

Our
LGBT+
ROLE
MODELS

“ACCEPTANCE OF YOURSELF IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN ACCEPTANCE FROM OTHER PEOPLE. WE ALL NEED PEOPLE TO LOVE AND CARE FOR US AND THOSE THAT DO WILL ALSO ACCEPT US AS LGB AND T PEOPLE.”

PAUL FITZGERALD ”



// OPENING REMARKS

Most of us will have little trouble recalling someone we look up to or admire; someone who has influenced the person we are today, who has encouraged us to achieve, to reach our full potential, to be confident in our abilities. Someone who inspires us.

Imagine, however, a role model who can help you to be yourself; someone who has been through many of the challenges you are experiencing and who has succeeded. This resource shows role models from the LGBT+ community who are 'Out' at work.

We hope they inspire and enthuse you, encourage and motivate you to be the person you want to be. Don't forget that most of these people had others around them to support them too, to help lead the way, to show them what was possible.

**THE QUESTION IS:
WHOSE ROLE MODEL
ARE YOU GOING TO BE?**



East Midlands Ambulance Service



NAME // PAUL FITZGERALD

JOB TITLE // EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY MANAGER

ORGANISATION // EAST MIDLANDS AMBULANCE SERVICE

MY EXPERIENCE

I have never really been in. I came out when I was 14 over 40 years ago. My first job was working with 3 day eventers and the person I worked for was a lesbian, so that was never an issue. I have never hidden who I am from anyone including my employers.

Over the years I have experienced varying amounts of discrimination. Prior to the legislation changes I faced the prospect of being sacked just for being gay. I was also a criminal in the eyes of the law because I was in a relationship with an older man. It is difficult to look back and realize what life was like for the LGBT communities at that time.

When I have faced discrimination I have always challenged it. When I worked in social services one of the comments I heard on a regular basis was: 'Here comes Paul, backs to the wall!' When I reported this to a senior manager I was told to ignore it and to stop flaunting myself. I had nowhere to go because the law offered no protection and policies regarding sexual orientation were nonexistent. If you consider how far we have come and the protection offered by current legislation, it feels surreal.

The working environment within EMAS for individuals who sit within the wide sexual spectrum is one of openness, respect and dignity for all. We work closely with our LGBT and T communities across all five counties. We are involved with regional conferences, local and regional support groups and are members of the National LGBT and T Ambulance Network. We have developed best practice guidance for the transgender communities with specific emphasis on our Emergency Call Centre.

MY ADVICE

Always remember you are important.

Acceptance of yourself is far more important than acceptance from other people. We all need people to love and care for us and those that do will also accept us as LGBT and T people.

Role models are vital. Growing up I had no one I could look up to or aspire to be. Having role models who are out, proud and real is essential. We have come a long way but much is left to do. Role models play an important part in that process.

In the future I hope that LGBT and T people will live in a world free of prejudice, discrimination and hate. They will grow up without fear of rejection and be allowed to reach their full potential in all aspects of their lives.

“WHEN I HAVE FACED DISCRIMINATION I HAVE ALWAYS CHALLENGED IT.”





Nottingham
City Council

NAME // ROSEY COX

JOB TITLE // PROJECT OFFICER AND LGBT LEAD

ORGANISATION // HUMAN RESOURCES, NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

MY EXPERIENCE

I have worked for Nottingham City Council since March 2004 for Trading Operations specifically around recruitment, sickness management and the promotion of free school meals. Since August 2015 I have worked for The Equality and Community Relations Team where I am a Project Officer and Lead for LGBT.

Initially I came to Nottingham City Council on a six month temporary contract; my initial plan was not to come out as I didn't feel that I would build the relationships or friendships within this time. However, month by month my contract would get extended and the lying would become more difficult as they knew I was in a relationship but the assumption was I had a boyfriend, I never corrected them. Eventually I was offered a permanent contract.

