

LGBT+ role models



**We celebrate those who have
made a difference to the lives of gay,
lesbian, bisexual and transgender
people in Leicestershire**



Ruth Hunt
Chief Executive, Stonewall

People perform better when they can be themselves. Stonewall’s Diversity Champions Programme supports employers who want to create a workplace where their staff can do just that.

The programme has over 750 members employing over 5.5 million staff. The reason these progressive employers work with us is because they understand that their lesbian, gay, bi, and trans staff are more efficient, confident, creative and motivated when they feel able to be themselves at work.

At Stonewall we know exactly how important role models are to our sense of self. Young people tell us how much better they feel when they know another LGBT person and staff in big and small workplaces alike say they can imagine being successful when they see people like them succeeding.

We’re pleased that Leicestershire County Council has taken inspiration from our role models guide and have produced this important publication that recognises the contribution these successful lesbian, gay, bi, and trans role models have made in Leicestershire. These role models show up within all areas of the community, have a positive influence on the people around them and pave the way for others to feel able to be themselves too.

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We celebrate those who have made a difference to the lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in Leicestershire



Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service and Leicestershire Police are proud to work together through our LGBT+ staff networks for all of our LGBT+ staff and residents. This year, we were supported by colleagues from East Midlands Ambulance Service, Leicester City Council, Charnwood Borough Council and Leicestershire Partnership Trust in our search for LGBT+ role models. The fire, police and ambulance services also have a joint staff network – the 999 LGBT+ Network which we’re very proud of.

We’re committed to celebrating diversity and combatting discrimination across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, and through our involvement in the LGBT Role Models initiative we’ve

seen and heard first-hand about some of the fantastic work that’s happening in the area. We’re delighted to see such a wide range of role models – who share a local connection – featured in this publication, and we hope that you’ll enjoy reading their stories. Role models are massively important to LGBT+ people – a role model is someone to look up to, who celebrates diversity, champions equality and has a voice on behalf of those who need the most support. Whether you identify as LGBT+, or are an ally, be inspired by these stories and think about how you can be a role model too.

ACC Julia Debenham
Leicestershire Police

Rick Taylor
Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service

Gordon McFarlane
Assistant Director and Equalities Lead,
Leicestershire County Council



Remembering Kelvin Irons

Kelvin was one of our 2013 role models, who has since sadly passed away.

Born and bred in Leicester, Kelvin spent 32 years at the Department for Work and Pensions, and his career saw him take on roles as diverse as office management to prison adviser. Kelvin was a great role model and in his own words, ‘A good advocate for being yourself and for

feeling comfortable and confident with who you are.’ Through his work as Social Justice Manager for Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, Kelvin supported people and helped turn lives around. Staff at Leicestershire County Council remember him fondly from his time working

with them on the Supporting Leicestershire Families project. He was nominated to be a role model by a colleague on this project, for his enthusiasm in helping vulnerable families. Kelvin will be remembered and missed by those who knew him.

Stephanie Morgan, QPM

Recently retired former
Deputy Chief Constable,
Leicestershire Police



During her time at Leicestershire Police, Stephanie Morgan was the most senior 'out' gay police officer. She still plays an active role in making the county a better place to live for everyone through her voluntary roles supporting the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Community Foundation and an advisory role on the University of Leicester's Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement Panel.

She also received the QPM (Queen's Police Medal) in the 2015 New Years' Honours List and an Honorary Doctorate from De Montfort University for the work undertaken with LGBT Communities.

Here, in her own words, she describes why she is seen as a role model...

"I joined the Hampshire Constabulary in 1983. I've had a varied career which began with the Fraud Squad, dealing with complex 'white collar' crime.

"In 2010, I was appointed as Assistant Chief Constable of Leicestershire Constabulary taking up the operations portfolio. I was regional commander for the Olympics, and oversaw the torch relay.

"In my line of work, I had to judge success as an absence of crime and disorder and of people, including all LGBT people, being and feeling safe in the communities I policed.

"My partner and I have suffered prejudice in the 29 years we've been together. My partner was in the services at a time when same sex relationships were illegal. We lived in fear of being found out - several of our close friends were arrested and their homes searched.

