

National Ambulance  
LGBT Network



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

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# The Meaning of Pride



What is the origin of Pride  
events and why is it so  
important that we take part?

Alistair Gunn and Kirsten Willis BEM  
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# Introduction [1]



I have written before about the importance of celebrating Pride events and making sure that Ambulance Services increase the visibility of their LGBT staff. This year, judging by posts on social media, more ambulance staff have attended Pride events than ever before. It's great to see.

Pride is not just important at an organisational level however. Many LGBT people share common experiences of 'coming out' or starting their trans history, and similarly most people will tell you about their first Pride event.

Mine was back in 1995 when there was only one Pride event, which took part in London every July. Rather than a celebration Pride marches were largely a demonstration for equal rights. I managed to find a photograph from that day back in 1995 when a group of university friends took to the streets, hoping we would not appear on television and be 'outed'. I will forgive you for having a good chuckle at that photo!



1995

2007



2019



# Introduction [2]



The other two photos are from London Pride events and have an ambulance flavour. In 2007 two colleagues, Adi, Richard and myself, joined London Ambulance staff for the parade. This was in the first year of the rationalised services and you will notice that our uniforms didn't match at that point.

This year I came to London Pride to watch the parade for a change and it seems so did 1.5 million more people. I have to say I have never seen anything quite like it and after four hours watching I gave in and went for some food. My third photo is catching up with London Co-Chairs Lee, Jules and Alex before the parade.

This year was particularly poignant because the parade also recognises 50 years since the Stonewall Riots, or Stonewall Uprising as I prefer to call it, when the LGBT community in New York fought back at the police who were persecuting them. This is now recognised as the start of the

gay rights movement and the start of the journey to get rights equalised. The New York Pride parade is timed to be an annual celebration of that event and London Pride, which drew inspiration from our American cousins, began three years later in 1972.



**London Pride 1972**

We hope you enjoy this months 15 Minute Read in which we look at the meaning of Pride from a very personal perspective.

**Alistair, Chairperson**



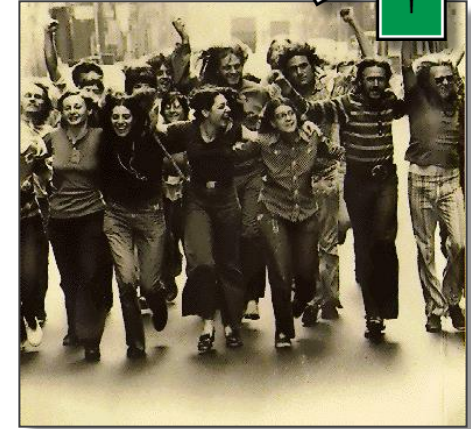
# The Stonewall Uprising



On **28 June 1969** the patrons of a New York City bar fought back against a discriminatory police raid. At the time, homosexuality, or sodomy as it was referred to in legal books, was still a crime. Men could be arrested for wearing drag and women faced punishment if they were found wearing less than three pieces of 'feminine clothing'.

On the night of 28 June 1969 the Police arrived at the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village. However, the patrons inside, numbering over 200 people didn't sit and wait to be arrested, instead, they rose up, resisted and began to riot.

The effect was that they sent the strongest message to the Police that they were not prepared for LGBT people to continue to be treated differently to the wider population, who did not identify as such.



**The Stonewall Inn in New York and a famous photo of some of the protesters**

So the historical significance of Pride month being in June, began from the Riots of 28 June 1969 at the Stonewall Inn, New York.

In 1970 the phrase Gay Pride was coined. A committee had been formed to commemorate the riots of the previous year.





# Taking Pride for Ourselves!



## My RAINBOW Story



In this article, Kirsten Willis, Deputy Chair of the National Ambulance LGBT Network, looks at the changing significance of Pride events at a personal level.

My personal journey began as a young naïve 19 year old, who entered the World of the LGBT Community back in 1991.

Back then, all that was available was a **womens disco** on the third Friday of the month, run at the local Council Alternative Arts Centre in Reading.

My first experience of Pride was at London in 1994, a true assault on my senses, but a glorious celebration. I'd suddenly found there were more people who were **just like me**.

# PRIDE



# My RAINBOW Story



London Pride was the so called epicentre of all that was considered **Gay** when I was first finding my feet as an **out woman**. But oh what a different experience it was to today, there were people with banners protesting in the streets, '**dirty gays**', '**lezzas**' and '**trannies**' and horrible chanting that we were in some way abnormal.

By the 2000's I experienced a sense of change, I'd gone from feeling quite unsafe in my surroundings at **Pride**, not feeling I could hold my girlfriends hand, to a sense of new beginnings and so much more colour.

A revolution was just around the corner and I wanted to be a part of it!

By 2010, I had been **inspired** by my experiences of the previous two decades and now it was my time to make a stand.

I decided to start a local Ambulance LGBT Network, initially learning how to set up a Network from my friends in the Gay Police Association and before I knew it, I found myself becoming an **ambassador**.