I was then a year into my role before I started to come out to my colleagues. When I eventually started to come out I felt so happy and relieved, this was because a deep dark secret that only I knew about had come out into the open and no longer needs to be hidden. The removal of the burden was amazing.

The timing of my coming out was right for me because I was proud and comfortable with myself as a person.

My experience of coming out at Nottingham City Council was a positive one. It led to great things for me including chairing Nottingham Pride, chairing the LGBT Employee Network Group, being awarded one of Nottingham's 100 Women of Substance which is a scheme to recognise the contribution of women within the city. The fact that I have been an inspiration to others for work I have done within the LGBT Employee Network and for running Nottingham Pride, in particular, bringing about the first LGBT parade.

More recently I was awarded East Midlands Role Model of the Year by Stonewall.

MY ADVICE

First, accept yourself, before coming out it's important to be sure and positive about your sexual orientation or gender identity yourself. If you still have doubts, I would advise that you discuss it with a close friend or family member first. Find the right time, choose a time when you and the person you are coming out to will have plenty of time to talk. As more often than not the person that you have come out to will have lots of questions.

Be calm, think about your emotions and be mindful that you are likely to get nervous, which under the circumstances is perfectly normal. Check out what support may be available professionally or through family members or friends.

I realise that nothing can ever be known for sure. I believe that nothing is absolute, but I can absolutely defend my beliefs. I understand that chance is prevalent in all aspects of life, but never leave anything important to chance.

“BE WHO YOU ARE AND MORE IMPORTANTLY BE PROUD!”





NAME // RUTH WILLIAMS

JOB TITLE // IT ENGINEER AND CHAIR OF THE LGBT STAFF NETWORK

ORGANISATION // NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MY EXPERIENCE

I joined the IT department of NCC as an IT Engineer 7 years ago. I am naturally a very shy, introvert person so a career in IT suits me as I can stay in the background and work very much on my own. When I joined the Council, I didn't make a conscious decision about coming out to my new work colleagues as I just assumed they would know I was gay from the way I look and, at that time, it wasn't something I really talked about unless asked. Today, I am proud to be an openly gay woman but this has not always been the case. My parents are deeply religious and hold strict Christian values which means they cannot accept my sexuality and, as a result, we have been estranged for many years. So whilst it was never talked about, all I remember knowing was that gay was somehow wrong. It was years later, with the help of supportive friends, that I was able to realise that, yes I am gay, always have been and that there's nothing wrong with that whatsoever, and eventually at age 32 be able to confidently, in the words of the song, "shout out I am what I am".

When I joined the Council I was pleased to see that they had a LGBT Staff Network and volunteered to take on the role as Treasurer because this meant I could continue to stay in the background but at the same time promote LGBT issues within my workplace. Imagine my surprise when last year a vacancy arose for a new Chair and, spurred on by my network colleagues, was taken out of my comfort

zone and encouraged to take on the role. I believe I have become more confident as a person since becoming Chair and am extremely proud of what the network has achieved over the last three years especially becoming a Stonewall Top 100 Employer and increasing its ranking from 307th to 64th in the country in 2016. I am particularly proud of the work the network does to raise awareness both in the workplace and in the wider community about LGBT issues.

My work colleagues are now used to me setting up displays throughout the year to promote LGBT History Month, IDAHOT Day, Bi visibility Day or Trans Remembrance Day and even occasionally get involved and give their opinions about what should be included. I even sometimes find myself having conversations about LGBT issues within my team which is a pleasant surprise. It gives me enormous satisfaction to think I can play a small part in broadening people's views about LGBT issues and get them to value people's differences.

MY ADVICE

Be yourself. Don't let others influence who you are. Don't try to be or act a certain way because of other people's expectations.

Be comfortable with who you are first, and the rest will follow.

“BE COMFORTABLE WITH WHO YOU ARE FIRST, AND THE REST WILL FOLLOW.”

