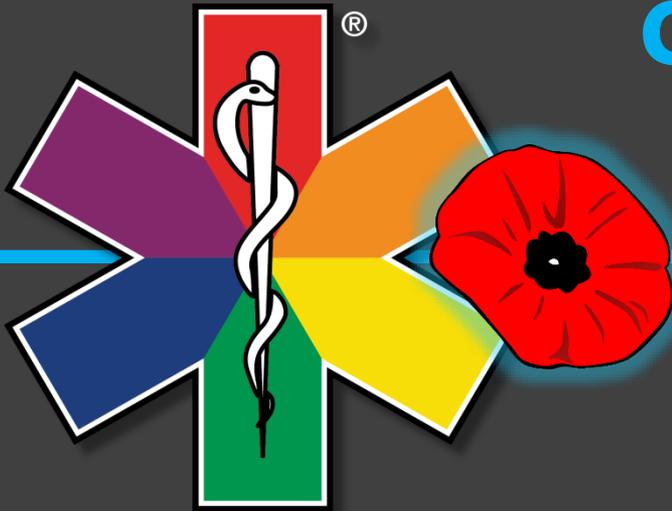


National Ambulance
LGBT Network



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

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Reflections of a Network Chair

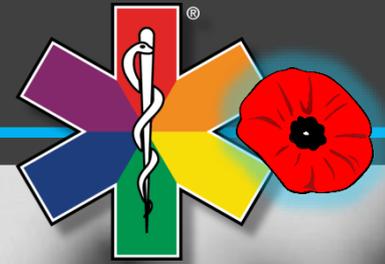


What is it like to establish
and help run our LGBT
staff networks?

Emma Burrow (she / her)
10 November 2020



Remember...



This is Wilfred Owen, remembered mainly for his poetry that graphically recounts his war experience. He was killed in 1918 in battle at the age of 25. It is believed he was also gay.

This years Poppy Appeal is struggling due to Covid lockdown

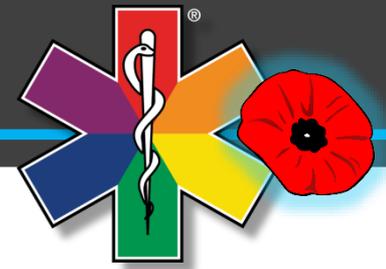


measures but you can still buy a poppy pin and lots of other things from www.poppymap.org.uk.

We'll probably never know how many young gay men died to protect the liberty we take for granted today.



My Story [1]



My name is Emma Burrow and I work for North East Ambulance Service (NEAS). I started working there in August 2018, as Research and Development Administrator. I soon became involved in the LGBT staff network Proud@NEAS. Firstly, as social media secretary and then I became Chair in June 2019.

I previously worked in elderly care. From kitchen assistant when I was 17 and moving up the ladder to Residential Care Manager in 2013. I gained several NVQ's including an NVQ in Leadership and Management, with the goal of managing my own care home. Unfortunately this wasn't meant to be. I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 2011 and since relapsed three times. In 2015 my best

chance of survival was to have a stem cell transplant. I went on long-term sick leave and had my transplant in May 2015. However I soon relapsed again and was given a terminal diagnosis. I had palliative chemotherapy and remarkably, it put me into remission and I've been in remission since.



During treatment (left) and having stem cell transplant in 2015 (right)



My Story [2]



I've suffered many side effects from the treatment I've had over the years, one of which has led to me having seven joint replacement surgeries so far, hence why I was unable to go back to my job delivering care.

