

National Ambulance  
LGBT Network



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

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# What is the Importance of Staff Networks?

This month's pack  
explores this  
important question



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# Introduction



In our LGBT Staff Survey in 2018 we received a number of comments from people asking why staff networks are necessary and are they trying to deal with problems that don't really exist?

If we set aside people's discomfort around discussing these issues and being 'out' at work, we are left with a challenge that everything is equal for LGBT people.

Although legal rights have largely equalised in recent years we know that inequalities do exist and that attitudinal shift has not matched the pace of change that legislation enjoyed.

Interestingly, in the same staff survey, 46% of respondents claimed to have experienced negative behaviours because they are LGBT. The reality, whether we accept it or not, is there is still more to do to make our services truly 'LGBT friendly'.



Look out for future 15 Minute Reads. The next one, due to be released on 15 July 2019, will look at the origins and meaning of Pride.



# Priorities of LGBT Networks



Staff Networks are put in place in many organisations where inequality exists. This challenges some people's thinking because they believe people are being given favourable attentions. The reality is the purpose is to achieve equality of opportunity and experience.

To understand this more we need to define what the inequalities are for different groups of people.

## LGBT Inequalities

Specific inequalities that LGBT staff networks seek to address are:

- The higher than average incidence of mental health illness associated with

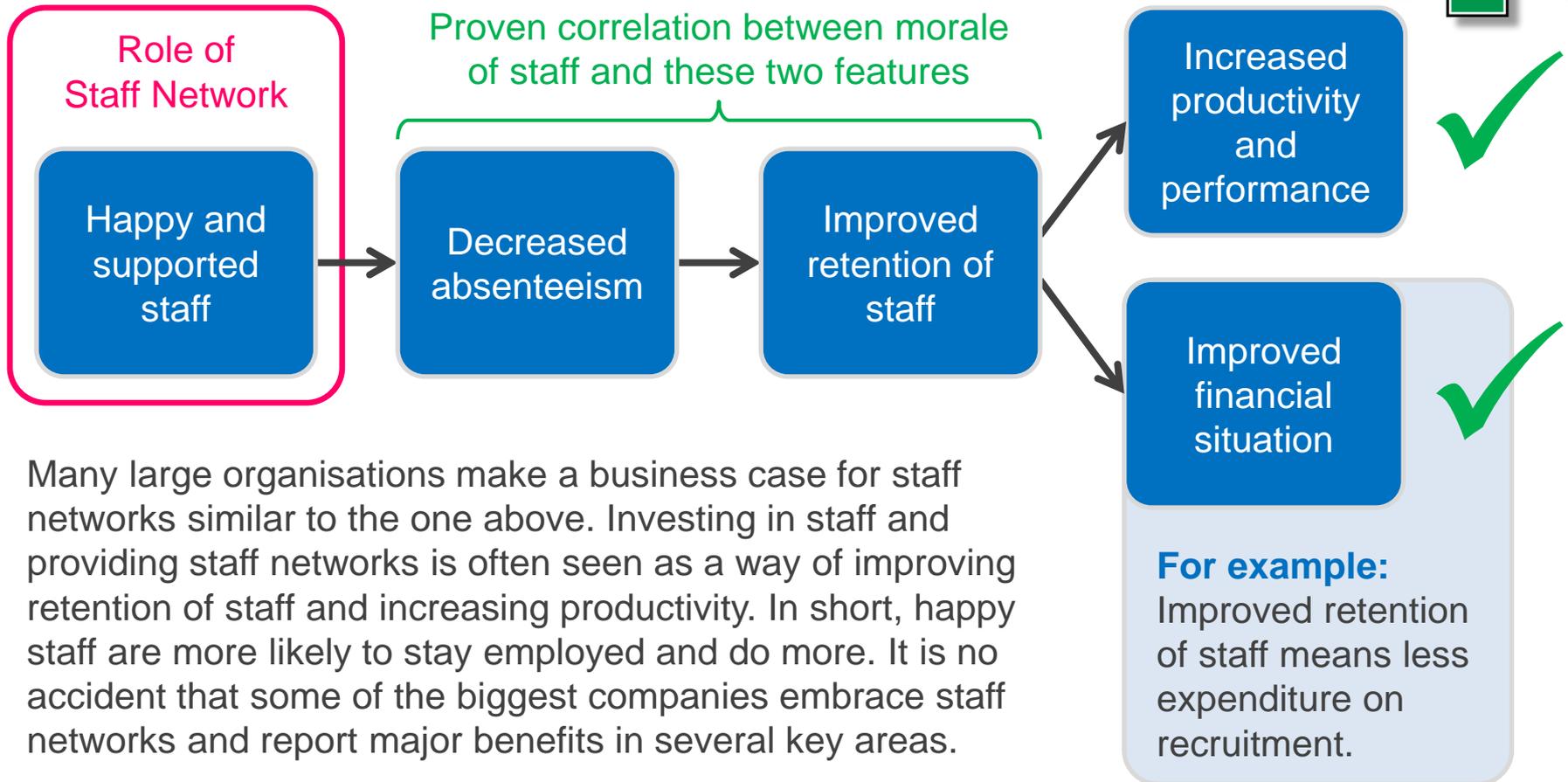
people not being able to be their authentic self at work.

