My name is Elizabeth Wynn, I'm the equality diversity manager of the Babraham Institute. I'm going to be giving you top tips for LGBTQ+ inclusion.

I'm going to be starting on a bit of a sombre note. Last week, Michael Wakelam, the director of the Institute, passed away. As well as being the director, he was a member of the equality4success team so I'd like to give a tribute to him. He was a huge proponent of equality and diversity at the Institute and beyond and I want to share a quote from him. “If you asked me to summarise the Babraham approach to achieving excellence in four words, I'd say “Start with the individual.” For the best science, you need the best people able to do their best.” So I think that this shows Michael really understood the importance of inclusion, and I want to briefly touch on tolerance versus inclusion.

I think that words like tolerance, acceptance, inclusion can be thrown around a bit as though they're interchangeable, but they really have quite different meanings. So when we're talking about LGBT issues, this tolerance is the sort of, “oh, I don't have a problem with gay people,” which is very different from valuing and welcoming and including LGBT people. So that's the aim: proper inclusion where everyone feels seen and valued and appreciated. So just keep in mind that's what we're aiming for with this. And now I'm going to share my top tips.

So, first of all, learn. That might seem like quite an obvious thing to say. So I just wanted to put in words two reasons I think this is important. The first one is there will probably be things you know you don't know or that you don't feel confident about. And that can lead to a real sense of awkwardness, which is against that feeling of inclusion. Second thing is, there will probably be things you don't know you don't know. And as a result of that, you can inadvertently use language that's hurtful or promote harmful stereotypes. So that's why it's important to learn.

So my top recommendations are things you should learn about where to get started: terminology. So I know that this can be quite a mammoth undertaking. There's a lot of different terminology around LGBT issues and identities. And for some things, there are even consensus about what's the best term to use. And it can also seem to change quite quickly. So it is a big thing to learn about, but it's an important place to start. I recommend Stonewall, which is the largest LGBT charity in the UK and also in Europe, I believe, and they have a good glossary. I recommend that as a starting place for learning about terminology.

Next, privilege. So I know that this can be quite a loaded term. So I wanted to share this statement from the University of San Francisco, which I think is really good. So, “Becoming aware of privilege should not be viewed as a burden or a source of guilt, but rather an opportunity to learn and be responsible so that we may work towards a more just and inclusive world.” So another way I've seen privilege explained, which I think is really good, is privileges the things we don't see. So if you have cisgender or straight privilege, there will be things that you just aren't aware of because you've never had to think about them. And learning about those will open your eyes to privileges that other people lack.

I think this campaign I have here is quite fun and effective at turning it on its head. So, “When are you going to tell your parents you're straight?” “I don't mind if you're straight, just don't flaunt it in public.” So, like this statement from University San Francisco says, it's important not to approach learning about privilege as an exercise in guilt or defensiveness, but rather, yes, an opportunity to learn. And once you start learning about it, you'll probably come across things that you've never realised were a privilege for you because you've never had to think about them. For example, in this campaign, “Your cis? So what do you have down there?” You probably never thought, if you’re cis, you probably never thought of the fact that not having strangers or acquaintances ask about your genital configuration is a privilege. But it is.

A final top tip for things to learn about: people's experiences. So these are science based, these two web sites. 500 Queer Scientists, LGBTSTEM.WordPress.com are good places where queer scientists are happy to share their stories. So the previous two were more abstract, terminology and privilege are slightly more abstract things, whereas this is, you know, people's real lived experiences.

One caveat on learning: if you want to ask your LGBT friends, acquaintances, colleagues in a spirit of learning, you need to respect their boundaries. It might not be something that they want to talk about and they don't have an obligation to teach you. So, yeah, even if you're approaching it in a, you know, a genuine curiosity, interest in learning, wanting to be better at creating inclusive spaces, you do need to respect their boundaries, what they want to talk about. And there are plenty of online resources for you to be able to take your learning into your own hands.

My next tip is be visible. I think this can be neatly summed up by saying the absence of discrimination is not the same as evidence of support. So you know yourself. You know that you are a friendly, nice, non-homophobic person, but if there isn't any evidence of that to an LGBT person, you are Schrodinger's ally. They just don't know how you're going to react if they're open with you. And they might decide it's not worth the risk if they've had bad experiences in the past or even if they haven't they will definitely know someone who has. So this is why it's important to have evidence of that support.

So, plenty of ways to do this. At the Babraham Institute, we have rainbow lanyards, lots of rainbow stickers, pronoun badges. I'll be talking about pronouns in more detail a bit later. You can also, you know, print out a safe space poster or have a rainbow flag or something around the place. This Safe Zone Trained checkmark sticker thing, that's from a program called the Safe Zone Project. It’s a sort of self-accreditation. There's a two hour online course you can take that will help you learn how to make more inclusive spaces. And then, yeah, then you can put that accreditation somewhere.

So I know that rainbows aren't everyone's thing. They can be quite garish, it doesn't fit everyone's aesthetic. So if you don't want to be visible in this way, you can show evidence of support by being vocally supportive as well. So, for example, talking about something you've seen in the news, a TV program that you've seen recently, that sort of thing. So I called this ‘be visible’, but it's really offering evidence of support, whether that's visible or vocal or something else.

My next tip is challenge discrimination. So, like learn, I think this is quite an obvious thing to do. It's quite clear that if there is discrimination in a space, it's not an inclusive space. But this is something which is much easier said than done. So I just want to quickly give you some tips for doing this.