I “YOU ONLY HAVE ONE LIFE, LIVE IT ON YOUR TERMS!”



“LGBT ROLE MODELS ARE CLEARLY NEEDED, AND I AM VERY PROUD TO BE ONE.”



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

NAME // SEAN MCCALLUM

JOB TITLE // FIREFIGHTER

ORGANISATION // NOTTINGHAMSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

WORKS AT // EDWINSTOWE FIRE STATION

MY EXPERIENCE

I am a Firefighter based at Edwinstowe Fire Station. Outside of the Service, I am also a District Councillor. I began working for the service in 2002. This was interrupted when I was called upon by the British Army to serve in Iraq in 2003 as a combat infantryman.

I was not open about my Bisexuality at that time, as I didn't feel safe. When I returned from active service I once again took up my duties with the Fire Service.

After a while, I became increasingly unhappy about my inability to be open with my colleagues – I realised that it was starting to affect my health, as I had to work ever harder to cover my tracks and suppress many feelings and opinions with regard to matters of sexual orientation and relationships. When I took the plunge I simply sent a collective text message to the members of my watch, and waited for the sky to fall in. Funnily enough, that didn't happen, and the members of my watch were very supportive.

I cannot say that I have met anyone in the fire Service that is downright homophobic, although I have had some challenging discussions with many, who simply wanted to actually understand why LGBT issues were of such importance to me, and the organisation. This is not a negative thing, but rather, a developmental opportunity for those who question.

I decided to become a trade union official which then gave the opportunity to pro-actively work to amend some of the organisational barriers that were in existence at the time, and also to let other LGB people within the Service see very clearly that it actually could be a positive experience to come out at work.

Since then, I have worked hard to be a good role model for LGB firefighters. I've managed to have a positive effect on the Service's LGBT+ development, and this has often required guts and determination, but it's been worth it.

MY ADVICE

My advice to others would be simple – that is, to come out in your own way, in your own time, and on your own terms.

I feel this is so important for an individual, and it is also important never to compromise one's values during the process, even during times of difficulty – in the end, people will judge you more by your deeds than your sexual orientation, and respect is always earned, never granted.

Always look to improve and educate, rather than blame and recriminate.

My greatest wish would be that in the future, people like myself won't have to be LGBT 'Role Models'. Rather, I look to a time when normalisation of non-heterosexuality has reached such a point that the issues just cease to exist. As it stands though, we have a long way to go, and LGBT role models are clearly needed, and I am very proud to be one.

“COME OUT IN YOUR OWN WAY, IN YOUR OWN TIME, AND ON YOUR OWN TERMS.”



“I WAS DETERMINED THAT PEOPLE WOULD GET TO KNOW ME FIRST BEFORE JUDGING ME BASED ON MY SEXUAL ORIENTATION.”

NAME // ELISABETH BRITZ

JOB TITLE // SENIOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

ORGANISATION // NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HEALTHCARE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

WORKS AT // RAMPTON HOSPITAL – HIGH SECURE FORENSIC SERVICE

MY EXPERIENCE

When I first arrived at Rampton Hospital on a cold December morning in 2004 I made a decision that I was going to come out as a gay woman as quickly as I could; however I was also determined that people would get to know me first before judging me based on my sexual orientation.

I had recently had an unpleasant experience in my previous job and avoided talking about my sexual orientation for almost 4 years and had lived in fear of staff or patients finding out.

On induction everyone was talking about their husbands, wives etc. I carefully spoke about my partner until one colleague put me on the spot and asked me what my partner's name was; I am ashamed to say that I lied. I told her "his" name was Sean. I felt terrible about this as my partner, Sarah, sat waiting at home for me.

I decided I would need to do something about this as I was determined not to live a lie again. I waited until my first OT team meeting. As I sat listening to everyone the subject of finding a representative to attend an LGBT workshop came up, I took a deep breath and outed myself. I could see some surprised faces around the table, but the response was generally positive.