- The higher level of attempted and actual suicide amongst young LGBT people.
- The increased incidence of social isolation experienced by older LGBT people.
- The increased incidence of 'negative experiences' and bullying experiences amongst the LGBT working population.

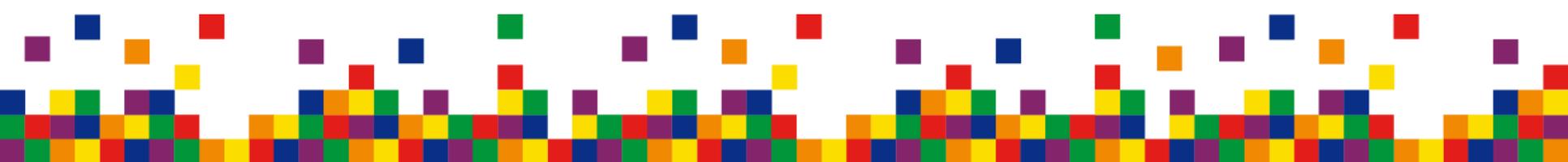
As well as having a positive impact on staff, having staff networks increases people's awareness of issues facing patients and people using our services.



# The Traditional Business Case



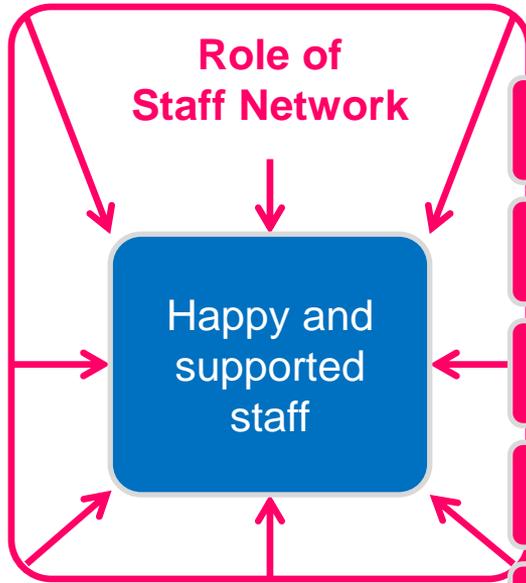
Many large organisations make a business case for staff networks similar to the one above. Investing in staff and providing staff networks is often seen as a way of improving retention of staff and increasing productivity. In short, happy staff are more likely to stay employed and do more. It is no accident that some of the biggest companies embrace staff networks and report major benefits in several key areas.



# How Does It Work?



The five key features of successful staff networks:



Understanding the true need

Assisting with long-term cultural change

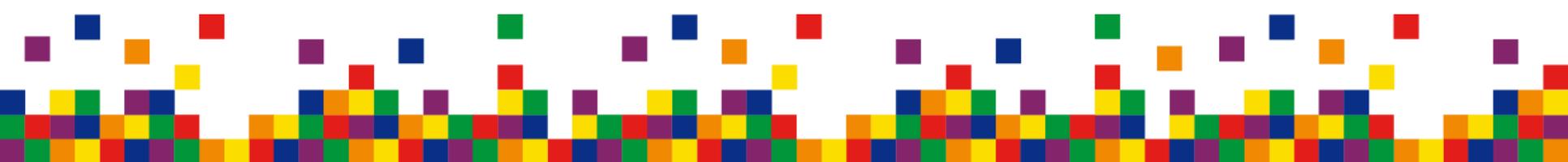
Getting into the consciousness of organisations

Make the unusual usual

Bringing people together

Rather than a 'business case', these features link to the morale responsibility to support staff.

The question to explore is what impact do staff networks have that ultimately make staff feel happy and supported. Rather than being just events based, successful networks have demonstrated an ability to become part of the culture of the organisation. Let's candidly explore the five features in more detail...



# Five Key Features [1]



## Understanding the True Need

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What better way of understanding the true need of staff than to ask staff themselves. It seems obvious but all too often strategies to improve working conditions are nationally or policy driven.

Ambulance services have the additional challenge of having very disparate populations. This can create micro-cultures which can be difficult to manage and stay in touch with.

