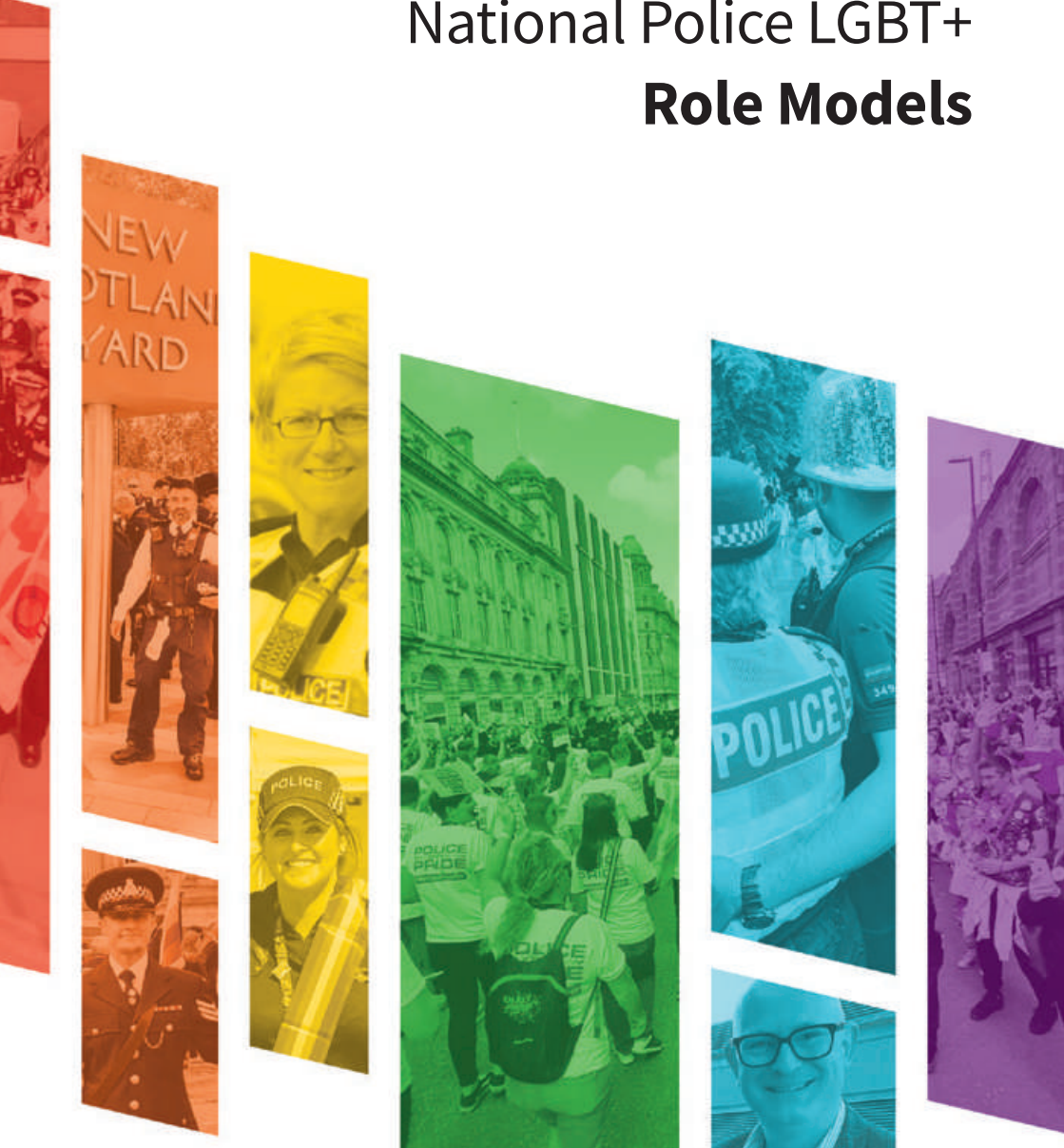




National Police LGBT+ Role Models





Our Role Models

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National LGBT+ Lead

DCC Julie Cooke
Cheshire Constabulary

I am the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for LGBT+ and have been doing this role since 2017. I believe it is incredibly important for policing to be representative of the communities it serves and that 'difference makes a huge difference' to how we deliver our policing services and how we serve our communities. Everyone should be able to feel confident to bring their whole self to work and to be who they are and my primary objective is to ensure that diversity is embraced by all within policing.

As an LGBT+ ally, I do this role because I see how draining it can sometimes be to fight for what is right - to be yourself. I try to highlight some of the challenges of being LGBT+ and I aim to raise awareness and understanding, starting the conversations that others shy away from. Sexuality and gender identity do not define people, they are just part of an individual's makeup and over the last couple of years we have done a lot of work to increase understanding of being bisexual and being transgender.

This booklet is to raise awareness of the different LGBT+ identities of people working within policing and to give confidence to our LGBT+ staff that they really can be themselves. Each person has a story to tell, but overwhelmingly, they all focus on how much better it is when they were honest about who they were. I know as a senior leader that I will get better performance from my staff if they are confident to be themselves.

Through this booklet, we also hope to enhance our relationships with our LGBT+ communities which in turn will encourage people from our all of our communities to join policing. I am extremely proud of all of the people who have told their story in this booklet - for many it is a very personal journey - but all have the desire to encourage openness and make policing as diverse as possible.

POLICE
WITH
PRIDE





Detective Constable
Tracy O'Hara QPM
Merseyside Police

I had never really thought much about my attraction as I was growing up but when I joined the police I realised that being gay might be something that was an issue.

The time was 1996. I was in a relationship, I never spoke of it, I never spoke about me and I felt like a fraud. I listened to homophobia almost every shift. It was everywhere, in the police station, as we patrolled, as we attended jobs. It was exhausting. I worked hard, I made arrests and I loved

my job. But a double life was getting too much. One day a colleague asked me outright if I was gay. I told him yes and we became firm friends.

However it wasn't enough. In 2001 I reached a crossroads. Either leave the job I had wanted to do since watching 'Cagney and Lacey' as kid, or stay and feel incomplete. I met a police friend. I told her and she told me two things. Go and find the "gay" network and do not leave the police - change it from within. I found the network and it kept me in the Police. In fact, it has done ever since. Being part of Merseyside Police's LGBT+ network has been one of the best decisions I ever made and I then tried to do my best to change the police from within.

I have seen Merseyside Police fly the rainbow flag each year, the trans flag every year, seen our HQ lit up in rainbow/trans lighting for various LGBT+ events - more recently I have seen chief officers march at pride, young in service colleagues being out and proud, staff speaking out about injustice and on a national/international stage I have seen the landscape change in a way I could never have dreamt of.

I have marched in pride for over a decade, been part of LGBT+ National Police Network since its inception and I have been recognised for my work by HRH the Queen, by way of a Queens police medal in 2017. Unreal for a working class girl from Middlesbrough who spent her years growing up with a football for company.

“Be your true self, life is short, you are valid and you matter. Being in the police is an amazing career, varied, challenging, tough and rewarding.”



Acting Chief Constable **Adrian Hanstock QPM**

British Transport Police

Today's workplace has become increasingly inclusive and organisations are much more aware of the advantages of introducing diversity to the workplace. Creating a supportive atmosphere, free from the effects of discrimination or unfair processes, can help improve health, job satisfaction and create more positive relationships with colleagues.

However, it's relevant to look back now and then to fully understand how far we've come.

It seems incredible that the culture in the police service more than 30 years ago was to view LGBT+ officers with suspicion, considering them to be vulnerable to blackmail and a potential "risk". These attitudes undoubtedly dissuaded some people from becoming police officers in the first place or otherwise undermined their confidence to progress in their chosen careers.

The payback is much more than just a boost to individual employees' confidence and self-esteem. A diverse

“ I am proud to see just how much the police service has changed, as have many other organisations, in demonstrating a willingness to understand the tremendous benefits that diversity and inclusion can offer and, perhaps more significantly, the efforts that have been made to improve relationships and change the way organisations operate. Over time the irrational prejudices have been replaced with a "why not" and somewhat pioneering approach. ”

organisation is more likely to understand and respond appropriately to the varied needs of its employees and customers, clearly an important ambition in policing when considering the expectations of our multicultural society. Diverse teams also tend to perform better and the flow of creativity and ideas can help stimulate innovation and healthier ways of working.