"My father was homophobic

and I felt unable to share much of my life with my family. In 2007 I told my father the truth when my mother was seriously ill with a terminal illness. My father found this difficult to accept but him knowing the truth meant that my partner was able to be a part of my family, and help out in the nursing of my mother.

"I want young people growing up today to have positive role models and be able to share who they are with their friends and family. I'm very optimistic for the future as I know how far the LGBT community has come, since those days when we feared being arrested.

"Being both the national policing lead for LGBT issues and the most senior 'out' police officer put me in the spotlight as an LGBT role model.

"I'm proud of the fact that I reached the position in my career where I made a difference by

influencing the national agenda and hopefully make things easier for LGBT officers and staff to progress.

"I am also proud to have led a national initiative - the 'It gets better' video where officers from all over the country were filmed giving personal stories in order to discourage LGBT youth from committing suicide and encourage them to report bullying and hate.

"I accept that there is further to go but take heart in the fact that there is an enthused LGBT community here that is doing all it can to ensure that 'coming out' is made as easy as possible."

"I want young people ... to have positive role models and be able to share who they are with their friends and family...."

Dr Elly Barnes MBE
CEO and Founder of Educate & Celebrate

Originally from Leicestershire, Elly topped the Independent on Sunday's Rainbow List in 2011 for her commitment to LGBT+ in Education. In 2012 was 'highly commended' in the TES 'Teacher of the Year' awards. She has continued year upon year to be nominated for numerous awards and this year 2018 achieved a place on The PRIDE Power list and also winning the DIVA Magazine Activist of the Year.

Since 2005 Elly has devoted her career to changing the face of the education system by making nurseries, primaries, secondaries, colleges, universities LGBT+Friendly by developing accessible resources, providing training and a robust programme which guarantees positive change and facilitates young people, families and teachers alike to be themselves without any fear of discrimination.

In 2010, Elly began delivering Continuing Professional Development Days from her school, developing Educate & Celebrate and the Award Programme for all schools to access. In 2015, she spearheaded the Educate & Celebrate programme as part of the pilot Anti-HBT bullying project with the Department for Education for which she received an MBE for her contribution to Equality and Diversity in Education. This was followed by an Honorary Doctorate from The University of Aberdeen.

In 2018, she is CEO of Educate & Celebrate, heading a wonderful team of experienced teachers and youth workers who have all made their own schools LGBT+Friendly – giving them the experience to deliver the successful programmes throughout the UK, the Channel Islands, Europe and beyond. The team continue to develop resources responding to the needs of young people, teachers and families.

Throughout the development, Elly has formed a close partnership with Goldsmiths University of London and, together with Dr Anna Carlile, wrote a book of all the research from the Educate & Celebrate Programme released in March 2018 called How to Transform Your School into an LGBT+Friendly Place: A Practical Guide for nursery, primary and secondary teachers.

Elly's approach has been recognised by Ofsted as best practice for taking a whole-school approach to tackling homophobic,

biphobic and transphobic bullying and ingrained attitudes in our schools describing it as 'visionary and innovative'.

Elly is a regular writer, speaker, author and campaigner for social justice in education. She says: "Increasing visibility around Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity changes and saves lives. We believe every conversation is important to move forward with breaking down the barriers to LGBT+Inclusion. Together, we can create cohesive school communities with people and social justice at its core, enabling us all to be ourselves without any fear of discrimination."

"Together, we can create cohesive school communities with people and social justice at its core..."





David Hope-Pagett

**Service support assistant (Leicestershire County Council),
Hypnotherapist and Stage Manager (Leicester Pride)**

David says that growing up, school was really enjoyable until he got to high school. “I was bullied extensively and when we as a family moved to Leicestershire, and a new school – this continued.”

“When I left school I studied computing but decided this was not for me and moved out of home at an early age of 17, as at this point I was coming out and felt I really needed my own space to become the real me finally rather than pretending or hiding it from family and friends. Coming out was a tough experience with my mother who didn’t accept this at first and I spent the next 5 years feeling very isolated from family because of this. During this time, I studied makeup and special effects at Leicester College and then moved down to the South West. I’m really happy to say my mother no longer feels this way and attended my wedding and loves my husband greatly.” David married his partner of 13 years in 2014.