What is really needed to bridge the two areas is network that can identify what is happening within the organisation and identify any local or individual needs. Staff networks offer this by creating a

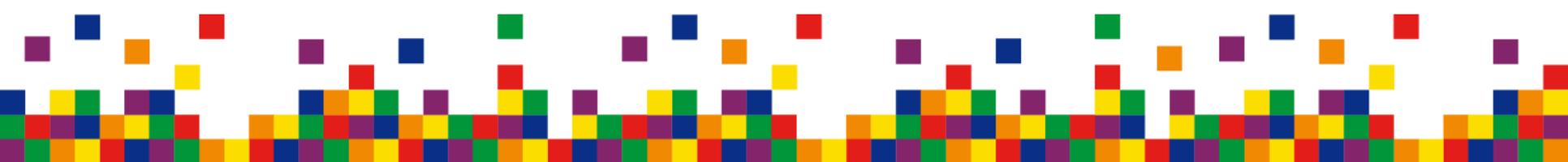
safe space for people to share their experiences and raise any concerns.

There is nothing more frustrating for all parts of an organisation than achieving compliance with actions that make no difference. Staff networks provide a forum to explore the reality of any implementations and we are increasingly seen different departments engaging with networks to gauge what is really happening.

## Assisting with Long-Term Cultural Change

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Management priorities frequently change in organisations as new directives and strategies appear. Staff networks can provide a stable body where longer-term



# Five Key Features [2]



changes can be worked on. This can include campaigns to increase staff awareness of specific issues and holding true to promoting positive depictions of different groups of people.

We should not underestimate the importance of staff networks have on cultural change. Even their mere existence gives a powerful message to the workforce.

A good example of this at work is the rainbow star of life badges that were created in Yorkshire Ambulance Service in 2011. At first many staff feared wearing them as it was felt they would 'label' staff. Today over 20,000 badges are now in circulation across the United Kingdom

and staff wear them to show they are 'LGBT friendly'. That has only happened because a vision was created and upheld.

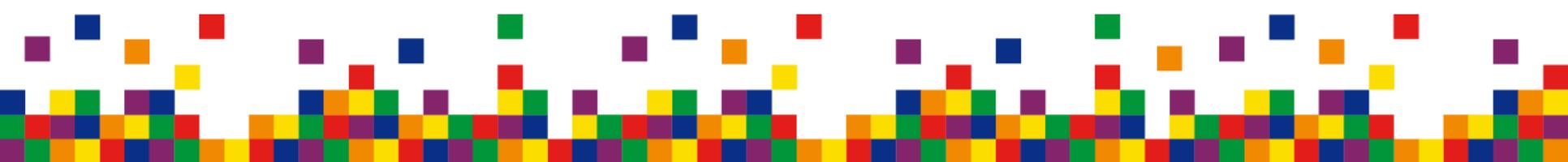
20,000 rainbow star of life badges are now in circulation



## Getting into the Consciousness of Organisations

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With people's needs at the heart of staff networks, it is important that voices are heard in the right places. It is often been



# Five Key Features [3]



proved that staff networks are most successful when socialised with senior management teams.

This might take the form of a regular update presentation at the steering group or Board where people who have direct responsibility of diversity and inclusion are present. A word of caution is that networks that don't have this 'feed in' route are less likely to get buy-in and support from senior management teams, simply because they are unaware of the aspirations of the network.

In the same way that the National Ambulance LGBT and BME Networks report into an Association of Ambulance Chief Executives subgroup, we

Encourage Networks to set up and maintain reporting into a senior level Board within their organisation.

## Making the Unusual Usual

There is nothing better than regular inclusion in staff updates and newsletters to normalise the existence and give a positive depiction of minority groups.

Using every opportunity to raise the profile of issues is also very important. This includes events Networks take part in and also those that are recognised.



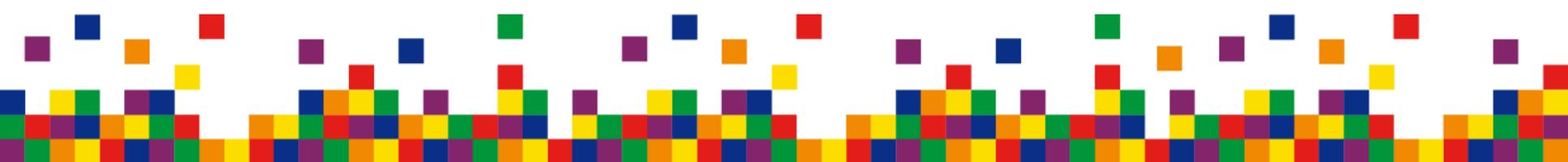
# Bringing People Together



The final feature of successful Networks is the ability to bring people together within Trusts and also for events. Where staff may feel isolated in disparate working conditions, it provides a chance for people to meet and support mechanisms to be created.