This shift in approach is underscored by the great number of LGBT+ colleagues now represented in a wide range of roles and specialisms, and thankfully LGBT+ staff are no longer seen as a 'threat' but are valued for the skills, professionalism and contribution they can make to their job.

Finally, when reflecting on my own experiences, as a gay man I would never have imagined that it would ever be possible for me to become a chief officer, but through the support of enlightened leaders, and in a service keen to embrace change, I have been able to reach a senior role based on my personal merits and depth of professional performance; not blocked by rather unfounded perceptions on who I happen to be.





Police Constable
Vicky Mors

**Cheshire
Constabulary**

My name is Vicky and I have been a serving police officer for nearly 13 years. Prior to this, I worked for Merseyside Police for two years as a call handler. In 2009 I was diagnosed with Endometriosis and this triggered me to think about the possibility of having children, given that my fertility would be hindered with the condition.

I had an IVF attempt in 2010 that failed and in 2015 I decided after being single for a while that I would just go for it and try my last treatment attempt on the NHS. Although it was daunting - the thought of having the treatment and a baby alone – my supervisors at the time were very supportive and made the whole process much less stressful than it already was.

Lo and behold, the treatment worked, and at the end of 2015 Jaxon, my now four-year-old son was born. Life, shall we say, has never been the same since.

MY ADVICE...

"I feel that it is important to be who you are, especially at work, as well as in your personal life. I hope by doing so it encourages younger individuals to be open with their sexuality and realise that it's ok to be a part of the LGBT community, and that they shouldn't feel scared to talk about how they may be feeling in regards to their sexuality."

Some people thought I'd gone mad deciding to have a child alone, but I just thought there's never a right time for most things in life and if I don't at least try I might regret it in years to come.

Although at times it's hard being a single parent, I have found that the force has helped enormously as and when it can. I work a flexible pattern which allows me to work around the little childcare I have available to me.

I am openly gay in the workforce and have been since I started. I have never been met with any hostility and have never felt like I've had to hide my sexuality. I believe that this is due to the way Cheshire Constabulary promote the LGBT+ community within the force.

I regularly attend the Pride meetings as and when I can, and Jaxon attends with me. I openly talk to Jaxon about the fact he just has a mummy and try to educate him in the sense that families can be made up differently and diversely.





Police Constable **Paul Bloomer**

Police Service of Northern Ireland



I am a serving officer in the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), I identify as queer and live with a disability.

My parents instilled in me a deep respect for diversity, a strong desire for public service and for social justice. They raised me to be solution driven, a positive person and to try and make the world a little bit better. I always wanted to be a police officer but I never thought the institution was welcoming of LGBT+ people - when I was 15 my career's advice teacher told me that I wouldn't be suitable for the police because of my sexuality, this left me feeling dejected and resentful. I left Northern Ireland (NI) in 2002 like a lot of young LGBT+ people did, I've heard this phrase a lot, 'We went away to be gay'.

In London, 2008 I saw a police recruitment ad in an LGBT+ Magazine, I felt something that was always out of reach for me was now possible. I made the decision to return to NI and help be a positive role model for LGBT+ people in my home country. I then joined the police service in 2010.



*You are meant to be seen, you
are meant to be celebrated.*



I joined the Gay Police Association (GPA) and was one of three PSNI officers present at the launch of the National LGBT+ Police Network in Manchester 2015. After the launch we marched in uniform at a pride event. It was transformational for me, hearing the positive reaction from the crowd was deeply moving. An older woman from the crowd grabbed my arm, I could see tears in her eyes, she said she had left NI as she had suffered discrimination for being LGBT+, she too had 'went away to be gay'. She told me once she saw the NI uniform she felt that some positive change had come over her home country and that seeing us there made her feel represented in a way she never expected.

To have people cheer and welcome seeing police officers, it renewed my sense of pride in my uniform and I wanted every officer especially those who are LGBT+ from my home service to experience the same. I also wanted the LGBT+ community in NI to see and know that they were supported by their police service. I knew that change was needed back home to allow this to happen and that I had a lot of work ahead of me.

I helped reform the GPA into the PSNI LGBT+ Network and helped lobby for the first participation of uniformed PSNI officers at Belfast Pride, August 2017. We walked through the streets with 50,000 people cheering and clapping us, I could see the positivity light up my colleagues faces. I felt like we had brought a little bit of positive change to my home country and I couldn't be prouder of that.

I believe in doing all I can to help support and empower the most marginalised people in our community. I helped establish our intersectionality working group with the aim to amplify the voices of BAME LGBT+ people within the UK LGBT+ police network, to improve our representativeness and fairness in decision making.

I would say to any LGBT+ person reading this, live your life proudly and in the open. You are not alone, there are police officers out there who will work to help you and protect you. If you are suffering from hate crime, domestic abuse or bullying, please report it. Give us the chance to do something about it.



T/Sergeant Rhian Carter

South Wales Police

I joined the police in 2012 in my early twenties, at a time I was just about figuring out that I was a transgender woman. Nobody else knew and I didn't even know how to begin telling people, or even if I should.

In 2019 I could take no more and I came out to my team. At first just a couple, then the wider team and ultimately to my managers and my organisation. I was met by unwavering love and support from my colleagues and it was because of them that I was able to go from being completely closeted to starting my full-time transition in less than two weeks.

I had spent years trying to gauge the opinions of others around gender identity and my observations were

generally positive, but I would occasionally hear a remark in poor taste. This was concerning, but ultimately, they weren't talking about me. They were talking about "those transgender people" who didn't really exist in my workplace.

Whilst the remarks never left my memory, those who said them became some of my biggest supporters and advocates. When I came out a lot of people who thought they'd never worked with a transperson realised that they'd been working with one for years.

“After I came out, I was repeatedly described as brave for being myself in such a "macho organisation". My experience is that, despite perceptions, our police force runs far deeper than that today. I have encountered challenges and that has been a part of the learning experience for both myself and for the organisation. But whatever I've faced I've always had support, often from the unlikeliest of people and places.”

I now live a very different reality to the one I did not so long ago. Rather than living every day in fear, dread and helplessness I am empowered to be the woman I am personally and professionally. I've worked across a variety of roles and responsibilities since transition, and as a result of being able to come to work without the stress of having to live as someone I'm not I'm more efficient, happy and more productive - something vitally important to in order to serve the public to the best of my ability.

I wasn't able to come out in spite of being a police officer. I was able to come out because I am a police officer.



Rachel Roberts
Hate-Crime
Coordinator at
Merseyside Police

My name is Rachel Roberts and I am a Hate-Crime Coordinator for Merseyside Police; working in Central PVPU.

I joined Merseyside Police in January 2020, having previously worked as an English teacher at Liverpool's largest secondary school for a number of years. I was also Assistant Head of Year to over 230 students and as part of this role I supported young people who had been bullied because of their identity, ethnicity, disability or the way they looked; and it was these experiences that made me apply for my current police staff role.

Being an epileptic gay woman and coming from a family where my great grandparents descended from Sierra Leone, Belfast and Hong Kong, the role of working to support people of protected characteristics really resonated with me. This is because over the years I have been subjected to discrimination and prejudice because of my protected characteristics.

I am relatively new to the LGBT+ Network and it is the first time I have ever been part of a staff network. Having previously worked in an educational setting I was not aware of any staff networks and I also had mixed experiences when talking about my sexuality. Some of these experiences were positive but sadly some were not. For example, when completing my initial teacher training I was told by members of my faculty that I should never discuss or talk about my sexuality in the work place. This was upsetting and frustrating because I have always been open about my sexuality; having come out when I was 15 years old. But what was even more frustrating and shocking was that when I challenged my colleague's comments, I was also told by the head teacher that the school was not homophobic. However, the school could never have a head teacher who was gay.