# PRIDE



# My RAINBOW Story



So now in 2019, I find myself with an 'ology', recognised for Services to NHS Leadership in the 2019 Queen's New Years Honours, receiving The British Empire Medal.

How could a naïve 19 year old girl receive such an honour? Well in just one way, by becoming part of something much bigger, of taking her opportunities, by working together and not being afraid to challenge prejudice, and most of all...

**Always be yourself.**

**Always be proud of who you are.**

**Take every opportunity you get.**

**And... never give up!**

**Together we can  
make a difference.**

**@kirsten\_willis**



# PRIDE



# Bringing People Together [1]



One of the great things about Pride events is bringing people together. It doesn't matter where you work, what your rank or position is, it is one day to get together and enjoy being who we are. Here is a photo that really shows what Pride is all about...



**Photo shows Kelly Lomax (left) and Vicky Robles at York Pride 2019.**

## Vicky's Story

### What Pride means to me...

My partner and I met at work, when we started working for NHS111 back in 2013. We became friends and that's how our story started.

I never labelled myself or identified as gay. I was married (to a man) and was very unhappy and unsatisfied with the relationship, so thankfully it ended. Kelly was and is very open about her sexuality and I admire her for it, her friend told me she had a soft spot for me, but I never thought anything would happen and I'm sure she didn't imagine us being where we are now.

We started spending more time together, and I found that I was attracted to her zest for life. The inevitable happened one night over pizza and apple vodka and we've been together ever since. She is





# Bringing People Together [2]



the love of my life and I'm proud to call her my wife, we married last October, our relationship is easy, it is full of respect, trust and honesty, fun, love and laughter.

York Pride in 2018 was my first Pride that I attended with Kelly and I felt at home. I felt comfortable, accepted and just me. We attended York Pride again this year and although the sun didn't shine, everyone that attended did and the people of York were clearly supporting everyone that was there.

## Kelly's Story

### Here goes...

I met Vicky when we joined NHS111 back in January 2013 and we became good friends a little after. I knew Vick was married and I was in a five year relationship, that ended in April 2013 and Vicky was there for me when I needed to talk

and then, I then lost my Mum in May 2013 and Vicky was there for me again.

Vick is a very private person and I didn't know what she was going through, with her now ex-husband. Once I found out I put all my feelings for her aside and all my grief aside and I wanted to be there for her, as she was for me.

I never in a million years expected us to be together in a relationship, let alone married. I can honestly say, I have met my soul mate, my rock and my forever life partner.

Last year she attended her first York Pride, which I was nervous about, as she hasn't done this before and seeing her be herself with others and loving the openness of others, made me smile.

I'm proud of who I am and I always have been and now I'm even prouder, to have my now Wife by my side, to share many many more Pride's with me.

# Ask the Committee [1]



We asked the National Ambulance LGBT Network committee what their first Pride was and what it was like...

**My first Pride event was Brighton TransPride in 2016...** For the first time I felt that my existence was valid and that I was truly accepted with out prejudice.

Steph Meech, South East Coast Ambulance Service

**My first Pride event was London in 1985...** I was working for the Greater London Council and we congregated in Jubilee Gardens, it truly felt like a jubilation and a stand against the system!.

Pam Brown, West Midlands Ambulance Service

**My first Pride event was Brighton Pride in 2016...** Eye opening, humbling and completely amazing. As an ally it left me buzzing for days so how must it feel for our LGBT staff I can't imagine!

Asmina Chowdhury, South East Coast Ambulance Service



# Ask the Committee [2]



**Our first Pride event was London Pride in 1995...** It's very strange to think we both watched the parade and remember getting squished into a tube on the way to Clapham Common. There were so many people in those trains you just had to sit on each other. The atmosphere was crazy, yet hypnotic. Where else could you enjoy a day with thousands of fellow gays. Although we have exactly the same recollections, it would be another 20 years before we would actually meet.

Alistair and Kirsten, Network Chairs

**My first Pride event was Nottingham Pride in 2006...** It was the year I turned 18 and it was a mixture of anticipation, trepidation, excitement and nerves all rolled into one. It was my first experience of being amongst the community and I've never looked back, 13 years on I now actively take part in Pride events to promote equality and celebrate our achievements but also as a reminder of those who can't.

Jonny Holmes, East Midlands Ambulance Service



# Introducing...



## National Ambulance LGBT Network Conference 2019

This years National Ambulance LGBT Network conference will be held at Tally Ho Conference Centre near Birmingham on Thursday 10 October. This conference is the first of two events that will explore intersectionality and how LGBT issues are complicated by other factors.

Replicating the registration process introduced last year, a number of places have been allocated to each Ambulance Trust in an attempt to draw equal representation from across the country. We expect demand for places to be high so please contact your local LGBT Network to get information on how to secure a place.

[www.ambulanceLGBT.org/conference/conference-2019](http://www.ambulanceLGBT.org/conference/conference-2019)





# Celebrate with Pride!