You only need to look at the photos here to see the positive impact different events can have.

It is also proven that organisations that have staff networks are better equipped to deal with first-line problems between staff as early intervention is often achieved. Staff are more likely to challenge issues themselves if they have support mechanisms in place or advocacy support which is provided through staff networks.



# Ask the Committee [1]



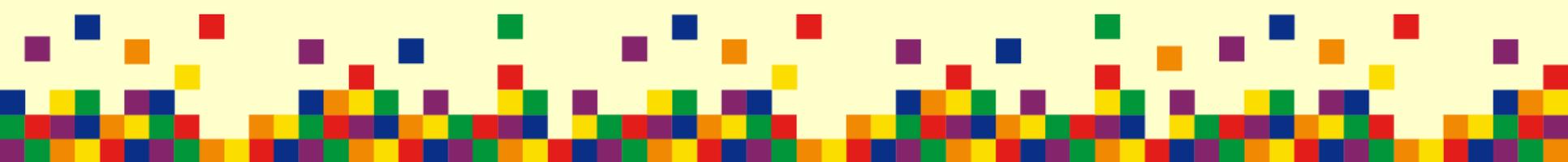
We asked the National Ambulance LGBT Network committee why staff networks are important. Here's what they said...

**Staff networks are important because...** the strength of our people / workforce is in their differences. Staff networks provide a safe platform for individuality to be celebrated, validated, and harnessed for the benefit of staff wellbeing and patient care.

Alex Ewings, London Ambulance Service

**Staff networks are important because...** they give a voice and protection for LGBT staff and allies who would otherwise find it difficult to be themselves in the workplace. By having a successful network staff can feel included and know they have a voice and a safe escalation process for any rising matters or concerns. Without a network we run the risk of segregating good people by condoning the behaviour of others.

Lee Hyett-Powell, London Ambulance Service



# Ask the Committee [2]



**Staff networks are important because...** they give people with different identities, a platform to make real change within their organisation such as policies, procedures, raising awareness to other staff and the public and changing the way your organisations does things. Having networks shows people that their organisation is supportive, inclusive and really does care about supporting and representing minorities.

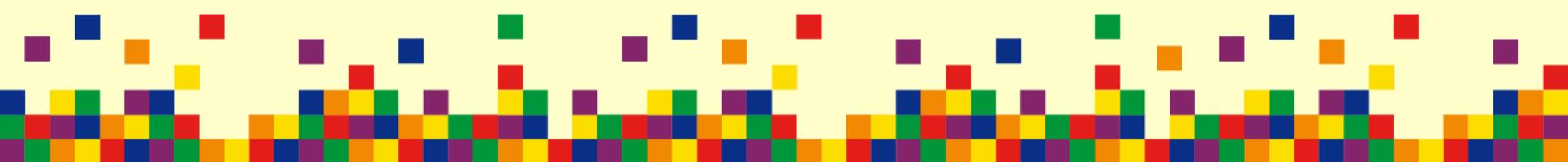
Emma Burrows, North East Ambulance Service

**Staff networks are important because...** they provide a safety net to stop you falling!

Pam Brown, West Midlands Ambulance Service

**Staff networks are important because...** they give staff a voice and allow the Trust to understand issues and barriers that may be faced by a specific group of people.

Ben Barber, North East Ambulance Service



# Introducing...



## #InformedCare

Every single member of the Ambulance Service **can** make a difference by being informed and knowing how to respond to the needs of individual groups of people.

Use the hashtag to share your learning and experiences that have made a difference.

It's all about providing great care!



# Understanding Health Inequalities



- | The lives of many lesbian and gay people in history are **invisible.**
- | Just over fifty years ago homosexual acts were **illegal.**
- | The lives of trans people in the past have been **misunderstood.**
- | Today bisexual people face increased levels of **discrimination.**
- | Young LGBT people are still more at risk of **suicide and harm.**
- | Older LGBT people experience higher levels of **social isolation.**

**#InformedCare** is great care.



# Positive Action for Change



- | **Visible:** Increasing visibility of LGBT issues.
- | **Positive:** Positive role models and stories.
- | **Connect:** Reminders that LGBT people are part of our services.
- | **Celebrate:** Celebrating key events on the LGBT calendar.
- | **Openness:** Being open about mental health issues for LGBT people.
- | **Opportunity:** Promote inclusivity whenever we can.

**#InformedCare** is great care.



# Happy Pride Season!



# NHS 70

South East Coast Ambulance Service **NHS**  
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