

National Ambulance  
LGBT Network



Supporting Lesbian, Gay,  
Bisexual, Trans staff, patients  
and communities

A partnership of UK Ambulance  
Services

# Celebrating LGBT History Month: Ten Things to Know

---

A resource to help recognise  
LGBT History Month in an  
interactive way

Alistair Gunn  
7 February 2018





# Ten things we'd like you to know

**LGBT history facts with a medical twist!**

This article was first put together by Simon Davies and Alistair Gunn at Yorkshire Ambulance Service in 2013. This was redrafted and updated in 2018. Other resources can be found on our website at: [www.ambulanceLGBT.org/resources](http://www.ambulanceLGBT.org/resources)

Permission is granted for this information to be used to promote LGBT History Month in Ambulance Services.



# Fact 1: How Many LGBT People?



Various studies have attempted to establish how many people are actually lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). The Government census estimates that between 5 and 7 percent of the UK population is lesbian, gay or bisexual. There is currently no reliable information on the number of people who identify as 'trans'.

5%

If we use this estimate of 6 percent, in our national workforce of 32,400\* people, around 2,000 people are lesbian, gay or bisexual. We are not trying to suggest you start to identify them, but if you're not aware already you will certainly be working with people who identify this way.

6%

More interesting, is the number of patients we interact with each year. Applying the same principle to the 6.6m\* emergency and urgent calls we respond to each year, that is potentially 400,000 people we are called to who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people are not immediately visible in our communities or in the workplace, but you can be assured they are there, and possibly more than you realised.

7%

\* Figures from National Audit Office report, 'NHS Ambulance Services' (January 2017).  
The figures stated are for the 2015/16 financial year.



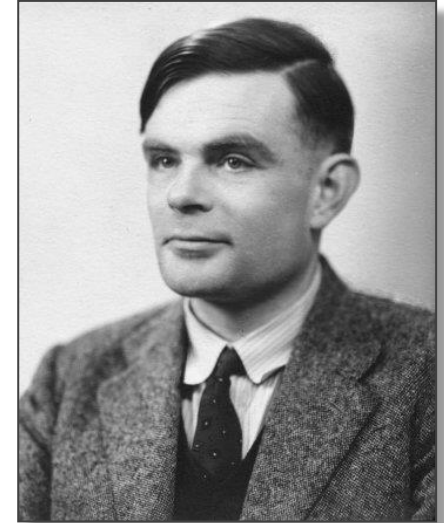
# Fact 2: Criminal or Mastermind?



History is littered with famous lesbian and gay people. There are many stories we could write an alternative essay on, but one we thought was worth recounting is the story of the man who cracked the Enigma Code. London born Alan Turing is celebrated for helping the British outwit the Germans in World War Two. He was also gay.

After rising to fame for his work, he later found himself convicted of 'homosexual offences'. The court offered the supposedly lenient option of hormone treatment instead of prison. The side effects of the therapy lead to him growing breasts, something that lead to his depression and suicide.

Today, it is still recognised that LGBT people are at higher risk of suicide. A recent Stonewall report titled Prescription for Change found that 5% of lesbian and bisexual women had attempted suicide in the last year. Similarly, gay and bisexual men are seven times more likely to commit suicide than the general population.



*Alan Turing  
cracked the  
Enigma Code in  
World War 2*



# Fact 3: The Pink Triangle



When you think of the Holocaust most people are familiar with the six million Jews who were murdered at the hands of the Nazi regime. There were other groups of people who suffered a similar fate including political prisoners, Jehovah's Witnesses and 100,000 gay men who were sent to labour camps and killed. Like the Jews who were made to wear the yellow Star of David, gay men were made to wear a pink triangle.

The pink triangle symbol was reclaimed as a positive symbol of gay identity in the late 1970's. A more recent symbol adopted by the LGBT community is the rainbow 'freedom' flag and this is often seen outside gay and gay friendly businesses, pubs and services.

If you would like to know more about the pink triangle symbol, look up [www.pinktriangle.org.uk](http://www.pinktriangle.org.uk).



*Gay men in concentration camps wearing the pink*



If you would like to know more the book 'The Men with the Pink Triangle' by Heinz Heger provides one of the few documented accounts



# Fact 4: The Origins of Stonewall



Many people will identify Stonewall as the lesbian, gay and bisexual charity that has fought relentlessly for the equal rights of lesbian and gay people. The name Stonewall comes from the name of the gay pub in New York, where a rebellion from the gay community fought back at police raids and oppression in 1969. Ever since then, the name Stonewall has become synonymous with campaigning for equality.

Some of the successes of Stonewall have been equalising the age of consent, removing the ban on lesbians and gay men serving in the military, instigating laws outlawing the discrimination of people at work on the grounds of sexual orientation, equal rights for same sex couples and more.

Today, Stonewall also focuses on improving services and experiences for LGB people. You can find out more about this at [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk).



*The Stonewall Inn  
in New York still  
exists today*



# Fact 5: The Gay Condition



In history homosexuality has been viewed very negatively; as an illness or criminal act. One text refers to a case of a man deported from the country as the court believed his condition was so rare he should be separated from other offenders.