“ I love being part of the LGBT+ Network and I love seeing the LGBT+ Merseyside Police logo all around the station where I am based. I really feel that Merseyside Police is an organisation that allows me to celebrate and embrace who I am. ”

For me, being gay and working for Merseyside Police has never been an issue and it will never will be. However, I know that this is not the case for everyone and that there may be staff who do not feel confident or comfortable being themselves because of past experiences. Which is why I think the LGBT+ Network is invaluable because it strives to create and promote a workplace that is diverse, inclusive and supportive of all staff members who identify as LGBT+; so that they feel comfortable and confident being themselves.





Barry Boffy
**Head of Inclusion
and Diversity at
British Transport Police**



If you'd have told me at any point before 2007 that I'd find myself working for a police force, with a career in law enforcement, I would never have believed you. As a career option, this would never have even crossed my mind.

I realised that I was gay in the 1980s during my teenage years, during a time when Section 28 of the Local Government Act was very much being enforced. It meant that being gay was never spoken about at school (and actively discouraged or ignored). I didn't know anyone who was visibly 'out' and you certainly didn't see LGBT+ people on the TV unless it was to tell a dark morality tale, usually with an unhappy ending. I honestly believed that you couldn't be openly gay and succeed in any career, let alone with a police force.

However, it was made very clear that being gay is just one of the many things that make me who I am. It's probably the least interesting thing about me and it's actually rarely mentioned by me or anyone else. Being myself at work and

not having to make the enormous effort of hiding my sexuality has really helped me and I have never met anyone in policing that has actually been the least bit interested in my sexuality. They're more interested in whether I am good at my job - and rightly so!

I'm incredibly proud to work for a police force that doesn't just accept me for who I am, but actively supports me and provides an inclusive work environment where everyone is welcomed and accepted for who they are too.

MY ADVICE...

"Be your genuine self, all of the time and unapologetically, as you'd be surprised how little it really matters. Even if you've had a tough time in the past, it's really important that you don't let your previous experiences cloud your judgement and that you should expect the same treatment again. Being your genuine self is really liberating and will let you concentrate on the things that are truly important and will give you the space to get on with what you need to do; performing to your very best and enjoying your career. This is ultimately what's important to your employers and all those around you. They want to know you, not a version of you that you think they may be more comfortable with."



Police Constable
Skye Morden

West Midlands Police



I am a police officer with 20 years of service. I now train public order and am a taser lead instructor. I have policed the worst of humanity and stood and “held the line” in large disorders.

I have numerous awards for bravery and courage, often going above and beyond. Since I was young I knew that something was wrong, that my identity didn’t match my physical self. Growing up, this pressure cooker of hate and pain has been hidden away, until it has almost beaten me. My first few tentative steps into the world as me have been

terrifying. I can honestly say that dealing with an aggressive, violent people is easier and less frightening than simply going outside as me. The NHS waiting lists for specialist gender identity clinics is five years. In some areas, the wait is infinite. For people who are struggling with their identity, this is heart breaking. The trans community has increased levels of suicide and Stonewall research shows that almost half of young trans people have attempted suicide. Because of this I am now paying for private healthcare to help me transition and finally become the real me.

Trans people are subjected to daily abuse. Anger and misinformation is everywhere. Police social media accounts receive hate every time they post support for LGBTQ+ or other vulnerable communities. It’s like a death by a thousand cuts.

I wrote a trans positive article that was picked up by the worlds tabloid press. Thousands of hateful comments caused “the job” so much concern that my private life was subjected to a CTU check to ensure my safety. But I am strong and I need to use my privileges as a police officer to stand up, to show those vulnerable communities that we exist in the police and that we “HEAR YOU”.

Trans people exist. Science shows this. We are ALL a complex mix of biological, psychological, and social elements which are interconnected. Some of us have different chromosomal make-up. Likewise we all have different levels of hormones and there are many men who have a more ‘female’ pattern brain and vice versa (Joel and FaustoSterling, 2016). Some people are intersex. Gender IS a spectrum.

“ But there is a light in this terrifying world, my policing family. You, who have stood by my side through thick and thin. You who have now embraced me and supported me. YOU have heard me and I thank you. ”



T/Inspector
Danielle Knox

**Cheshire
Constabulary**

I joined Cheshire Police eleven years ago. From about the age of 14, I had a calling to serve the public and make a difference. I decided to join the police to protect people who are vulnerable.

When I first joined the force, I did hold back about coming out because I didn't know what to expect. A lot of people volunteer in the specials or become a PCSO before they become a fully-fledged police officer. I went straight in after university. I feared that if I came out straight away I would be judged, however people have just been fantastic.

I noticed that although there are a lot of people who are LGBT+ in the force, there aren't many colleagues putting themselves forward to be role models. I didn't have that when I joined the force. I decided to attend the Stonewall Role Model training. It was an inspirational day. There was a great sense of empowerment and the understanding of the benefit of LGBT+ role models not only to the community but also those you work with. Going on the Stonewall training changed the way I viewed my role. I felt it was really important I made a stand for other people. As a result of that, I became the vice-chair of the Cheshire Police LGBT+ network. I met people who had experienced bullying. I realised that other people had a more difficult time than I did - I think I have been really fortunate in terms of the experiences I have had.

MY ADVICE...

"Openness is important because, if you are working in a team, you work very closely with your colleagues. You therefore need to be able to be yourself. That person you are having coffee with between conducting interviews is the same person who will be backing you up in a fight. I don't go around telling members of the public I'm lesbian. I am there to do a job, I represent the constabulary, I wear a uniform... but I am proud of what I am and have also represented the police in pride marches."



Sergeant
Sandy Scott

Lancashire Constabulary



My name is Sandy and I am a response sergeant. I have been a police officer since 2009 and before that, police staff for 3 years working in the force control room. Most of my service has been with North Yorkshire Police until recently, now having transferred over the hill to work for Lancashire Constabulary.

I am an openly bi woman who came out in 2016 after spending pretty much my whole life hiding who I really was from the majority of the world. I owe my decision to come out and to live authentically to attending my first ever Pride in York and seeing my then Deputy Chief Constable supporting the event as an ally in full operational uniform, wearing rainbow face paint and a huge smile. This experience was a turning point for me and why I will always encourage senior leaders to support pride events wherever possible. You never know who you will inspire.

Sadly often people who identify under the 'bi umbrella', people whose attractions span more than one gender or are regardless of gender are erased or ridiculed from both within the LGBTQ+ community as well as outside and there is still a lot of work needed to raise awareness around these identities.

It is interesting to compare how society accepts me depending upon the gender of my partner. With an opposite gender partner I can walk down the street holding hands and I am invisible, but when I access LGBTQ+ space I am often made to feel unwelcome, viewed with suspicion and assumed to be straight. Now with my same gender partner I get stared at for walking down the street holding hands, sometimes with curiosity and sometimes with distain, but I can access any LGBTQ+ space I like. I am welcomed as I am assumed to be a gay woman. Complete opposites despite the fact that I am the same person and my identity does not change. Only other people's perceptions of me change. But, whatever the gender of my partner I am still bisexual.

“ I can now truly say that I am comfortable with my queerness and welcome conversations from anyone wanting to learn more about how they can support this still largely misunderstood and marginalised part of the LGBTQ+ community. Nationally we now have a working group for people who identify under the bi/queer umbrella along with allies of any identity, who support one another and who do what we can to work with our networks to ensure they are welcoming and inclusive towards bi/queer people. ”



Superintendent **Elliot Foskett**

Northamptonshire Police

Elliot joined the Royal Navy in 1990 following a few years as a professional musician and radio DJ, before joining Thames Valley Police in 1997. He served as a detective constable in Milton Keynes and on the National Crime Squad before transferring to Northamptonshire Police in 2006. Elliot was promoted to detective sergeant in 2006, working in Corby CID and on several high-profile homicide cases before being promoted to detective inspector in 2008 and leading the Force Intelligence Bureau.

In 2010, Elliot had a change of career and became the staff officer to the chief and deputy chief constable, working alongside chief officers and the then NPIA to produce the first iteration of the National Decision Model.