“Personally over the years I have faced quite a few issues with regards to my sexuality. I left home at 17 due to not feeling accepted and had to rely on friendships built in the LGBT+ community to survive. I was attacked on three separate occasions for being gay. Each time I brushed myself off and continued to push for the right to be who I was. I have overcome adversity and hatred from those people who will not accept that we all have the right to love who we love, and to be who we are.”

David’s career has taken him from the 118 118 call centres to banking to drag cabaret – and now his day job is in Children and Family Services at Leicestershire County Council.

“As well as being involved in the council’s LGBT+ staff network, I’m a Mental Health First Aider which also gives me the skills to support my colleagues on a variety of workplace issues including LGBT+ issues.” In his spare time, David has also become a qualified Hypnotherapist.

David is now a proud member of the Leicester Pride Committee, and says, “My work with Leicester Pride for the last 10 years has raised awareness of real issues that still face the LGBT+ community every day and I’m proud to be a part of it. It’s been a pleasure and privilege to give back to the community that over the years has given me so much in my eyes – including the support of the LGBT centre when I needed it most.”

“I have overcome adversity and hatred from those people who will not accept that we all have the right to love who we love, and to be who we are.”

Kartik Bhalla

Digital Marketing Assistant, Leicestershire Partnership Trust

Kartik started working in his digital marketing role since he left school at 16. “I decided to take up an apprenticeship in digital marketing in the healthcare environment because it was an area that I was really keen on learning more about.

My role at work involves engaging staff through marketing and communications campaigns to promote health & wellbeing initiatives. We have around 5,500 staff based across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

I’m really proud to have successfully secured a permanent post at Leicestershire Partnership Trust, following on from the completion of my Level 4 Diploma in Digital Marketing. This will enable me to carry on developing and embedding diversity and inclusion in all we do, whilst recognising and valuing staff engagement regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.”

Kartik also takes on the voluntary role of Lead Advocate (Chair) of the Trust’s LGBTQ+ staff network and support group.

“The aim of the group is to provide a safe and confidential space for LGBTQ+ staff, in which potential issues can be discussed openly: providing a gateway of advocacy and assistance to staff, signposting them to internal processes or external services, ensuring that equality perspective is considered by the Trust,

strengthening relationships with external partnerships, and getting involved with local diversity and inclusion events.

For example, for the first time, staff represented the Trust by marching in the Pride parade this year. T-shirts and a parade banner were designed and commissioned in the hope of showing support and commitment to our LGBTQ+ workforce, and to recognise and celebrate the vibrant LGBTQ+ community of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.”

Kartik is a passionate advocate for intersectional equality and diversity, both personally and professionally.

“Growing up as a gay Asian, I’ve faced some cultural barriers and I found it particularly hard to navigate those. There’s still a huge challenge in defying stereotypes, traditions, taboo culture, as well as lack of representation in media.”

“Despite these challenges, I think the future is bright and colourful for the residents of Leicestershire! The contribution and value of LGBTQ+ people is becoming more recognised every day....”





Soroya MacDonald

Youth Development Worker, Leicestershire County Council

With over two decades dedicated to youth work, Soroya has spent her career supporting young people to achieve their potential.

She has been recognised for going the extra mile for LGBT+ young people in Leicestershire and providing a space for them to be themselves.

Soroya says: “I have been a youth worker for over 20 years. I have worked with young people with many different issues and in many different settings.

“I train school staff in local schools and colleges to be LGBT+ champions and to be aware of some of the issues that young people face. The LGBT+ champions wear a rainbow lanyard so that young people can identify them.

“I’ve also encouraged schools to add LGBT+ awareness into the curriculum – making sure that LGBT+ history is included in social studies, or that all types of families are included – not just the nuclear family.

“I try to think about the support that young people need. I am always cheerful and respect young people’s views and opinions.