I'm taking this information from Imperial College London Active Bystander Training. They have the 4Ds strategies for intervention. So direct action, delay, distraction, delegation. To quickly cover what those mean, direct action is the, you know, in the moment someone says a homophobic comment, just saying, “Hey, did you really say that?” or “Ooh, I don't think we should use those kind of words here.” Obviously, that can be really difficult to do. You know, in the moment, you know, in a group, depending, there might be a power differential that makes it really difficult to do so.

Here are a couple of other strategies you can employ. Delay, basically, if you don't address it in the moment, that doesn't mean that you can't address it at all. So you might just take some time to get your thoughts together so that if a similar or the same situation occurs again, you have prepared what you want to say, makes it easier to say. Or you might also like to address it in different circumstances. So if it was a group setting, you didn't want to speak up, you can at a later date bring it up with the individual. That's a perfectly fine way to handle it.

Distraction means change the conversation. That might seem like a really paltry thing to do, but there are two main benefits of it. First of all, that conversation stops. Anyone who's hearing that conversation is no longer hearing it. Secondly, it signals to the person who made that comment or whatever that no one is going to engage with them on it, that it's not the sort of thing we talk about. And if it happens frequently, maybe in conjunction with some of these other strategies, that might cause them to reassess their behaviour.

Finally, delegation, that just means bring it up with someone who has more authority to deal with it. So, for example, a manager.

Next tip, talk about pronouns. I think that people are recognising more and more that it's important to talk about pronouns, but it's something that people can often lack confidence on. So I'm going to give you tips for talking about pronouns.

But first of all, I just want to quickly say why it's important. So, first of all, of normalising pronouns, talking about pronouns, sharing pronouns demonstrates that you have a good understanding of the fact that gender identity, gender presentation, biological sex are different things and that they don't exist in a binary, that there is a spectrum of gender. Secondly, and this ties back to privilege, it might not be a thing you've ever thought about. Of course, I am a woman, I look like a woman, my pronouns are she/her. But there are people, trans people, non-binary folks, gender nonconforming, intersex, for whom this is something they need to think about a lot and talk about their pronouns, you know, maybe with every new person they meet. So by normalising talking about pronouns among everyone, it makes it easier for those people to talk about their pronouns.

So some tips for doing this. How do I normalise talking about pronouns? There are lots of opportunities to share your pronouns. So you might have noticed that on the first page of this presentation under my name, I had my pronouns. I mentioned pronoun badges a bit earlier. So this is something we have at the Babraham Institute. I wear mine on my lanyard. If you've ever had an email from me, you might have noticed that my pronouns are in my signature. You can put it in your Twitter bio. If you're at a conference, you can write it on your conference badge. You can also just do it as part of introducing yourself. Hi, my name is Elizabeth. My pronouns are she/her.

So those are ways that you can normalise talking about pronouns. And I think the big thing here, what I'm going to come back to a lot on this topic, is if you treat it like a normal and casual subject, that's how it will be received and that's how shaping the whole conversation around it will feel.

How do I ask someone their pronouns? Again, casual, normal, everyday. I think it's good to treat it as a normal part of getting to know someone. And also, if you introduce yourself with your pronouns, that makes a good space for someone who whoever you're introducing yourself to, to share their protein, their pronouns back. And it might prompt them to do so. Otherwise, you can just ask them. And it's that casual, normal, everyday, not making a big deal of it.

What if I get it wrong? It's easy to make mistakes. It's easy to slip up. For example, if someone you know is transitioning, it might be really easy to use their old pronouns instead of their new ones. If someone's gender presentation doesn't match what you typically think of as matching that pronoun, it's easy for your brain to make a mistake. Doesn't make you a bad person. Everyone makes mistakes. If you get it wrong: apologise, don't make a big deal of it, and try not to make that mistake in future. I think it's important not to make a big deal of it because, that makes it feel really awkward. And it also might make it about you rather than the person which you shouldn't do. If you know, you're like, “Oh, my God, I can't believe I got that wrong. I'm so sorry.” Just turns into a big deal when it's simply a slip up.

So pronouns can be a really good thing to educate yourself about going back to learn. So the majority of people, vast majority of people do use he or she. And some people do use they. But there are other pronouns which are less common but you still might come across. So it can be useful just to become a bit familiar with those. And learn a bit about the conjugation of them.

I have another tip for you on the subject of pronouns. So using a less common pronoun might feel unnatural or uncomfortable to you. So in order to become more to make that more natural, comfortable to make yourself more confident about it. A good way to practice that is if you have a pet or a plant or a stuffed animal, whatever. Practice talking about them using one of these pronouns that you want to become more comfortable with. So, for example, I might say, “Every time I feed my cat, they act like they've never been fed before in their life. You’d think I was starving them.” Just to be practice, just become more confident about it.

So my final tip is listen. Every LGBT person that you meet, you know, your friend, your co-worker, your family member, a person at your gym, whatever, is their own individual with their own experiences, and they are the authority on their life. So listen, when they tell you, you know, what terminology to use, what their past experiences are and how you can make the most inclusive space for them because they are the best person to know that.

And this isn't just straight and cisgender people listening to LGBT people. It also applies within the LGBT community because, for example, a straight white trans woman will have a really different experience than a gay Asian cisgender man.

So those are my five top tips. I know I went through a lot really quickly. I do have resources which I'll be tweeting out so you can check those out.