In 2012, Elliot was promoted to chief inspector and took over in the Force Control Room before moving back to a detective chief inspector role in 2014. He was the lead for violent crime and CID in the north of the county, achieving promotion to detective superintendent, head of crime in 2015.

Whilst in this role he was also the lead for wellbeing and worked as part of the national gender working group with Chief Constable Dee Collins.

Elliot had yet another huge change in career direction in 2018, taking up a role with the College of Policing as the lead for the Strategic Command Course. Whilst in this role, he was able to influence a huge number of existing and new chief officers, particularly around the diversity agenda.

Whilst in this role, he designed and implemented the national 'Aspire' course, providing a bespoke course for those who identify as belonging to groups underrepresented in senior policing.

Elliot came back to Northamptonshire at the start of the pandemic to take up the silver commander role, a role he has held throughout the Covid outbreak. During the summer of 2020, Elliot was also asked to return early from the College of Policing to take up the force lead for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

He was supported for the Senior Police National Assessment Centre in late summer 2020 and will undertake the assessment in 2021.

Elliot publicly 'came out' as bisexual in 2021 and has had huge support from colleagues.

Elliot is 51 and is married to Lisa. He has three children, Nicholas, Holly and Jude. In his spare time he is a songwriter, singing and recording his own music with musicians from around the country.



Detective Sergeant
Christian Owens
.....
Merseyside Police

I have 25 years' policing experience. I have been a detective for the last 12 years and I am currently posted to the force's Community Engagement Unit... but, more importantly, I have become me. A visible and very proud trans man, who is trying to make changes and improve the future for others.

I started my career in October 1994, as a 23-year-old female police constable. In 2012, I made the biggest decision of my life and embarked on my journey of transition that would finally enable me to live my life truly as me - Christian Owens - a man.

In 2009, I had started to socially transition in my private life, dressing as a man behind closed doors and in public on the few occasions when I felt brave enough.

“ I was leading a double life. A man at home and a woman at work. I was racing home because I was desperate to be me. Then, on 10th December 2012, having started my medical transition, I walked through the doors of Merseyside Police HQ for the first time as DS Christian Owens. ”

It felt liberating to finally be me, but extremely scary. I was scared of being misgendered, not being acknowledged as a man, of being bullied and isolated, and losing my friends and colleagues. I got stared at, and looked at strangely in the toilets. Male colleagues would often awkwardly leave the toilets when I entered, refusing to use them. I heard ignorant comments, such as “I don't get it” and “is that a man or a woman” and people did fail to challenge at the times that I really needed them to.

But what really matters is what we, as an organisation, have done since that time and I am proud to say that we have progressed, improved and made important changes. Chief officers are visible and want to raise the levels of knowledge and understanding, in order to empathise and fully support.

Internally, I provide educational inputs to raise awareness. I now live my life to the full and I'm grateful for every single day. It gives me enormous pleasure and satisfaction to now be a role model for others.

I hope that this snapshot of my journey as a trans police officer has inspired you and given you hope for the future.



Police Constable

Laks Mann

Metropolitan Police

Laks is a police officer at Met Police with twelve years' service, and is the Intersectionality and Community Engagement Lead on the Met LGBT+ Network's Executive Committee. Laks is the secretary of the National LGBT+ Police Intersectionality Working Group, and a keynote speaker addressing intersectionality at the National LGBT+ Police Conference 2021.

Laks is an alumnus of Stonewall's flagship LGBT+ Workplace Leadership Programme and also their BAME/ PoC Role Models Programme. He has been invited to speak at conferences and events for Stonewall, BTP, House of Commons, PwC, KPMG, BBC Asian Network, Prince's Trust, The Telegraph, and Knowledge Quarter about his experiences of policing and working towards inclusive work environments.

Laks is a Mayor of London appointed Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisor to City Hall - and advocates through an intersectional lens of race, ethnicity, faith, LGBTQ+, and working class lived experiences. As an EDI Advisor, Laks is consulted on policy initiatives, strategic interventions, community engagement and outreach activities.

Laks is the LGBTQ+ Curator for South Asian Heritage Month - a national celebration to raise the profile of British South Asian heritage and history in the UK, through education, arts, culture and commemoration.

Laks is the founder of Gaysians UK - a community led national LGBTQ+ organisation he built to increase visibility of the UK's South Asian queer community.

Laks is listed in the UK's Top 30 BAME Leaders 2020 by University of Oxford, House of Commons, and OBV. Laks is also a Pride365 Certified Champion - and a 2020 finalist in the National Diversity Awards, British Diversity Awards, and European Diversity Awards.

Prior to policing he worked in the charity sector for two years, and in the corporate sector for eight years with global blue chip organisations including Deutsche Bank, PwC, and Jones Lang LaSalle. Throughout his career he has consistently engaged in discussions to address diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and was a Co-Founder of the PwC Ethnic Minorities Forum established over twenty years ago.

His favourite pastimes include boxing, cross-training, socialising with family and friends, and arts and culture - where his interests gravitate towards Afro-Indo-Ethnic-Centric events, queer narratives, and working class stories.





Will Ambler
Dispatch at North
Yorkshire Police

I joined North Yorkshire Police in 2003 as a gay married woman called Sarah. I started my career in crime recording before moving across to Dispatch. Fast forward to March 2017 when I “came out” again as a transgender male and William was born.

By the time I was a teenager I was sure I should have been a boy. Actually I just wanted to be like my big brother. At the time I had never heard of gender reassignment. It wasn't something I would consider. What would people think?? How would I tell my mum?! All questions that I later went on to face. In 2017 life changed beyond anything I could comprehend. I had left my wife of 14 years, moved out of the family home and made the decision to live my life as Will.

I started opening up which lead to me taking the first steps in my transition. I was convinced I would lose all my family and friends. However I couldn't go back to my old life.

I opened up to close friends and family. I was terrified. My mum was 78, how would she take the news. As it turned out she was fine. She was a funny cookie my mum. She never got my name right. Always either my old name or Will I Am. Didn't matter though. I had been fully accepted. Not just by her, but by my brother, sister, friends and family. Without exception.

Life is different now. I am privileged enough to work for the LGBT+ network both locally and nationally. I will forever shout from the rooftops how fortunate I am to have the support I do. Many don't have that support. Which is why I will forever be part of this. It has become a passion. I have my own family now. A partner Kirsty, and along with Kirsty I have three wonderful step children (buy one get three free!), and life is just unrecognisable. I couldn't be any happier and I am so thankful.

MY ADVICE...

"Be courageous. What you are worrying about is likely to be worse in your thoughts than it is in reality. Be honest. The more you tell people the less they can make up in their minds. Be proud. Each step you take is a step towards your truest self and ultimately I believe this will be your BEST self."



Police Constable
Michael Keppler
.....
**Civil Nuclear
Constabulary**



I joined the Civil Nuclear Constabulary (CNC) in 2017, before joining I was a lorry driver.

The CNC is an armed police force protecting the UK's civil nuclear industry and providing armed escorts for movements of nuclear materials within the UK and abroad. The CNC also deploys armed officers to support national operations if required.

During my application I declared myself as heterosexual. The hardest thing I found in taking this approach was the mental effort in pretending to be 'straight'. I didn't fully

come out until late 2017 so I had to effectively filter my life. Living like this heavily affected my mental health but having friends that were accepting gave me the chance to be me and the one thing I love about my life now is the fact that I can be myself.

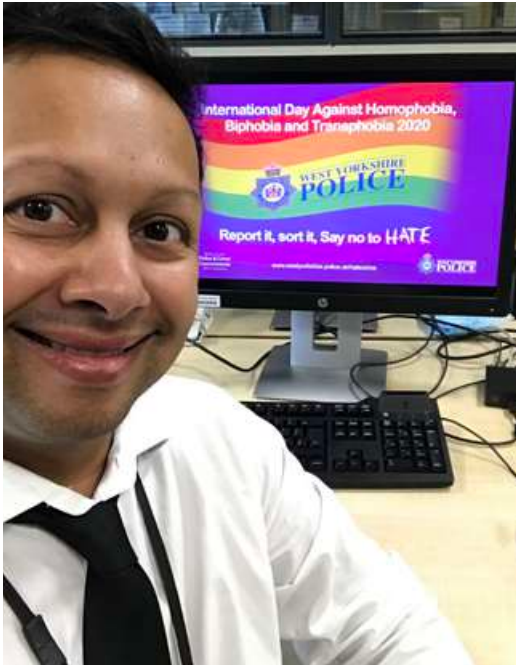
With the unique structure of the CNC I knew I had to come out twice. Once at training school and then again when I was deployed to unit. This really ramped up the first day nerves! I took about six weeks to have the confidence to come out at training school and everyone supported me. At my unit it was much the same, but for some I was the first gay they'd knowingly worked with. This gave me the chance to help enlighten them about LGBT+ issues.