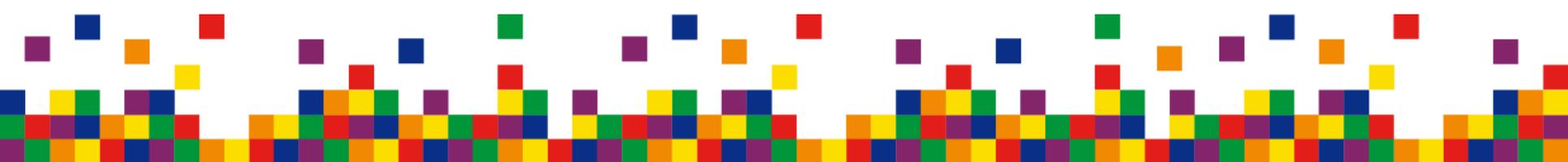
My dream job was always to work for the ambulance service as a paramedic. Due to physical disabilities that wasn't possible but the next best thing was to work for the ambulance service. I got the job and the rest is history!

I say all of this because I think it's important to understand why I decided to take on the role of chair. My character and personality is someone who is very organised, likes to plan and likes to help people.

I have a renewed sense of resilience and appreciation for life. So my goal in life is to enjoy it and use my experiences to try and help others in any way that I can. I saw taking on the role of Chair as one of those ways.



Living the dream in 2019



Contents



Included in this resource:



Key skills needed to take on a network role



The complicated world of social media



What to be aware of



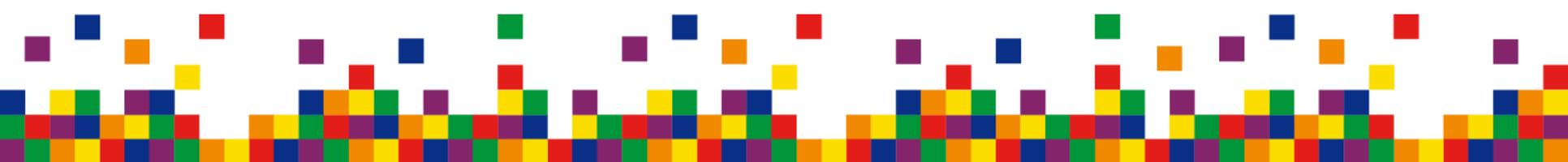
Benefits



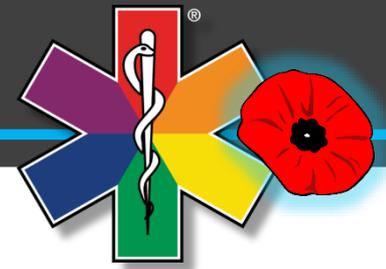
Ask the committee



Amazing experiences since becoming Chair



Key Skills Needed to be Chair



Here is my rainbow of skills needed to be a successful Chair...

Organisational and planning skills are essential!

Don't take it personally

I learned this the hard way in that when ideas or plans received negativity, I thought it was because of me personally when it really wasn't.

Confidence

You need to put yourself out of your comfort zone and make your voice heard if you want to make real change.

Good communication

As with any role, communication is key.

The members of the network are a team. Their thoughts, experiences and ideas are important. They need to be heard and empower them to lead on things they are passionate about.

People management

Let's be clear, you are NOT a manager! However as chair you do need people management skills because people will look to you to lead and make decisions.

Resilience is vital

Not everyone believes in equality for all. Some people do not like or believe in the LGBT community and may be very vocal in saying this. You will have knock backs. LGBT equality is not always high on everyone's agenda but perseverance is key.



Complicated World of Social Media



I do not claim to be a social media guru! When I first started working for NEAS in 2018 I quickly took on the role of Social Media Secretary for the Proud@NEAS network. I soon learned that this could be a full-time role in itself but on a completely voluntary basis!

There are many awareness days on the LGBT calendar which need to be recognised. They are important to recognise on social media so that staff, patients and the public can see that your organisation is publicly acknowledging and addressing the issues that LGBT people face and that you are striving for equality, diversity and inclusion.

You need to think about what the main message is that you want to get across and ensure your posts are clear and appropriate. I very quickly had to learn about hashtags and tagging people to make sure posts got as wide a reach as possible.



Be Aware



In a network role you have to remember that you are more visible. You may be the first point of contact in most situations. If someone is having issues then they may speak to you about them first. This can be an emotional rollercoaster.