In Victorian times lists of causes of homosexuality were created, which included things like excessive meat-eating and lack of physical exercise, parents of wildly different ages, overbearing mothers, sexual position adopted by parents at the moment of conception and loosening of moral fibre. A further one was thought to be aristocratic over-refinement and 'plebeian brutishness'!

Believe it or not, homosexuality was not decriminalised in England and Wales until 1967. Even worse than this it wasn't until 1992 that the World Health Organisation declared that, 'homosexuality is no longer an illness'. As of May 2012 seventy eight countries still have legislation criminalising same-sex consensual acts between adults and carries penalties up to and including the death penalty.



*ISIS are still known to execute 'sexual deviant' men, often by throwing them off tall buildings*



# Fact 6: It's in the Blood



The National Blood Transfusion Service was set up in 1946 and today collects 2.1 million donations a year as well as supplying 8,000 units of blood a day. In the 1980's, at the same time as the onset of the AIDS epidemic, men who had sex with other men were banned from donating to the service.

This policy has caused a great deal of controversy, with the National Union of Students famously encouraging a boycott on donating by everyone in the 1990s. The blanket ban was not removed until November 2011, when the rules were changed to permit donations from men who have abstained from sex with another man for the past twelve months.

It is only towards the end of 2017 that recommendations have been made to lift restrictions from gay and bisexual men. It remains to be seen how widely these recommendations are implemented. To find out more link to <http://www.blood.co.uk/>.



*Signs of positive change are in the air as the Blood Donation Service adopts new recommendations*





# Fact 7: The Young and The Old



In 1989, a sixteen year old boy jumped to his death from a car park in central Manchester. The death of Albert Kennedy highlighted the rejection and depression suffered by many young people coming to terms with their sexuality, and today a charity is named after him.

Those who think the problems are resolved today need only look at the results of some recent studies. According to the NSPCC two thirds of young LGBT people have suffered homophobic or transphobic bullying at school. Young gay people are four times more likely to make a suicide attempt requiring medical attention.

It is not just young people that may get a raw deal. In recent studies of elderly lesbian and gay people in care homes, there are reports of homophobic abuse directed towards residents. Equally, the needs, and even existence of LGBT people is often overlooked, making the experience of people in their senior years a very lonely one. The Ambulance Service, like many other health organisations, often fails to acknowledge the existence of LGBT elderly people.



*Albert Kennedy's death highlighted the needs of young LGBT people.*



# Fact 8: Famous Medical Gay People



Anyone who watches television can't help but notice the increasing number of gay characters and storylines in many programmes. The increasing awareness of gay issues is reflected in our viewing.

Continuing the medical theme, it's interesting to see how representation of homosexuality has changed. One of the greatest heartthrob doctors of the 1960s, Dr Kildare, was played by actor Richard Chamberlain (*top picture*). For years Chamberlain kept his homosexuality a secret, thinking stating this could bring his career to a rapid end. In 1967, another repressed gay actor Kenneth Williams (*middle picture*) played Dr Tinkle in Carry On Doctor. Whilst Williams brought high camp to the storylines he was often seen seducing women.

In the more enlightened 'noughties' it was openly lesbian, gay and bisexual doctors, fictional and real that are getting pulses racing. Dr Christian Jessen (*bottom picture*) has become a celebrity in his own right after discussing ailments on the programme Embarrassing Bodies. Dr Jessen is also an established campaigner for LGBT rights.



# Fact 9: Transgender People



There are examples of transgender people throughout history, from the Roman times right up to present.

Perhaps the most notable television storyline was in Britain's longest running television soap, Coronation Street. In 1998 Julie Hesmondhalgh joined the cast and played Hayley Patterson, a male to female transsexual. It wasn't until the year after that the UK Sex Discrimination Act was amended to include protections for people undergoing gender reassignment, followed later by the Gender Recognition Act in 2004.

Famous 'trans' people include transvestite comedian Eddie Izzard, transsexual Big Brother winners Nadine Almada and Luke Anderson, and UK Journalist Paris Lees. We can also celebrate a number of trans staff that currently work in the Ambulance Service. For more information check out the Press for Change website at [www.pfc.org.uk](http://www.pfc.org.uk).



*The inclusion of transgender character Hayley in Coronation Street caused quite a stir at the time*



# Fact 10: LGBT Friendly Ambulances



The increased focus on LGBT issues by individual Ambulance Trusts, together with the development of the National Ambulance LGBT Network, means we are seeing more engagement with local events than ever before.

One of the most powerful affirmations to our staff and the communities we serve is the special liveries that have been applied to ambulance vehicles at Pride events. We shouldn't underestimate the value of doing this. What clearer message that our services are working to become 'LGBT Friendly' than displaying this on our frontline vehicles.

The other emergency services are often considered more enlightened but this changed in 2017 when all services displayed their specially liveried vehicles at the National Ambulance LGBT Network Conference in Brighton ([see picture](#)). Ambulances displaying the rainbow star-of-life symbol can be seen at Pride events around the country.



*Specially liveried ambulances at South East Coast and Yorkshire Ambulance Services*