In 2019 I became a member on the CNC LGBT+ Committee. My aim here is to give confidence to others to be out, be proud and be confident in the knowledge the organisation supports them.

MY ADVICE...

"Be yourself. Have the confidence to be you. True friends will support and stand by you. The same goes for your family. Some people close to you may need time to adjust so be prepared to give them time. It may be a shock at first, I know it was for my parents, but after a few days I was just Michael again.

I would also say don't bottle it up, speak to someone. They don't have to be close, they can be a complete stranger. As well as workplace support, there are local and national support groups. These groups will know someone who is in your position. Use them, don't be afraid."



Detective Sergeant
Roshan Pittea

**West
Yorkshire Police**

I joined West Yorkshire Police four years ago as a PC, having spent the last ten years working with children and young people. I decided that I needed a new challenge and had often considered the police; my dream job was to be a detective.

During the recruitment process, I went to a few of the positive action seminars set up to give additional support to underrepresented minorities. This really gave me confidence and helped demystify a lot of the process. I started as a student officer in August 2017 and the rest is history!

I did my probationary service as a uniformed response officer before moving across to district safeguarding as a trainee investigator. I am now an accredited

detective and have also attained my SCAIDP (Serious Child Abuse Investigation Development Programme) accreditation. More recently, I passed my sergeant's exam and am now an acting Detective Sergeant for one of the District Safeguarding Teams.

In and amongst my 'day-job', I represent the LGBTQ+ Staff Network at Bradford District. My hope is to build a strong grassroots network to make sure all our LGBTQ+ colleagues have the right support throughout their careers and can effectively assist the organisation in reaching its goals around diversity, equity and inclusion.

“For me, visibility is becoming more important. To borrow a phrase from a colleague, “We can't be what we can't see.”

If someone had told 13 year old me that, at the age of 38, I'd be a detective sergeant with aspirations of becoming an SIO (senior investigating officer), 13 year old me would have laughed. Not because of my brown skin and Mauritian heritage, interestingly. At that age, I was becoming aware that I was gay and the messages I was receiving from my peers and society in general were incredibly negative. I didn't see myself as having any kind of useful, fulfilling role in society as a gay man.

So now, I do as much as I can to share my experience in the hope that it will encourage and inspire others. My hope is that people see me, hear my story and realise that a career in policing can be as much for them as anyone else.





Humberside Police Architect

I cannot remember a time when I ever assumed I was heterosexual, even before I knew what the word 'lesbian' meant, so embracing my sexuality, and my identity, has been a natural progression for me. It hasn't always been easy, and certainly in the late 1980's when the government introduced Section 28, the politics were pretty tough. Pride events were not the colourful and diverse enjoyable parties they are today, they were assertive political rallies where we were verbally and sometimes physically abused.

I was very politically active, as well as being a student for so many years going on to study for an MA/PhD, I established a lot of friends who were also lesbians and a mix of creativity and sexual politics made for a very interesting and stimulating time which I think has stayed with me my whole life.

I started off my career as an artist then took seven years to qualify as an architect. Architecture was a good career choice for me and my work has taken me all over the world. My career has been exciting, engaging and successful.

Being gay has been like being a member of an exclusive international club. Wherever I am in the world I can tap in to an instant social life. I do feel very lucky.

Working for the police has been interesting because, given my experiences as an LGB political activist in the 80's, I was a little apprehensive of them and assumed that they would exude an aggressive, right wing, anti-gay/ BEM attitude. I swiftly learned that this assumption was actually prejudice on my part towards the police, as they have been the most actively supportive organisation I have ever worked for.

In my current working role, not only do I feel that I could report derogatory behaviour if I experienced it, but that on a day-to-day basis I am as valued, respected and considered as any of my heterosexual colleagues.

MY ADVICE...

"Don't let a comment from one individual taint your experience of an organisation or group. There will, sadly, probably always be racists, homophobes and bigots, but they are in an ever decreasing minority. Be strong, assertive and proud of who you are, and always treat people with respect, regardless of their views."



Detective
Superintendent
Sarah Pengelly

**Cheshire
Constabulary**

Moving to a small Dorset village at the age of 11, I was truly an outsider - I was ever conscious that I had the wrong upbringing, the wrong clothes and the wrong accent. I felt even more like I didn't belong in my early teens realising that I was gay. Fast forward 10 years to my joining Cheshire Police: I'd like to say that I didn't feel like an outsider, and that being gay in the police in 1991 wasn't really 'a thing'... but I can't.

I was outed as gay within two weeks of landing with my block after my initial training. I was fortunate, unlike some others, I wasn't subject of any truly direct bullying and my immediate team accepted me - I was motivated, a decent investigator and was a 'thief taker' - regardless of my skills I always felt that I was being judged for who I was not how I did the job.

Moving to CID was harder: it was a battle, I still had the wrong clothes, the wrong accent and the wrong sex partner. In Cheshire, I didn't have any clear role models to look to, to speak to or to aspire to be like. Looking back, now I realise just how challenging that time was. Somehow I found the courage to take my then girlfriend out on the CID 'Christmas do'.. whatever was I thinking... But, we've truly come a long way since those days.

Right now, I am able to be myself at work, be honest about the fact I share my life with my wife Michelle, also a serving officer in Cheshire. This enables me to bring my best to work and to be my best in work. I'm in an organisation that values difference, developing leaders with difference and who are building trust amongst our teams. We have clear and accessible force support via our own LGBT+ Network, our role models program and DE & I team.

We are part of a local and national network of LGBT+ staff associations, supported by immense organisations like Stonewall, with the ability to engage with communities through established and emerging events like pride, and many others. We are supported by our chief officer team, and whilst from the LGBT+ community myself, 'every day is a school day' and I've learned loads in the past eight months whilst supporting DCC Julie Cooke who is NPCC LGBT+ Portfolio lead advancing national issues like guidance for searching and vetting process to protect trans colleagues. I'm thrilled to be a visible and accessible role model serving as a member of Cheshire Police protecting the public.

“ We are an organisation that's currently committed to valuing difference across a whole range of aspects. Long may it continue, it feels as though we've reached a turning point and I don't think there's any going back ...only forward. ”



T/Inspector
Cliff Goodwin

Staffordshire Police
seconded to College
of Policing

I joined Staffordshire Police as a police constable in 2007, having served both as a special constable and as police staff previously.

During my service to date, I have served in proactive, investigation and response teams. In 2013, I was promoted to the rank of sergeant, and have since worked on a local response team, in custody, and more recently I lead multiple teams across the county in a non-emergency, desk based investigation team.

When I joined the police I was not out, however whilst working on the response team with some four years' service, I was outed to my shift. However, I was unaware of this for some six weeks or so.

I had never disclosed my own sexuality to my employers for fear, wrongly, that it would hinder my career and development. Although I didn't fear overt bias, I doubted that managers around me and my team wouldn't treat me differently, or that promotion would be unachievable, as at the time there were no openly

LGBT+ leaders in the organisation.

My fears were in-fact unfounded, and my line manager at the time, took me to one side to tell me the team knew, but hadn't wanted to upset me so had said nothing. For a time I felt guilt that I had let these people down. However they were all excellent, and reassured me that it made no difference to them.

At that time I was approached by a member of the local LGBT+ network, to ask if I wanted to attend their meetings. I am now co-chair of the local network, and have hosted our recent 20th Anniversary Conference, as well as developing our new allies programme, and helping to shape the organisation through our participation in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index. The network offers great support, friendship and mentorship opportunities.

