

## Real estate firms join forces for LGBTQ+ inclusion this Pride Month

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In a powerful display of unity, smaller real estate firms are uniting for a common cause this Pride Month to pave the way for a more inclusive and diverse industry.

Following an initiative from the Property Advisors Forum (PAF), a collective of CEOs from leading real estate advisory firms\*, a new collaboration has been established between Colliers, Allsop, Gerald Eve, Carter Jonas, LSH and Montagu Evans to encourage greater representation of the LGBTQ+ within real estate.

Last year PAF invited the LGBTQ+ leads from each of their firms to come together to discuss the issues facing the community in real estate.

Following the initial invitation the LGBTQ+ leads began meeting regularly to discuss ways that the industry could be more inclusive and to share best practice, with a view to improving awareness and creating change within the industry.

One of the challenges identified was the uptake of employee networks. "It was clear from the outset that larger firms like JLL and CBRE have the numbers to develop well attended and well-established employee LGBTQ+ networks, whereas smaller firms were struggling to grow their network memberships," said [Robert Nunn, Head of UK Talent & Development, Colliers](#).

With Pride Month on the horizon the firms with smaller networks agreed that working together could create the momentum and numbers needed to build engagement in the events being planned.

[Gareth Hosgood, a Partner in Commercial Valuation at Allsop](#), added: "In smaller firms the handful of members, who are usually volunteers, take on a lot of responsibility. This is amplified in regional offices, where LGBTQ+ representation is even lower. This lack of role models and mentors can leave LGBTQ+ employees feeling isolated. We knew that by collaborating with other firms, we could create health and well-being initiatives with a much broader reach and appeal."

## A collaborative effort for Pride

To address these challenges, the group have planned a series of collaborative events. Each firm will host an event to celebrate Pride in June, inviting members from other smaller firms to attend.

Allsop is organising a spin class and networking breakfast. Montagu Evans will host an exhibition of art by LGBTQ+ artists, and Colliers is putting together a Pride Quiz and mixer. Additionally, collaboration with Freehold, the networking hub for LGBTQ+ professionals in the sector, will open these events to a wider audience.

Rob explains: "A good example of where this collaboration is helping to support inclusion in our industry is with Carter Jonas who have a newly formed LGBTQ+ network in Birmingham. While they are getting established, they will join Colliers to celebrate Pride in our Birmingham office. If this works well, we will look to build on this approach as we evolve in the future."

Gareth added: "Looking ahead, the group plans to participate in the Pride 10k run in Victoria Park, Hackney under the Freehold banner on 21 September. This initiative is one of many aimed at promoting inclusion and diversity in commercial real estate."

## Addressing industry challenges

The real estate industry still faces significant challenges regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion. Research indicates that a significant number of individuals who were open about their sexuality at university feel uncomfortable being out in the industry.

Rob explains: "The lack of visible LGBTQ+ role models in the property sector can hinder personal and professional growth. We know that creating inclusive work environments encourages diversity of thought in the way we do business, which benefits firms and clients alike. While things are changing, the industry still suffers from not attracting talent from underrepresented groups. Through the smaller firms uniting and showcasing our shared values we hope to make incremental improvements to change that."

Gareth concludes: "Improving diversity and inclusion benefits all real estate firms and is an area where we should collaborate, not compete. This group is crucial in ensuring smaller firms and networks can create a greater level of inclusion for the entire industry. Our collective efforts are paving the way for a more inclusive and diverse industry, supporting not only the LGBTQ+ community but also enriching the sector with varied perspectives and talents."