

LGBT role models



Proud
to value
diversity

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

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



East Midlands Ambulance Service, Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service and Leicestershire Police are proud to work together through our LGBT networks for all of our LGBT staff and residents. The fire, police and ambulance services also have a joint staff network – the 999 LGBT Network - and this year we joined up to showcase our work together and meet the people we serve at Leicester’s Pride.

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 a ‘straight ally’, be inspired by these stories and think about how you can be a role model too.

Sue Noyes
Chief Executive,
East Midlands
Ambulance Service

ACC Phil Kay
Leicestershire Police

CFO Richard Chandler
Leicestershire Fire
and Rescue Service

Gordon McFarlane
Assistant Director
and Equalities Lead,
Leicestershire County Council



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 600 members employing 5.5 million staff. The reason these progressive employers work with us is because they understand that their lesbian, gay and bisexual staff are more efficient, confident, creative and motivated when they feel able to be open about their sexual orientation.

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 gay 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 have taken inspiration from our role models guide and have produced this important publication that recognises the contribution these successful lesbian, gay and bisexual 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.”



Remembering Kelvin Irons

Kelvin was one of our 2013 role models, who sadly passed away earlier this year.

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 to help 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 safer place to live for everyone through her role as advisor for the office of the Police Crime Commissioner and has been involved in charity work including 15 months as a trustee of Leicester's LGBT Centre and supporting the Leicestershire and Rutland Community Foundation. 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. Six years ago 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 DVD' 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."

"We lived in fear of being found out - several of our close friends were arrested and their homes searched..."

Elly Barnes
LGBT Schools Advisor

Originally from Leicestershire, Elly Barnes topped the Independent on Sunday's Pink List in 2011 for her commitment to LGBT in education. In 2012, Elly was 'highly commended' in the TES 'Teacher of the Year' awards and she remains one of the country's leading voices for equality.

Elly was the driving force behind Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans History Month celebrations at Stoke Newington School, Hackney from 2005. She aimed to eradicate homophobic language, bullying and challenge her students' perceptions of LGBT people.

As an experienced teacher, Elly went on to set up her own school as a Diversity Training Centre. She now offers LGBT training to teachers nationally. Her approach was recognised by Ofsted as a centre of best practice for successfully tackling homophobic bullying.

Elly is now the LGBT Schools Advisor for Birmingham City Council, the Equality and Diversity Lead at Stoke Newington School and a freelance diversity trainer. She also volunteers as the National

Schools rep for LGBT History month and SchoolsOUT.

Elly says, "I started the LGBT initiative in my school in 2005 when I was a newly appointed Head of Year. This meant I had 240 year 7 students with whom I could work on a new culture of acknowledgement, respect and understanding.

"Our teachers were witnessing widespread homophobia on a daily basis. Every 5 minutes I would hear students use the term 'gay' as an insult.

"The most effective methods I found were eradicating homophobic language, giving facts about LGBT people to my students and educating them through the curriculum by studying famous LGBT people.

"By working together we can

create an enlightened environment, where everyone can be who they want to be, without fear of discrimination."

Elly has worked tirelessly over recent years to ensure that young people value diversity, and her efforts mean that discrimination is becoming a thing of the past.

"Every 5 minutes I would hear students use the term 'gay' as an insult..."





Andrew Murphy

Chair, LGBT Workers' Group, Leicestershire County Council

Qualified social worker Andrew Murphy has worked in local government since 2001. He has been married to his husband Phil, since 2007.

Andrew established the council's LGBT Workers' Group in March 2008, and has worked tirelessly since, in his role as chair, to promote the needs of the LGBT workforce.

He is humble about his achievements as chair, but the reality is that he has overseen the council's rise from 166th in the Stonewall workplace equality index to its current top 20 place.

Andrew says: "I am proud of being part of a really successful and innovative Workers' Group which actively supports the council to think about LGBT issues and the needs of the LGBT people of Leicestershire.

"Activities like our conference really encourage our staff to think about how to consider the needs of the LGBT people of Leicestershire throughout their lives.

"I'm also really pleased to have been part of the Straight Allies programme that we have set up. One of the things I'm passionate about is that too much equality and diversity work can feel like 'preaching to the converted'.

"I'm more interested in how we engage the wider community, who perhaps think this is irrelevant. The Straight Allies scheme is a really successful way of doing this."

When asked about what challenges he has faced as a gay man, Andrew says:

"When I think back to being at school, the thought of being where I am now: out to pretty much everyone, living with my partner and with a gang of lovely friends, would have been unimaginable. Then, to be gay felt like an utter disaster and something that would condemn me to isolation.

"The world has changed so much since then, and visible LGBT role models I think have played a huge part of this. It's people like Clare Balding, who are fantastically good at what they do, happen to be a lesbian, and while they don't make a huge song and dance about that, nor do they hide it. That would have been pretty hard in the 1980s.

"And yet, the stares that Phil and I have got in supermarkets just for being two men who look

like a couple; the fact that holding hands in public or kissing goodbye on a train platform still feels like a big deal; the fact that when you change jobs you have to think about how to come out all over again. I don't think many straight people are aware of all that."