With confidence that difference is not a hinder, but in fact makes for better leadership. I have recently passed my inspectors exams, and am looking forward to developing my career in the police.

MY ADVICE...

"As many will say, be yourself. Being able to be yourself, will make you a more genuine team player. It was huge weight of my shoulders when I was my true self at work, and I felt I was no longer carrying a secret. Talk to a member of your LGBT+ Network in confidence or any LGBT+ ally - they are sure to offer you help, empathy and support."





Police Constable

Amy Tapping

Northumbria Police

As a result of my love of horses, I studied Equine and Business Management at Berkshire Agricultural College. Whilst deciding on what direction my working life would take, I joined the Territorial Army as a Signaller and during 2003, I was deployed to Iraq under OP Telic.

My policing journey began in 2004 as a PC when I joined Thames Valley Police - my roles in response and neighbourhood policing covered Slough, Windsor and Bracknell areas. Through playing on the police hockey team I met my partner and in 2010 I transferred to Northumbria Police. My current role is in the Force Coordination Centre managing resourcing for spontaneous and pre-planned events.

I have been involved in the national network since its inception in 2015.

I launched the Northumbria Police LGBT+ Network in 2016 where I held the position of co-chair which led to a fantastic opportunity of being the North East LGBT+ Regional Lead for the last two years.

I am now the co-chair of the National LGBT+ Network and have the opportunity to contribute to several diversity, equality and inclusion boards within policing both locally and nationally.

“ Since being involved in the networks, I have seen how important it is to create conversations in the workplace to enable colleagues to learn and understand the ever evolving LGBT+ community. In being open and a visible gay woman I hope this gives others the confidence to be open and confident to bring their whole selves to work. For any organisation this improves productivity and team working. ”

My passions within the LGBT+ area of business include improving the police response to LGBT+ domestic violence and honour based violence. Having had the opportunity to be a network lead in force and regionally, I understand the competing demands and pressure this can have on individuals. I therefore recognise the importance of my current role in ensuring force and regional leads get the recognition and support they require.

I live with my partner of 13 years with our dog Arthur. I have a horse Jumanji, we take part in dressage competitions and show jumping. My other hobbies include the odd game of hockey, snowboarding and I have just taken up paddle-boarding on the North Sea.

I have been involved in reverse mentoring senior officers which gives the opportunity to increase empathy and develop chief officers into allies improving the diversity and inclusion of a team and of the organisation as a whole.



T/Commander
Clinton Blackburn
City of London

I joined policing in 1992 when there no visible gay role models.

Back then policing was very macho which made it hard to be myself, so I decided to spend the first ten years hiding who I really was from my family, friends and colleagues - simply through fear of rejection and ridicule.

At the time I worked in a country force and colleagues would think nothing of popping in for a cuppa whilst out on patrol. I can still recall my partner going over the garden fence to avoid being seen. This was a crossroads for me and I decided enough was enough and got a job with Virgin Airlines. But at the last minute I changed my mind and refused to throw a job I loved down the drain. I transferred to a London force, bit the bullet and came out at the age of 32.

“ If I were to give one piece of advice for anyone considering coming out, it would be to just do it. If you are worried speak to an ally or a LGBT+ colleague and make sure you have support in place, but you will be surprised just how rewarding it is to take that leap of faith. ”

Since that day I have never looked back. I stopped isolating myself and began to get promoted and succeed in my career. Over the following 17 years I moved from pc to chief superintendent; I know that being able to be myself played a huge part in my success.

When I started to lead teams I began to spot others out there facing a similar struggle. I realised that if I had met someone like me earlier, it would have given me the courage to be myself at work. So I decided to step up to the mark and help others.

As a result I have contributed to running several support networks, introduced HIV+ SPOCS, represented the south east of England for the National LGBT+ Network, elected LGBT+ Reserve Member for the Police Superintendents' Association, brought in a trans tool kit, and now co-chair the National LGBT+ Police Network. We still have some way to go, especially for trans and bi colleagues, but we are on a journey of progress. I am now pushing hard to make sure we leave a legacy in policing so LGBT+ staff can feel themselves and the LGBT+ community can come forward to report crime and seek help.



PCSO
Helen Riddell

**Avon &
Somerset Police**

I joined as a police constable in 1988 and have had the pleasure of serving ever since. In fact after 32 years as a police officer I retired last year and came back as a PCSO !!

My motivation has always been to help all our communities but particularly to improve the relations between the police and LGBT+ people and help our own staff within the constabulary.

Back when I worked for Met Police I was one of the original LAGPA members and when I transferred to Avon & Somerset in 2009 I had the confidence to become the chair of our staff network.

“ My focus was always heavily towards our external communities and I volunteered to become one of our LGBT+ liaison officers. ”

I ended up leading the team which was fantastically rewarding. I became involved in the new national LGBT+ police staff network as the South West regional lead and have been honoured to assist that group in hate crime and as the european officer link. I also served as an equalities officer with our local Police Federation.

I have served in a variety of roles including response, traffic, training school, neighbourhoods, diplomatic protection (firearms) and as a covert armed protection officer with special branch. Upon my promotion, which I delayed as I was having so much fun in my protection role, I returned to uniformed duties in Hackney and it was then that I met my current partner Heidi.

We made a big decision to start a family and move back to her native Somerset which was also close to the border with my homeland of Wales. One whirlwind round of IVF and then I carried our twin girls - I can't believe how quickly they are growing up.

I have had a fantastically rewarding career, experiencing the very best and worst of humanity but the remarkable people I have met and friendships I have made along the way have made it all worthwhile. It seems like yesterday that I arrived with my bag at Hendon and sat watching the tube trains go by from my tower block in training school. Soon I will be back at training school again, this time on my eight week PCSO course. It's very true that everyday is a school day so here's to my next chapter.



Sergeant
Kelly Reed

Thames
Valley Police

I joined Thames Valley Police as a response officer at Slough in 2002 and I am currently seconded to the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit as a communities and partnership manager.

Having spent almost 19 years in the police service I can say that acceptance of all sexual orientations has broadened somewhat but like society it is still assumed that heterosexuality is the default norm. That said, I am comfortable in my own skin and will encourage anyone to be their true authentic self, as by being so you will feel the security and strength that provides.

There may well be thoughts among those who are yet to understand that sexual orientation isn't always as fixed as cultures wish it can't be fluid and ever changing - the bi category has historically been met with comments such as "make up your mind", "Don't you just want your cake and eat it?". These familiar phrases were also used amongst the gay communities previously but thankfully less so in today's context.

“ It is about an attraction to the individual for me but people will see me in a civil partnership with a female and assume I am lesbian or gay. Times have changed for the better and I am far more comfortable to identify as Bi. My advice to anyone reading this is never assume, never judge and do not confuse sexual activity with sexual orientation identity. ”

Career wise I have felt supported by being part of an inclusive organisation, Thames Valley Police. My confidence in being open about my sexual orientation grew further once I joined the Thames Valley LGBT+ network. I am fortunate that I have never experienced any overt anti-gay attitudes to me as an individual whilst at work but I know colleagues that have, sadly from the communities we serve, and I have seen the impact that can have. I have been able to support my colleagues through my role on the LGBT+ Network and as a visible LGBT+ leader for Thames Valley Police.

You will often find me on twitter buzzing about development opportunities and other policing developments. I network both nationally and force wide within in my role as a Thames Valley Police (TVP) LAGLO (Lesbian and Gay Liason Officer) in order to raise awareness of LGBT+ issues and support staff in their roles when investigating crimes against LGBT+ victims.

One highlight of my police career so far has to be achieving the 'Diversity Team in Action' Award the bursary awarded is funded an exciting project aimed at reducing homophobia in schools across the Thames Valley Police area.

I have enjoyed my time in the police service so far by being bold, being Bi and part of the blue light family.



Sergeant **Steph Barcroft**

Merseyside Police

Upon joining straight from university in 1993 I went to the local police training school in Warrington, where I underwent my initial training before being posted to Birkenhead on the Wirral. At the time, I lived in Manchester so, having no knowledge of the Wirral, I actually thought I would have to get a ferry to work!