I have met some incredible and inspirational people. They have told me things that have been very upsetting and in some cases heart breaking but are so important to hear. It has given me a real insight into the issues that LGBT people and their families and friends face. It is truly humbling that they feel comfortable enough to confide in me but it can also be emotionally draining.



However, I like to have an open-door policy. I want people to know that they can contact me whenever they need to because its important for them to feel comfortable to do so.

Being in a network role can be exhausting, especially during the busy season of Pride! You may have people messaging you here, there and everywhere during the day, evenings, weekends. It can be non-stop!

It took me a while to realise that I had to make sure that I had some downtime as well because it could have easily pushed me to burn out. I learned to turn off notifications when I needed a break.



It's Not All On You!



- You need reassurances and investment from the organisation you work for. You need a clear budget for your network. You need reassurance and commitment that you will have allocated time to carry out network duties and admin.
- A lot of the work you do will be in your own time. Networks can be very busy with different events and activities. But it's not all on you! The Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team and Communications team are there to support you as are the other members of the group.

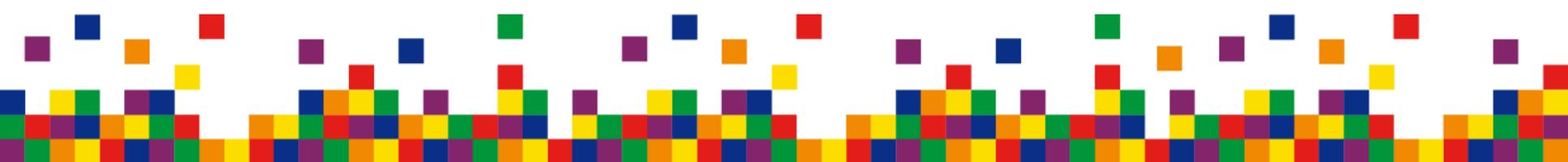
Benefits

I have had the opportunity to meet lots of

people from different backgrounds. This has given me a chance to hear their stories and better understand the issues which LGBT people face. I have met some incredible people along the way. It is truly humbling that they feel comfortable confiding in me. Their stories can be heart-breaking and hard hitting but are so important to hear.

I have a real sense of belonging. I am part of a group who have similar ways of thinking and a joint goal of wanting to make things better for staff and patients

I have had the opportunity to attend conferences, activities and events that I would not have known about previously.



Amazing Experiences



- ✓ I was asked to be a key note speaker and deliver a workshop at the 2019 Stonewall Scotland conference.
 - ✓ I attended the NALGBT network meeting in Crawley in 2019 then stayed on and went to Brighton Pride. My first time at Brighton Pride and it was absolutely amazing!
 - ✓ I was awarded a NALGBT Gold Star of Life badge for exceptional contribution to LGBT staff networks.
 - ✓ I have the opportunity to meet with senior managers within my organisation and outside of it to try and make real change for LGBT staff and patients.
- ✓ I was part of a working group to set up a local Pride event which was a huge success and then invited to the Mayor's Drinks Reception as thanks.
 - ✓ I took part in the NEAS 'Reverse Mentoring' scheme pairing with a Director and we created a safe space where they could ask any questions and have frank discussions about my LGBT experiences.
 - ✓ I have successfully launched the NHS Rainbow Badge at NEAS as well as commissioning an NHS Rainbow Patch especially for operational staff uniforms



My Photograph Album

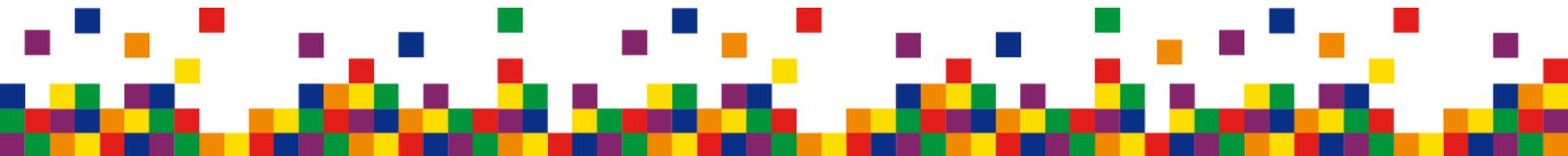


With colleagues, accepting a Gold Star of Life Award (top right) and launching the rainbow NHS badges