“I suppose it helps that I’ve faced my own challenges along the way. I think back to when I told my kids that I was in a relationship with a woman, and how I tried to make them understand.

“I also lived in a small community so some people who I had known nearly all of my life stopped talking to me.

“But I am very proud of my kids and how they reacted and supported me and I’ve come through the bad times. I believe it is going to get better. I’m happy that society has changed and is still changing and that’s making it easier for people to live the life they choose.”

“I hope I can play a small part in showing people that it’s good to be yourself.”

Charlotte Stacey

Business resilience professional and LGBT+ champion for Oxfordshire County Council and Fire & Rescue Service

Leicestershire-born Charlotte has worked in local government since 2007, carving out a career from historic buildings through event management, to the UK's highest-ranking openly transgender emergency planning officer, and on into information management.

Charlotte's resilience work involves making sure those organisations such as Oxfordshire County Council and their partner agencies are ready to deal with emergencies and incidents, whilst managing their data securely.

"I work in a traditionally male-dominated environment, yet have overcome stereotypes and preconceptions to build understanding from firefighters to Chief Officers.

I have been able to help colleagues think about how they approach and make adjustments with our service users, and to be mindful of their situations, for example making our emergency rest centres LGBT+ safe places, and managing equalities during incidents."

Charlotte has also been able to champion change behind the scenes, writing and amending policies to make them trans inclusive, and bringing in trans guidance for managers.

"I'm proud to have led a number of 'firsts' for Oxfordshire: celebrating Trans Day of Visibility with flags flying at HQ; marking International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Transphobia with a display of young LGBT+ people's artwork at County Hall; and attending Oxford Pride with Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service, with our LGBT+ colleagues, our female firefighters, our families and Allies."

Charlotte's main focus is to broaden trans inclusion and promote intersectionality. "I'm still conscious that the T or + does not do justice to the spectrum of gender identities, including non-binary.

We still have a great challenge to embrace people's unique identities and characteristics."

She is also keen to tackle hate crime – and make sure that people are not complacent. "I have been attacked twice since moving to Oxford, and was very well supported by Thames Valley Police. So from a personal perspective, I actively promote StopHate.org to encourage staff and public to register hate incidents; and we took the Stonewall #NoBystanders pledge to Oxford Pride to demonstrate our commitment."

Charlotte is optimistic for the future of Leicestershire's LGBT+ people. "I'm really proud to have been chosen as a role-model for my home county. Each year I come back for Pride with our Leicestershire colleagues and am reminded of how diverse the county is.

"I put my open-mindedness and appreciation of others down to my childhood exposure to the diverse communities and groups where I grew up, and to my parents and my education: as a Leicestershire child 'being different is normal'."



Leicester Wildecats

Established in 1996, Leicester Wildecats was the third gay football team to be set up in the UK.



The weekly kickabout is still a very important part of the club and it's open to everyone who signs up to the club's ethos and ideals, regardless of their age, ability or sexual orientation. The club currently has around 60 members from Leicester, Leicestershire, Rutland and neighbouring counties.

Wildecats was a founder member of the Gay Football Supporters' Network National League and took part in the very first game in 2002.

The team's biggest achievement so far is the 2008 victory in the Gay Football World Championship.

Gareth Miller, founder of the club, says: "Wildecats provides a unique platform for members of the LGBT community to play football in a friendly, safe, non-judgemental environment, and players of all orientations, ages and abilities are welcome to join.

"The club has played a significant part in improving the lives of a large number of LGBT people and LGBT-friendly people in the area over the last 22 years. As well as promoting beneficial physical activity, the club provides a strong, vibrant social scene for its members. The team has also made

links with Leicester City Football Club with a view to fighting homophobia in football.

"There is a great togetherness and bonding within the club, regardless of people's backgrounds. The team allows LGBT people to make friends outside of the normal channels available and some very strong friendships, and indeed, relationships have been forged through our club and amongst other LGBT teams we compete against.

"The club is proud to have a good balance between the weekly kickabout and the more serious

11-a-side league games, allowing people to show their abilities at different levels. We are also proud of our long and distinguished history.