I enjoyed five years on patrol in Birkenhead, during which I came out as gay. At first it was daunting (*have you seen Life On Mars?*) and some of the officers - now in their 70s - were, I suspect, not very diverse. At first I referred to my partners as male but, eventually, the lies were impossible to keep track of. So, on a night out and with a few beers inside me, I blurted out that I was gay. My team were brilliant and said they didn't care as I was one of them and that is all that mattered.

Personally, I have not looked back since that day, but I was well aware that other officers were not as lucky as I was and

that all was not well across the force. It was a challenging time for the police service following the death of Stephen Lawrence and allegations of institutional racism. The force set up the Diversity in the Workplace Project in response, out of which the Gay and Lesbian Support Network was formed. I worked on this project and I recall interviewing other gay staff. One comment in particular sticks with me: "I am so far in the closet I am under the duvet at the back of the wardrobe".

“ With this in mind, I set about changing the future and quickly became a poster advert for diversity in the workplace. To this day I like to think that I made a difference and paved the way for other LGBTQ officers. ”

Merseyside is a great force to work for where you can succeed. I am now a sergeant and working in the Integrated Offender Management Team at St Helens, Merseyside. There are some great people working here, hence I have never wanted to transfer elsewhere. I truly believe that Merseyside Police supported me in the early days and as such I gave them my loyalty - cheesy you may say, but very true if you know me.





Ubaid Rehman
Diversity and
Inclusion Advisor
at the College
of Policing

I proudly identify as a Muslim British Pakistani gay man with a hearing impairment and I've worked in policing for over 16 years. Prior to joining the Met Police, I was on its LGBT+ Independent Advisory Group and have carried out a range of academic research on policing including a Home Office funded project on the impact of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry on policing. In the Met, I've carried out a variety of roles from policy and strategy development, business planning, and strategic research and organisational learning.

Currently, I am on secondment at the College of Policing as a diversity and inclusion advisor. Whilst here I've been instrumental in a number of projects such as flexible working, and neurodiversity and providing support around peer reviews, equality impact assessments and access for those who have a visual impairment and/or are deaf or hard of hearing.

I am also the policy and strategy lead for the Met Police's LGBT+ Network. I make sure LGBT+ voices and concerns from both our people and our communities are captured during policy and strategy development and discussions. I lead on the network's Stonewall Work Equality Index and its business plan as well as collaborative working with other staff networks particularly on intersectional issues. I lead on the National LGBT+ Police Network's strategy.

“ In 1999, I co-founded Imaan, UK's first LGBT+ Muslim organisation and worked as its Secretary for a number of years. ”

I've also led a number of voluntary roles. In 1999, I co-founded Imaan, UK's first LGBT+ Muslim organisation, been the group's secretary and then gone on to liaise closely with other LGBT+ religious and South Asian organisations such as Hidayah, Inclusive Mosque Initiative and Gaysians and worked with ParaPride, a LGBT+ disability charity. I've delivered numerous talks and written articles on diverse topics including creating inclusive environments within police forces and on intersectionality and Islam. I'm the chair of Goslings, London's largest LGBT+ badminton club. I engage with other LGBT+ sports clubs to sports attractive and accessible for under-represented groups with an aim to improve health and wellbeing within the LGBT+ community. Lastly, I am an advisor on Tell MAMA's London Advisory Board.

To help switch off and recharge, I spend time with friends and family, enjoy long walks, running and cycling. I play badminton as well as go to the gym. I read widely, watch dramas on Netflix and other providers and look forward to returning to cinemas and theatres post-lockdown as I am missing these cultural fixes!





Dionne Johnson
Equality and
Inclusion Officer at
Staffordshire Police

Originally from Nottingham, I moved to Cheshire to study. Once I graduated from university I started a career in telecoms.

I've always had the desire and motivation to help others and help those who feel disempowered. Through my passion for helping others, I entered the world of policing and started working for Cheshire police in 2008 as a PCSO.

Throughout my life I have experienced discrimination whether it was as at school, college, University or at work. These experiences have made me somewhat resilient and help me deal with many things in life.

I moved into the field of HR and positive action in 2015 and started my role at Staffordshire police in January 2019, at this point I was already on the executive cabinet of the National Black Police Association - NBPA.

I am currently vice president of the NBPA, where we look to support officers and

staff who are Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic and raise awareness of issues and topics that may affect Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic officers and staff and the communities that we serve.

I have recently been elected to be the lead for the National LGBT+ Police Network - Intersectionality Working Group. It is important to help people understand the topic of intersectionality and the complexities of when someone identifies with a number of protected characteristics and find themselves being treated differently.

Being a black women in a same sex relationship often has me wondering where I fit and how I should act, react and negotiate your way through meetings both in work and social aspects.

Outside of work I enjoy playing hockey, coaching, training in Thai boxing, hiking and snowboarding.

It's fair to say that injustice and inequality are my main motivators. I strive for happiness, equality and I am ever thankful for all the experiences I have and the people I encounter.

MY ADVICE...

Have confidence in you,
be true to yourself
and please always
be kind to others no
matter what you do or
how you feel. Always
treat others as you
wish to be treated.

"In a world where
you can be anything,
be kind."





Police Constable
Adrian Tyson
.....
Cumbria Police

Growing up I felt I was different to my friends; I didn't know what it was and struggled through my teenage years. Having a birthmark on my face made me the target of bullying, so having to deal with what these other feelings were made it even tougher. I started to understand what the feelings and confusion was and realised I might be gay. My parents were and still are very supportive in everything I do, however I was too scared to talk about what was going on, looking back now I should have spoken to them a lot sooner.

As I entered adulthood, I tried to live a "straight" life, but I knew this wasn't me and made me even more confused.

At the age of 23 I followed in my dad's footsteps and joined Cumbria Police in 1999, my dad was still a serving police officer and I kept my sexuality private

MY ADVICE...

Be your authentic self, don't be afraid in confiding in someone, trust your family, friends, and colleagues. Remember you're not alone. Be proud.

having told no one. A couple of years later on a night shift, whilst partnered up with one of my lifelong friends and colleagues I told them I was gay, their response was "about time you told me, you're going to be fine". That was the first step out of the way, but I still hadn't told my parents. It took me until I was 30 to tell them, what had I worried about!? They have been so supportive and nothing has changed.

Over the course of my career I've had positive and negative experiences being an openly gay police officer. I was close to leaving a couple of times but the fighter in me said 'no, it's their problem not yours'.

Moving to January 2020 things are a lot different, I was appointed chair of the Cumbria Police Pride Network. My aim is to be a role model that shows my caring personality, to be able to support people who want to be their authentic selves both at work and their communities. I'm lucky to work for a police force that is very inclusive, supportive and allows me to be myself. It's great to see senior officers supporting the network. At the end of the day everyone deserves to be included, happy and most importantly their authentic selves.



Chief Inspector

Anonymous

By default rather than by any special ability I am the highest ranked known trans police officer in the UK. I transitioned after ten years' service, this was seven years ago now. I joined in 2003 and being trans and a police officer was still not allowed, I had a job that I loved but could not be my true self. I was the stereotypical ex-military PSU officer and people have told me that I was the last person they would have suspected was trans.

I was a sergeant and saw a PC who I used to manage, she was upset and speaking to her she broke down in tears and said that I would hate her, she told me she was leaving her husband and moving in with a female and thought that I would not want to know her because of this. I reassured her that she was a good officer, that she needed to be herself and had my full support and I thought she was really brave. It was like a switch went in my head and I knew I had to do something about my situation. I put a

plan in place and eighteen months later formally transitioned.

I returned to the front line as quickly as possible after a short period of office work. There has been funny moments, officers who knew me not recognising me and re introducing themselves. And sad moments, I had a job offer on a Caribbean island and found out a month before I was due to start from a friend who was an officer there that I had been outed and supervisors were openly gossiping about me. Its still frustrating that people know they should not out staff who are lesbian and gay and bisexual but that its ok to out someone who is trans. But overall I have had more positive experiences than negative. My personal view is that I am a police officer who happened to be trans rather than trans police officer, it is part of me but not all I am about. There are actually more trans people in the police than you would think, the police national LGBT+ network will be able to put you in touch with someone in a similar situation.