As a femme lesbian who has children, I spend my life 'outing' myself. This is a challenge that I experience not only in the work place, but in my life generally. Because I don't fit the stereotypical image of a gay woman, people frequently make assumptions about my sexual orientation.

I was introduced to the Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust LGBT Forum and Sexual Orientation Equality Steering Committee (SOESG) after a gay colleague suggested I might like to attend with him. I have been a committed member and attendee since, having previously co-chaired for a while and I am currently the vice-chair.

Some staff have come forward for advice and support and I believe that things are improving and that more often than not it is ignorance rather than dislike that fuels some of the behaviours such as homophobic jokes or comments.

I also promote and support the opportunity for patients to express their sexual orientation. In the high secure setting it can be difficult for staff to remember the importance of one's individual identities and that expression of sexual orientation and gender identity extends to our patients as well.

MY ADVICE

My advice to my younger self and to other young LGBT people is to be brave.

It took me years of living in the closet and feeling scared about the consequences of coming out. As a young Jewish woman, I had additional concerns about coming out. My family found it particularly difficult and there are still members of my extended family who I still do not talk to.

A number of years ago a colleague came to me for advice as she and her female partner wanted to start a family. She was having difficulty seeking IVF on the NHS as the policy did not support same sex relationships. With her permission I took the issue to the SOESG and with support from the Head of Equality and Diversity, Catherine Conchar, was able to instigate change. The policy is now inclusive and my colleague has been able to benefit from the same treatment opportunities that her heterosexual counterparts have. I think I am particularly proud of my contribution towards this.

I am proud of the work I do both as an occupational therapist and for the LGBT community in Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. I have demonstrated that you can be a successful career woman, a loving mother and have a happy marriage without being scared or hiding who you are.

Elisabeth featured in a short video about being a gay parent, called Here at Last! This video is an inspirational story of the lives and loves of a gay parent, who is Jewish, whose best friend died of AIDS, has a disability, a disabled partner who often uses a wheelchair, but above all is a mum who unconditionally loves her children. Filmed by Elisabeth's daughter Nicole Britz it was featured at a number of film festivals throughout the country in 2015, and can be viewed on the Trust website at: <http://nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/equality-resources-and-guides> or on Nicole's YouTube channel at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCasnIbzdO-_ZB-scNe30MnA



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
POLICE
PROUD TO SERVE

NAME // ANTONIA PROUDLEY

JOB TITLE // POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER

ORGANISATION // NOTTINGHAMSHIRE POLICE

WORKS AT // ST ANN'S POLICE STATION

MY EXPERIENCE

I began working for Nottinghamshire Police in 2009, and was open about my sexuality within my team. This was helped by two members of the team also being out as gay. In previous employment I found it easier to let people get to know me, and then reveal my sexual orientation. It was a refreshing change to be accepted for who I am from the start.

When I was relocated to a different police station in 2012, most of the staff already knew me and were comfortable with my sexuality, so no awkward questions.

I have previously been involved in promoting officer recruitment from within the LGBT+ community. Being visible around the gay scene hopefully breaks down some of the barriers in reporting homophobic hate crime. I have not met anyone in the police service that is homophobic, although I have witnessed the odd joke and negative comment being made. I have had challenging discussions with colleagues around LGBT+ issues, but used them as a developmental learning opportunity for those who need better understanding.

Being openly gay has sometimes greatly helped out at incidents I have attended, by gaining a rapport and having an understanding. Such as a young person struggling with their sexuality and gender identity attempting to seriously harm themselves.

I have had colleagues come to me for advice on coming out at work and how to deal with negative attitudes. To my knowledge homophobic bullying in my workplace is extremely rare.

The Chief Officer team are very enthusiastic and supportive of LGBT+ staff, and promoting their wellbeing and inclusion. The force has a network for LGBT+ staff which is a great asset. The Chief Constable attends the annual Pride event, joining in with the parade displaying the very large Nottinghamshire Police rainbow crested flag.