"Most of the legal barriers facing LGBT people have now been removed, but there is still some social prejudice to overcome. It can be very difficult for young LGBT people to discuss their feelings with friends, family and colleagues, especially if they are involved in football, which has a reputation for homophobia.

"Meeting LGBT people in a football environment can challenge

their preconceptions and allow them to see that there is more than one type of LGBT person, and not just the stereotypes portrayed in the media."

"There is more than one type of gay person, and not just the stereotypes portrayed in the media."

www.wildecats.co.uk





Laura Millward
Diversity and Inclusion Officer for Leicestershire Police

Laura Millward’s main motivation to join the police force back in 2005 was to help people and communities. This is a theme that has carried over into her role in the Diversity and Inclusion Unit.

“I’ve been out since I was 16, and I’ve always been comfortable in coming out to people at work. I do recognise that to some people, it is a massive step though - especially to have to tell your boss or your colleagues. So while I don’t need the support of our LGBT network, others do and that’s why it still exists in 2018 and why I want to stay involved. It’s not helpful to say “There’s not a problem here”, even if there isn’t a problem for you.”

Laura knows that the UK Police Service still has some way to go – Laura and other colleagues are part of national working group focusing on bi and queer identities and queer inclusion and although people are becoming more confident to be open about their gender identities there is still a lot more to be done. Gender neutral/inclusive facilities are still some way off.

Leicestershire Police has a culture of more openness encouraged by senior leaders such as LGBTQ Lead and Diversity Advocate ACC Julia Debenham, “We’re definitely encouraged to ‘bring more of ourselves to work’ and not shy away from talking about our family or partner. I know that it’s important for me, D&I officer, network member and role model to be out and open, but it’s equally important for our ‘advocates’ - role models within the police force who aren’t LGBTQ - to make people feel that they can be themselves at work.”

Leicestershire Police leads the way for trans employees. Laura explains that, “Our trans policy exists not only to protect the rights of trans staff, but also to make them feel comfortable about working here, to know that this is a safe, trans-friendly employer.”

Laura is a founding member of the 999 LGBT Network with another of our LGBT role models, Andrew Brodie. The network covers the emergency services in Leicestershire, and allows a bigger voice in involving three organisations (police, fire and ambulance). It also means that staff have somewhere to turn to for support that sits outside their employer; a third party LGBT network that enables an extra layer of confidentiality if needed. Laura has a simple vision for the long term future of Leicestershire Police’s LGBT Network. “In an ideal world in ten or fifteen years – however long it takes – there won’t be a need for an LGBT network because being LGBTQ won’t be an issue, you won’t be more likely to be bullied, or suffer mental health problems for example. I don’t know if or when that will happen, but I do know that right now, the network is vitally important to LGBTQ staff and is here for the foreseeable future.”

“In an ideal world in ten or fifteen years – however long it takes – there won’t be a need for an LGBT network because being LGBTQ won’t be an issue..”

Sue West

Fostering and Adoption Service, Leicestershire County Council

Family is extremely important to Sue West - both her own and the families she works with in her role as a manager in the fostering and adoption service at Leicestershire County Council.

When she came out (as lesbian) to her family, she faced a unique challenge in telling her husband of 25 years, and her two children. “I love being a mum, and my children have always been the centre of my world. Yet coming out to them and being true to myself meant ending the loving family unit in which they had grown up and felt like such a big risk.” But Sue’s experience was a positive one, she remains friends with her ex-husband, and both her children have been nothing but supportive. “I’ve learned that it’s never too late to be who you really are.” Sue has even shared her story in DIVA magazine so that women in her position could read about her experience.

Family is also an important part of her job. Sue has worked in children’s services since 1989. Her role in fostering and adoption helps to make sure that children in the care of the council are placed with loving foster carers on a long term basis, or in some cases, adopted by their ‘forever family.’ In the last couple of years, the number of adoptive families with gay mums or dads has increased rapidly.