When asked what the future holds for Leicestershire's LGBT residents, Andrew's optimistic:

"Leicestershire is a great place to live. I hope that the world and Leicestershire will continue to be a more tolerant and accepting place, where we see diversity as something to be welcomed, not feared or suppressed. Where LGBT people of all ages feel that they have a place."

"To be gay felt like an utter disaster and something that would condemn me to isolation..."

Leicester Wildecats

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

The weekly kick-a-bout 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.

The 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: "The Wildecats provides a unique platform for members of the LGB 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 LGB people and LGB-friendly people in the area over the last 17 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 LGB 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 gay teams we compete against.

"The club is proud to have a good balance between the weekly kick-a-bout 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 LGB people have now been removed, but there is still some social prejudice to overcome. It can be very difficult for young LGB people to discuss their feelings with friends, family and colleagues, especially if they are involved in football, which has a reputation for homophobia.

"Meeting gay people in a football environment can challenge

their preconceptions and allow them to see that there is more than one type of gay 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."



Rebecca Shaw

Project Co-ordinator, Next Generation

Having moved to Leicestershire in 2011, Rebecca Shaw has had an instant impact upon the equality and inclusion agenda in her local community.

In 2013 she was the driving force behind a series of initiatives to champion the voices and lived experiences of LGBT people living in Hinckley and Bosworth.

In 2003 Rebecca realised that she could no longer ignore an issue which had been troubling her for years and decided to embark on a process of gender reassignment. It was not a decision this former civil servant took lightly, nor one she regrets, but she acknowledges that she underestimated how it would impact on her life.

“I took for granted the ‘privileges’ I had enjoyed when presenting as a white, middle-class heterosexual male; suddenly people were looking at me in a different way, making value judgements about me which had no basis in fact. Unemployment, homelessness and hate crime were a rude shock.”

Rebecca suffered head injuries in October 2003 when she was attacked by a group of youths after leaving a gay bar in east London. Three months later an article by Guardian columnist Julie Bindel reinforced the message: transgender people are much misunderstood. Rebecca decided

to turn her long standing passion for social justice towards LGBT equality.

As co-chair of Rainbow Hamlets, which exists to champion and celebrate the lives, needs and experiences of LGBT people based in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Rebecca campaigned against homophobia and transphobia and spoke on LGBT issues in meetings with the council and its partner organisations. She found herself challenged to continue that work on moving to Leicestershire.

“I moved to Hinckley in September 2011 and stayed with a friend until July 2012. It was a difficult time. I was kept awake at night by stones thrown at my window and people shouting names. I looked to community safety plans for answers and found none; I saw no strategies for dealing with homophobic and transphobic anti-social behaviour.”

Since then, Rebecca has been working with Next Generation, a community organisation based in Hinckley, to raise awareness of LGBT issues and to help improve services for LGBT people. In

February 2013 she worked with Proud Generation, an LGBT group started by Next Generation, to promote LGBT History Month, a first for Hinckley. She followed this up with weekly community awareness events in the town centre during March and planned an event to celebrate International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia in partnership with Hinckley and Bosworth Council in May. But she sees herself as an unlikely role model.

“I don’t think there’s anything brave or heroic about what I do. To me, it is vital that trans people are seen to be capable of standing up for themselves. Because if we don’t, who will?”

“To me, it is vital that trans people are seen to be capable of standing up for themselves. Because if we don’t, who will?”





Soroya MacDonald

County Youth Worker, Leicestershire County Council

With more than 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 set up a group for LGBT young people at Mountfields Lodge in Loughborough. Although the numbers started small at the moment I am confident that we will attract more young people who identify as LGBT and will help to support them if and when they need it.

"I don't think of myself as a role model, but I think I've been nominated because I set up a dedicated group for LGBT young people.

"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 easier and easier to come out and live the life you want to live."

"I hope I can play a small part in showing people that it's good to be yourself."

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..."





Our chief officers march at Pride, Chief Constable Simon Cole and ACC Phil Kay in 2014 and DCC Roger Bannister in 2015 – that is a huge statement. They’re not LGBT so it’s not about them; they’re doing it to show their support for LGBT officers and residents.

Sergeant Laura Millward

Chair of Leicestershire Police’s LGBT Network

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 as Chair of Leicestershire Police LGBT Network.

“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 2015 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 – there are very few openly gay male officers for example, and when you get to highest level (the Superintendents Association) there are less than five out male officers in more than two thousand members. Leicestershire Police has a culture of more openness encouraged by senior leaders such as LGBT Lead and ally ACC Phil Kay “We’re definitely encouraged to ‘bring ourselves to work’ and not shy away from talking about our family or partner. I know that it’s important for me, as chair and role model to be out and open, but it’s equally important for our ‘allies’ - role models within the police force who aren’t LGBT - to make people feel that they can be themselves at work.”