MY ADVICE...

"To other supervisors and those thinking about transitioning is that it is a marathon not a sprint, and one size does not fit all, a set policy will not work for everyone."

POLICE
WITH
PRIDE



Chief Inspector
Lee Broadstock
Greater Manchester
Police (GMP)

I am a uniformed Chief Inspector at Greater Manchester Police and have previously worked within a Neighbourhood policing capacity covering the Village area of Manchester City Centre which has one of the most vibrant LGBT+ night time economy areas in the country, famous for Canal Street and also home to a number of LGBT+ community organisations and charities.

I had socialised for years in LGBT+ spaces and particularly in the village area of Manchester and always considered the area to be a safe and welcoming space, it was when working in and around the village that I saw the issues of targeted hate and discrimination still used against members of the LGBT+ community and I became increasingly passionate and determined to improve how GMP tackled LGBT+ issues and to improve the relationship between the LGBT+ community and the Police in Greater Manchester and beyond.

I joined the Gay Police Association and internal staff network in 2005 and that year marched for the first time at Manchester Pride, I continued to join the

Police With Pride team at Manchester Pride but did not get actively involved in the network until 2011 when I was approached by a colleague who was suffering from LGBT+ bullying and discrimination from his shift. At that time the Gay Police Association was no longer functioning and providing the support to colleagues, and our internal staff network had stalled due to its founder Julie Barnes-Frank having retired.

“ I wasn't prepared to accept anyone within the Police being subject to any form of bullying and discrimination and it is fair to say that this really ignited the fire within to ensure that this was challenged at all levels and staff felt supported. ”

I was elected as chair of the network and I refreshed and relaunched the network as the GMP Pride Network, it previously being called LAGSA (Lesbian and Gay staff affiliation) I felt that it was the right time for the network to move towards being more LGBT+ inclusive, the feedback from some LGBT+ colleagues had been that they did not feel the network supported or represented them.

The support I received when refreshing our network from my colleagues in our region (the North West) was amazing and I have made some lifetime friends as a result. The working relationship that was active in the North West as the 'Police with Pride' team helped to inspire and create the new structure and organisation we have now as the National LGBT+ Police Network.

I am really proud of how we have progressed within force and nationally, within force I am particularly proud of some of the firsts we have achieved, including the launch of the world's first Rainbow liveried police car.

At a National level it is so inspiring to work alongside some amazing people within forces that are determined to improve the lives of LGBT+ people.

Sally J
Force Control
Room Supervisor



I knew from an early age I was different to others around me but growing up in the 1970s I had very little access to the wider world. There was no internet so access to similar people was limited. I would look at someone like David Bowie and think yes he fits what I feel like. The androgynous look and choice of flamboyant clothing fitted more the way I wanted to be. There were a few years in the 1980s when I thought society was beginning to understand and the new romantic look with men wearing make-up fitted me just fine. I was able to express how I wanted to be but this was not to last. Gender definition soon returned to the absolute binary and men were men and women were women. I knew I wasn't comfortable conforming to these imposed gender expressions.

Times were hard for the LGBT+ community, as the lifestyle and choices were not accepted widely and abuse and discrimination was widespread. It would have been impossible to come 'out' in the early years of my service as I would not have been accepted so to my colleagues I was the butch geezer who conformed to everyone's idea of a proper bloke. This wasn't the truth though as I knew I needed to express my feminine character in some way.

“ I didn't fit in with either just male or just female. For me gender is a spectrum and we all sit somewhere on this spectrum. Why shouldn't a man wear heels if he wishes or express his feminine side? ”

It would be well into the 21st century until society would be able to accept the real me and to be fair it took many years for me to find out where I fit myself. I would describe myself as gender fluid and non-binary. I have realised that I am comfortable in the fact I have two identities, one male and one female.

My female character was revealed at work in 2015 and I have to say the force have been brilliant and I believe I may have been the first person to be given two different identity cards and recorded on our systems as having two different names. People accept Sally now and I know who I am regardless of the particular gender expression I choose.



Leicestershire
Police
Protecting our communities



Police Constable
Al Smith

**West
Midlands Police**

I grew up in rural Devon during the introduction of Section 28 and remember the anti-gay tabloid headlines well. While I was academically gifted and succeeded at school sports, as well as judo at a national level, I was bullied throughout my time at school. I realised I was gay when I was 11, but didn't feel able to 'come out' until I'd escaped to university. I needn't have worried as my family have always been supportive of me.

I followed in my father's footsteps and joined the police in 1998 - it was a way of helping others and enjoying a varied career. I ended up joining West Midlands Police because it was one of the few forces at the time that included sexual orientation in its equal opportunity statement. At the time I identified as a gay woman. There was no way I was going back into the closet, but I wanted to know the force would have my back if I was bullied again for being me.

I'm currently a force intelligence officer, a role I've thoroughly enjoyed for over 15 years. I describe my job as supporting my colleagues to work smarter to

deliver proactive policing. Every day offers a new challenge, needing me to be creative and a problem solver. I've worked with teams tackling organised crime groups involved in drug supply and the use of firearms, high risk sex offenders, as well as assisting in those investigating domestic and child murders. I'm currently part of our Serious & Organised Crime Unit tackling violent gangs who exploit others, for example through county lines drug dealing.

My self-awareness has developed since I joined the police and I now identify as trans, non-binary and describe my sexuality as pansexual. I started my formal transition in 2007, at the age of 35, and I'm currently the trans lead for the National LGBTQ+ Police Network. I work in partnership with colleagues of all ranks and grades, from new intelligence officers joining my team to chief constables commanding national DEI portfolios, to ensure the police service is better able to promote itself as an employer of choice for all individuals, not just those who are trans - for all those who want to serve their community and make a difference. It's been an absolute honour to serve with pride alongside my colleagues who have, by and large, been wholeheartedly supportive of me as we work hard together to prevent crime, protect the public and help those in need.

MY ADVICE...

"Don't let haters drag you down. Focus on what you can control and having a positive perspective. Connect with like - minded people, be that LGBTQ+ role models or anyone who whose values and conduct you admire. Help support each other in whatever you're seeking to achieve. We're all stronger together."



The National LGBT+ Police Network

About Us:

The National LGBT+ Police Network is a representative body for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans police groups present in the 43 police forces across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The purpose of the network is to:

- Provide a reference to stakeholders in the police service, the wider criminal justice sector and LGBT+ organisations on LGBT+ issues in policing
- Support the development of local and regional LGBT+ staff support networks
- Represent local and regional LGBT+ staff support networks on issues collectively faced
- Support police forces and national police establishments in the development of operational policing knowledge and services that will enhance services to the LGBT+ community

- Support police forces and national police establishments in being representative and inclusive of the LGBT+ community
- Membership to the network is available for the LGBT+ staff support networks of police forces of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands; this includes the territorial forces delivering local policing services and the national forces and agencies delivering policing services on a national scale in the United Kingdom.

Local LGBT+ staff support networks are run by their own employees, constables and volunteers and they will comply with local force policy on staff support networks, but are also members of regional networks, in line with existing structures in the police service.

Each region has a lead, known as the 'regional lead', which is decided upon by a nominated representative of each active local network in that region. National forces or agencies are combined into a virtual region, but all are individually represented on the National Co-ordinating Group and may develop links with local networks to ensure their geographically disparate staff have access to local support and activities.

The LGBT+ Police Network is supportive of all lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people, regardless of their background or characteristics. This is encompassed in our 'Value Statement'.

Our Value Statement:

National LGBT+ Police Network supports...

The inclusion of all lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people, regardless of their background or characteristics.

This includes seeking to promote an environment where all people, including trans women, trans men and those with a non-binary gender identity are made to feel welcome and supported.

This is a fundamental part of our public sector duty so that we can continue to build trust and confidence in communities and to enable our colleagues to fulfil their potential and provide the best possible service to the public.

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PRIDE



lgbt.police.uk

Designed by Cheshire Constabulary 2021, on behalf of all forces and Police with Pride.