“We did a successful

recruitment campaign to encourage same sex couples to adopt. Our advertising featured two mummies or two daddies as the norm, not as a token gesture. The ‘make up’ of adoptive families has seen significant change in the last few years. It’s very diverse – straight couples, lesbian couples, single gay men, single women...but fostering, where we urgently need to recruit, isn’t attracting LGBT foster carers yet. Applicants can expect a very fair, open and honest assessment with us and social workers that don’t make assumptions about them.” As a senior ‘out’ manager at the county council, she knows that she has made a difference with the help of her team in creating a service that celebrates diversity, and hopes that this starts to filter through in their fostering recruitment drive.

Sue says: ‘it’s important as a role model to be visible, to make both staff and service users feel comfortable and confident that they can be themselves too. At the county council we’re very lucky to have a committed LGBT Workers’ Group who are very positive and supportive. When I came out, I

contacted the group in confidence, was referred to the ‘rep’ for our department and just meeting them for a coffee and talking about the issues around coming out at work was a great help.”

Sue feels very optimistic about the future from a personal and work perspective, “My own experiences have helped me grow in confidence in terms of supporting other LGBT people. Workwise, the big step we need to take is to recruit more LGBT foster carers – we only have a handful at the moment.

“We need loving foster families and homes for the children in our care. LGBT people can provide those homes and be those families that make a difference to a child’s future.”





Angie Lymer-Cox

Service Manager – Children in Care Service, Leicestershire County Council

Angie leads our Children in Care service – and in her words, “Our future is our young people. They are so much less judgmental than past generations.

There was a time when young people asked me if I was married, I'd say no. “(Angie and her wife Anne were one of the first couples to have a civil partnership back in 2006, and were formally married in 2015). “Then one girl I was supporting, quite rightly asked me if I wasn't married, then why was I wearing a ring? She was just curious, had lots of questions for me, but to her it was just... ‘Whatever!’...”

Angie left school at 16 with very few qualifications, and described herself as ‘rebellious’ during her school years. “After school, I did a Youth Training Scheme (YTS) working with children and young people with special needs. I loved every minute and every child and family I worked with. It was the start of my passion to work with young people who had faced challenges in their young lives.”

Angie says that as a child and young adult she faced a number of challenges, which helped build strength and resilience as an adult.

Recalling her early feelings about her sexual orientation, she says, “At 17 I realised that the feelings I had been having over previous years were because of my sexuality. I was gay!

A revelation in itself as I never realised there was an alternative to a ‘normal’ way of life. After my YTS I became a youth worker and discovered other people from my community with similar challenges fitting into ‘normal’ society.”

“Initially working in this field was a challenge being gay in that many families and children didn't understand that gay people aren't a risk to their children. I have taken some abuse and each time see that as an opportunity to educate.

“Most of my family were really supportive of me. Some found it a challenge and would avoid any discussion. This was hard and caused a rift which never really healed. But I knew I had to move myself on in life and not hide away”.

After gaining further qualifications at college, Angie attended university to study social work...and has never looked back.

Angie now manages teams working with children in care, care leavers and unaccompanied asylum seeking children – which she loves. She is driven by the resilience and drive of young people and their achievements.

I want to be able to talk about my family, wife, puppy (my baby!) and holidays the same way my straight colleagues do without fear of discrimination or abuse.”

Tracy Ward

Head of Service, Adults and Communities, Leicestershire County Council

Tracy grew up in Leicester and, despite a spell at university in London, she was drawn back to her roots. She has worked in adult social care in Leicestershire since the early 1990s.

Tracy has been a recognisable role model for the county council, has regularly participated in events, articles and is an active member of the council's LGBT Workers' Group.

Tracy was nominated as a role model for being a good manager – for establishing working practices which value diversity and promote fairness and respect.

She says: "I believe everyone in Leicestershire has the right to access services which treat people with respect and dignity. I have worked hard to promote equal access for Leicestershire residents.

"I have faced homophobia in previous roles, and when I first started at the county council, I was uneasy with being open about my sexual orientation. I'm now proud

of the fact that people around me have felt supported to be out at work, and that I've played a part in valuing people's differences.

