out” may be describing a genuine process problem, a communication gap or a misunderstanding. Avoid deciding which before listening. Ask which decisions affected their work, what input would have been useful and whether there were barriers to contributing.

A helpful response might be: “Thank you for telling me. I can see how learning about this after the decision made your work more difficult. Let’s look at how the decision was made and what involvement would be appropriate next time.”

Responses that can unintentionally minimise concerns

- “It was only a small decision.” Better: “Let’s look at its effect on your work and whether you needed earlier information.”
- “We can’t invite everyone.” Better: “You may not need to attend every meeting, but we can agree how your input reaches the decision-maker.”
- “You should have spoken up.” Better: “Was there a clear opportunity to contribute, and did you have the information in time?”
- “It wasn’t personal.” Better: “Regardless of intent, let’s address the practical impact and communication process.”

Practical inclusion practices

- Map who will be affected by a proposed decision, including people who implement it.
- Give accessible information early enough for meaningful comment.
- Offer more than one way to contribute: meetings, written input or one-to-one discussion.
- Explain which parts of a decision are open to influence and which are fixed.
- Close the loop: explain what feedback was considered and why the final approach was chosen.
- Review whether participation processes work for disabled, remote, part-time and neurodivergent colleagues.

Organisational reflection

Are decisions routinely made in informal conversations that exclude certain shifts or working patterns? Do the same voices dominate? Are employees asked for feedback after outcomes are already fixed? Do changes to reasonable adjustments receive proper review? Can staff question a decision without being labelled difficult?

Inclusion is not a promise that every preference will be adopted. It is a fair opportunity to be heard, an understandable process and clear accountability for decisions.

UK guidance and support

ACAS: workplace communication, grievances and discrimination guidance — [acas.org.uk](https://www.acas.org.uk)
Equality and Human Rights Commission: Equality Act and reasonable-adjustment guidance — [equalityhumanrights.com](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

HSE: management standards for work-related stress, including control and relationships — hse.gov.uk/stress

Information Commissioner's Office: workplace personal information — ico.org.uk

This guide is educational and is not individual legal, medical or occupational-health advice.

Reflection and action workbook

Use this page to prepare a conversation or review what has changed

1. What decision affected me? What happened, and when?

2. What information or opportunity to contribute was missing?

3. What was the impact on my work, confidence or wellbeing?

4. What alternative explanations or constraints might be relevant?

5. What practical change would help next time?

6. Who will I speak to, and what will I ask?

7. What was agreed, and when will we review it?

A message from Space to Breathe Therapy

Being consulted does not mean having to win every decision. It means being treated as someone whose experience and contribution matter. Notice the pattern, seek clarity, make a practical request and review what changes.