MY ADVICE

My advice to others is come out if and when you are ready in whatever way you feel comfortable.

Don't worry what colleagues will think, they will more than likely already know and it won't change a thing, other than you feeling comfortable and a weight lifted. You may well influence others to be brave and come out at work too.

Always look to improve and educate people, negative comments are often not meant with malice rather just plain and simple ignorance and lack of understanding. Don't be scared to challenge negative behaviour and comments.

Stand up for yourself and others. Be proud of who you are, and never pretend to be someone else to please others. One day hopefully we won't need LGBT+ role models, just role models.

“STAND UP FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS. BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE, AND NEVER PRETEND TO BE SOMEONE ELSE TO PLEASE OTHERS.”



MY EXPERIENCE

Through my career I have sold everything from fine wines to incense. I have also worked in IT support and spent many years self-employed.

I've not really hidden my sexuality from day one and not had to at West Notts because the culture is generally very inclusive, this profile, however, does represent my official coming out!

I have worked at the college for nearly 3 years as Head of Student Support. My current role involves managing a large, diverse support department.

The best thing about the college is the people. I've never laughed so much. The sense of humour is very ascerbic but refreshingly so.

The student support team basically provide all of the support for our 32,000 students that takes place out of the classroom. Support can range from some of the 'fun' side to being in college, volunteering, students' union and raising money for charity to providing students with work placement, giving them careers advice to supporting students day to day who might have a disability and offering specific support for students with a range of personal issues. Some of those issues relate to sexual orientation and gender identity – for many young people coming to college at 16 represents a bit of a watershed moment when they feel they can be themselves in a way that perhaps at school they haven't been able to.

LGBT networks for both staff and students are growing in the college and the number of staff who are open about their sexuality is a sign of the positive culture here. It really helps our students to see this positive culture and to be able to relate to staff members, knowing that we understand what they may be going through right now.

MY ADVICE

Be yourself and live your life without fear or regrets. You will achieve more.

It is my view that everyone faces challenges and discrimination and those that achieve more in life do not allow negative experiences to take over their lives.

I am most proud of my educational qualifications, having been told at school that university was not for me, to go on to study at 5 universities so far is one of my biggest achievements. I hope to continue to develop my skills in order to progress up the ladder as far as I can reach. You should aim high and always give your best.

I have been very fortunate in being mentored by a college Principal who was a great role model and I gained an incredible amount from his support. It is very important to have something to aspire to, role models help to show you the way and give you the confidence that one day you too can be up there.



“BE YOURSELF AND LIVE YOUR LIFE WITHOUT FEAR OR REGRETS. YOU WILL ACHIEVE MORE.”

NAME // PAUL RANA

JOB TITLE // HEAD OF STUDENT SUPPORT

ORGANISATION // VISION WEST NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COLLEGE

WORKS AT // DERBY ROAD CAMPUS, MANSFIELD

“IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO HAVE SOMETHING TO ASPIRE TO, ROLE MODELS HELP TO SHOW YOU THE WAY AND GIVE YOU THE CONFIDENCE THAT ONE DAY YOU TOO CAN BE UP THERE.”



THIS RESOURCE HAS BEEN PRODUCED TO SHOWCASE THE INSPIRATIONAL, VISIBLE LGBT+ ROLE MODELS WORKING IN ORGANISATIONS ACROSS NOTTINGHAMSHIRE. IT IS OUR INTENTION TO DEVELOP THIS FURTHER SO THAT THIS BECOMES MORE INTERACTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE. IF YOU'D LIKE TO BE A PART OF THIS RESOURCE IN FUTURE PLEASE CONTACT ONE OF THE PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS VIA PHONE, EMAIL, FACEBOOK OR TWITTER.

THIS BOOKLET HAS BEEN PRODUCED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH //



East Midlands Ambulance Service
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