"As a manager within adult social care, I'm also proud that the organisations I have worked with deliver services which allow older people to maintain a sense of identity."

Thinking about the future, Tracy is keen to work with partners to deliver good services, and reduce hate crime and bullying:

"I want to make Leicestershire a good place to live if you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. I hope that people will read this publication and see people like them – who are able to come out at work, to family, to

friends and do not feel stigmatised or fearful of what may happen to them just because of their sexual orientation."

**"I hope that
people will read
this publication
and see people
like them..."**





Andrew Brodie

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service

Andrew Brodie has been a Fire Officer for over 25 years. He's worked in Cumbria, London, and is now Assistant Chief Fire Officer at Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service. He 'came out' to his colleagues in 2014, shortly after starting the job in Leicestershire. Coming out made Andrew one of the most senior male openly gay fire officers in the UK.

This is not a fact that Andrew takes lightly. He explains, "The early culture in the fire service in the 1990s was extremely homophobic, there was very little diversity and there was a bullying culture. The initiations were pretty horrific. It was not a time or a place where you could have even thought about coming out." There were several factors that led to him being open about his sexual orientation when he got to Leicestershire - a new start, a more senior role, more confidence in himself, but the overriding factor was the culture of the organisation. The (now retired) Chief Fire Officer Dave Webb made it clear that this was a workplace in which you should be yourself. Andrew explains, "Dave was proud that this was a fire service that you could bring your same sex partner to the work do, that you didn't have to hide who you were, he was very clear that this was an open, honest workplace."

Andrew knows that being out holding a senior fire officer position brings with it a certain responsibility.

"I've had to be willing to stand up and tell my story, and hopefully by doing so making other people feel they can be themselves."

Andrew was a founder member of the 999 Network with Laura Millward, and is vice-chair of the fire service's national LGBT network 'QUILT BAG'.

Through these roles he hopes he can make things easier for LGBT fire service staff and also for residents. "We have a big presence at Leicester Pride, and the reason behind that is very simple - we want to reach all of the communities we serve. We want to make sure that every gay couple would feel comfortable having a fire safety officer come in to their home, or that a trans person involved in a car accident

would be treated no differently from anyone else. We make sure that our 'shOUT' (Leicestershire LGBT network) newsletter goes to all staff - not just LGBT staff - and we make sure that those staff are not afraid to ask the questions to help them do their job."

Of all the brave things that Andrew has done - coming out in the fire service, saving countless lives as a fire officer, even paragliding on the weekends - he easily picks his proudest moment. "I went to a school to do a fire education session, and in the class was a nine year-old girl called Michaela Brown. Not long after I'd been to the school, Michaela was in a terrible house fire. She remembered some of the things I'd said, and saved her little brother's life. She even went on to win a Pride of Britain award for her bravery. That's what I'm most proud of, and that's why I do the job that I do."

David Rose

Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing at De Montfort University

David has been a health, safety and wellbeing professional for over 20 years having worked in the pharmaceutical, chemical, healthcare and higher education sectors. He moved to Leicester in January 2016 and started as Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing at De Montfort University that same month. Previously David lived in Brighton and on the south coast for 26 years where there is an open culture regarding gender and sexuality.

David knew he was bisexual from a young age but didn't talk to anyone about this for several years until the age of 16. "When I finally confided in someone they scorned me and said it wasn't possible. Sadly this meant I didn't bring the subject up again until I was 23, and again, I was met with disbelief and astonishment".

"Until I was in my mid-twenties, I dated women, but then I was in a relationship with a man for 14 years.. We experienced homophobia when holding hands in the street and this led to us not showing physical affection in public."

David says he experiences many misconceptions around being bisexual - not being monogamous,

'going through a phase', being greedy and carrying sexually transmitted diseases.. "It took my family and friends some time to actually understand my sexuality and for a long period of time I felt a bit 'lost'."

David recently felt empowered by the University to come out as being bisexual for the first time in over 30 years of work. He is a member of the LGBTQ Committee and is a trained Mental Health First Aid Instructor. As a role model David supports both staff and students in feeling comfortable with themselves and hopes to reduce prejudice, empower people and educate others about bisexuality. In doing so, hopefully people can be themselves and can prosper.