Leicestershire Police is also

leading 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 also joint chair 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 recently joined other officers from Leicestershire on the Police Unity Tour – a 180 mile bike ride to honour fallen police officers in aid of the Care of Police Survivors charity. Laura rode to honour PC Catherine Godfrey, who died in a cycling accident after being recalled to duty on a stormy night in 1947. PC Godfrey was being recalled to deal with a female as was the culture back then. Women dealt with women and men with men. “Riding for Catherine was an emotional reminder of the

achievements of female officers - those women that are role models themselves and paved the way to the more inclusive police force we have now. I wore a bracelet with her name on, and presented her niece with it at the police memorial in Staffordshire.”

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 LGB or T 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 LGBT staff and is here for the foreseeable future.”



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 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."



Inspector Aimee Ramm

Control Room Inspector, Leicestershire Police and champion swimmer

Born in Scarborough in North Yorkshire, Aimee Ramm came to Leicestershire to attend university, and has lived here ever since. She recognises the positive attitudes to diversity that the area has to offer.

“Leicestershire is extremely diverse and has such a variety of race, religion and culture that is it naturally at the forefront of promoting diversity.”

Aimee joined the county's police force in 2006, after graduating from Loughborough with a BSc in Sport Science and a MSc in Management. She qualified as a sergeant in 2010. Since qualifying, Aimee has been involved in a number of areas, including child protection, before her current role in the control room. “My job requires me to assess of incidents coming into the organisation and make decisions as to an appropriate response. I am a tactical firearms commander so I run the initial stages of incidents that require specialist firearms officers.”

Aimee's success in the police

force goes beyond the day job. She is also the current holder of seven police swimming records. “I was a keen swimmer as a child and continued to swim and compete through university at national standard – and just missed out on representing Great Britain at the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Swimming has taught me to work hard and never give up.” Aimee's achievements in swimming also include the British, European and World Masters records (team and individual events), national medals in Fly and Freestyle and 9 times consecutive Champion of UK Police swimming events.

She ranks her swimming records and medals as her proudest personal triumphs, but is equally proud of her professional achievements. “I take great pride in my work as a Police Officer - knowing my team and I have made someone's life better by seeking justice for a terrible crime, and that those responsible are punished.”

Aimee hopes that through her personal and professional accomplishments she can be a role model, and encourage others to succeed. “I hope that I can inspire people – regardless of sexuality – and of all backgrounds

and status to be the best they can be. I am passionate about my job and committed to being a good leader. I am privileged to be in a position where I can influence and encourage others to develop themselves. I am a firm believer that the most important thing in any organisation is the people and by putting people first we get better overall results.”

Aimee thinks that attitudes towards LGBT people have come a long way, but that ideally in the future we'd move towards a time where any 'differences' are so acceptable that we won't need labels anymore. “I have never faced any prejudice and in a perfect world I would hope neither would other people. I know for some people life can be made into a challenge by the attitudes and behaviours of others and I would like to be part of changing that. Honestly - my only ever challenge has been me accepting myself. I don't like to categorise myself by a label and like to think that I am known by people for who I am, not what I am. I hope that our society can become that – accepting people for who they are and not label them.”

Proud
to value
diversity





Luke Hutchinson

Housing department, Charnwood Borough Council

Luke is modest about his achievements in helping to create a more equal playing field for trans people in the East Midlands. He shouldn't be – he has achieved a lot in a relatively short space of time.

Luke started working at Charnwood Borough Council 5 years ago, and transitioned 4 years ago. Around that time he was moving to a new job in the Private Sector Housing Department. "It was a chance for a new start, so on the first day I went into the office for the first time as Luke. Everyone at the council has been absolutely brilliant, especially our Human Resources team. HR did not have a trans policy, so with my help and with Stonewall advice we created one immediately. As terrifying as transitioning was, I felt totally supported at work and in my personal life. Before I started at Charnwood, I hadn't worked in an environment where I felt comfortable to be me."

Luke hopes that his work on the policy will have wider repercussions. "Hopefully trans people will see that we have a policy and recognise that Charnwood is a supportive potential employer. Having a policy shows trans service users that we understand their needs too, and that they can expect to be treated fairly.

Luke has done some follow up work with the equalities team at Charnwood. "I recently produced some top tips for our staff newsletter. When I transitioned, there were so many occasions that I found there just wasn't the level of understanding that's needed in place. This made the task of updating my details with organisations like banks, the NHS, my Local Authority, utility providers to be a herculean task. I thought the top tips might help our staff if they're providing a service to a trans person. It was simple, but really important things like making sure you use preferred pronouns and asking if you're not sure, not making assumptions and being very respectful with the questions you ask."

Luke has also worked hard to change health policy in his native Nottinghamshire. Luke noticed loopholes which meant he couldn't get access to the medicine that he needed – even though his GP had prescribed it. His subsequent campaigning through his local councillor and MP resulted in a change to the way trans people

access medical treatment. "It took a long time to get that sorted, but if trans people can now get access to the treatment they need, it was worth it."

Luke is very positive about the future for trans people in the UK, "We all need to make sure that trans issues are not forgotten about or tagged on the end of LGB issues or policies. These issues need to be part of everyday life, everyday services that we access.

"It's fantastic that organisations like Stonewall are trans inclusive – the next step is to make sure that all organisations are trans inclusive."



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 last year 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 is co-chair 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."