"It's really important to me that young people growing up have less fear than I did at their age. I feel we have moved on as a society in the UK, but we still have a long way to go. Onwards and upwards".





Anjeli Patel
Senior Consultant, People Advisory Services, EY.

Anjeli is an Indian transgender female who was born in Leicester and later moved to London. She works for Ernst & Young as a Senior Consultant in their People Advisory Services practice.

“EY is a pioneer around inclusivity at work and I use this to create positive change both inside and outside of the workplace. I was a speaker at EY’s student induction, talking about my experiences as a British Asian trans* woman at EY and the importance of employee networks.

I have been involved in organising various networking events with some of EY’s key clients and supporters of the LGBT community. I am also a member of the South Asian network, took part in a firm wide and external video for International Women’s Day, and spoke at 6 internal events this

summer across the country about D&I at EY, reaching over 2000 people.”

Outside of the workplace, Anjeli spoke at Imperial College for LGBT history month about being Asian and trans*, and was interviewed by the BBC Asian Network.

“I have been interviewed by the BBC around my transition and inclusivity at work and have been profiled by both DIVA online and Attitude on her experiences as an Asian trans* woman. Additionally, I contributed to one Stonewall’s workplace resources, Engaging All Staff in Trans Inclusion, which was sent to more than 700 Stonewall

‘Diversity Champion’ organisations as well as being available publicly through Stonewall’s website.”

Anjeli is a regular speaker at Stonewall Workplace Conferences - she is immensely proud to get “... feedback from individuals who are inspired and enthused to do more in their organisation after speaking with me.”

In addition to awards, such as the workplace award for the category “Gamechanger”, she has featured in the top ten of both the EMpower Future Leaders’ List and in the OUTstanding Future Leaders’ List (both in the Financial Times).

“I’m really proud to have been nominated as a role model for Leicestershire. Leicester will always feel like home to me. It is positive to see so much is changing in the UK so rapidly for LGBT+ individuals for the better. ”

Jo Harland

Deputy NPA commander for East Leicester Dedicated Neighbourhood Team Leicestershire Police

Jo has been a police officer since 2003, and passed her sergeant's exam in 2016 – an achievement in her life that she is immensely proud of.

"I started my career in Nottinghamshire, and transferred to Leicestershire in 2008, working in child protection. I became a Sergeant in 2016. It's a challenging but rewarding career which I love."

Jo took on the role of one of the LGBT+ Network leads at Leicestershire Police in June 2017. "The police network is a supportive, proactive group of people and I'm proud to be involved. The LGBT+ network are there when people need us, and we make sure we're visible – at events like Leicester Pride.

We want to help to make sure that the people we serve

know that equality and diversity is important to Leicestershire Police and hopefully feel confident to report a hate crime, or think about working for us, so that we can continue to build a workforce that is representative of the local community."

Growing up as a gay woman, Jo faced challenges. "I think, like many LGBT+ people, facing my family when I first came out when I was 18 years old is the hardest challenge I have faced. I came from a small mining village and a large family. Due to my mother's age she found it very difficult to accept and chose to hide my sexual orientation

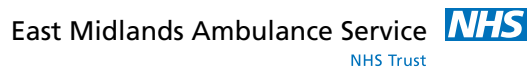
from the rest of my siblings for a long time – she thought they'd disown me if they found out. Although my siblings all had worries and concerns, they have all been very supportive and have embraced the fact that I am a gay woman. As LGBT+ lead for the police, it's important that I am publicly championing LGBT+ equality – I have had posts attacked on social media because of this, and the support of my siblings has been really important to me."

Jo looks forward to a bright future for LGBT+ people in Leicestershire.

"I am honoured to have been nominated as a role model to other LGBT+ people. I feel society is ever changing and evolving. We face different challenges but we are certainly moving in the right direction to allow everyone to be who they are."



Thanks to the following organisations for their support
in finding Leicestershire's LGBT+ role models



If your organisation would like to be involved in the future, please email LGBT@leics.gov.uk