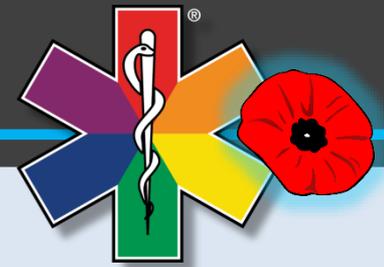
Ask the Committee!

We asked other members of our committee what their experiences are of being a network Chair.

Read their thoughts on the following pages.



Ask the Committee



Alistair Gunn (he / him) – Chair to National Ambulance LGBT Network

‘I first became Chair of the Yorkshire Ambulance LGBT Network back in 2008 when we first set up staff networks. I recently stood down from Chairing the local network to allow me more time to concentrate on the National Ambulance LGBT Network.

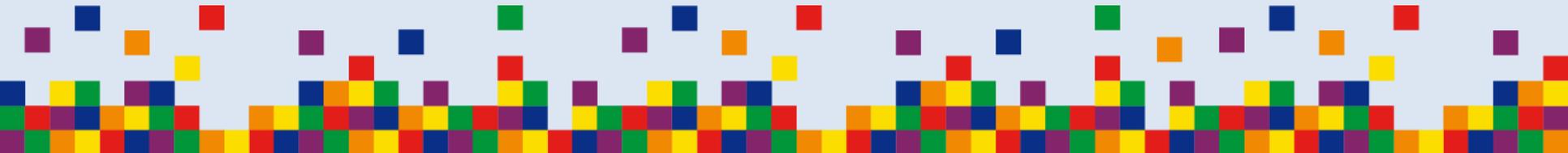
‘You always hope, when you stand down, that you leave a legacy of things that have made a difference and that the new Chair and committee will take it forward and to better things. I’m really proud of the fact we have raised the visibility of LGBT issues in Yorkshire and I believe we have a good reputation when it comes to matters of supporting people and celebrating diversity.

‘I think one of my favourite reflections is the creation of the rainbow star of life which I did with

members of the original committee when we undertook the Health Champions programme. Not only did it work in Yorkshire, but it went on to become the national symbol. I do chuckle when I think of the difficulties we had getting people to wear them originally. Some people didn’t like the ‘gay badge’ but it just shows how far things have come and now we can’t make enough of them!



‘It has been wonderful to see things change for the better, to meet so many people across the country and, most importantly of all, to feel that the culture of Ambulance Services is much more embracing for everyone that works in it. That only happens because people have nudged it in the right direction and will need to carry on doing so for some time to come.’



Ask the Committee



Kirsten Willis BEM (her / she) – Deputy Chair to National Ambulance LGBT Network

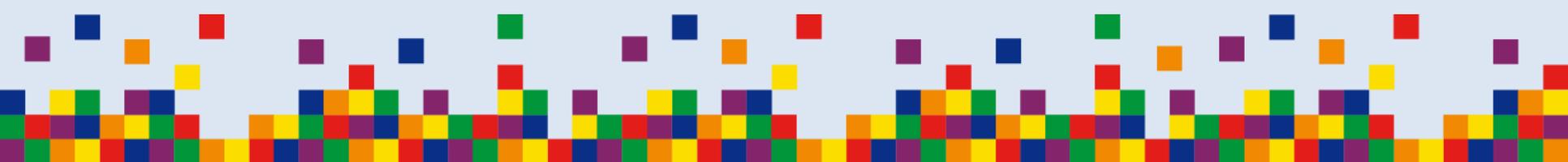
‘One word sums it up, a challenge! At times it has felt like wading through treacle, while our Trust has a very positive view on all our internal Networks, the LGBT has been the trail blazer. Becoming deputy chair to the NALGBT did develop our Network well locally, it can be hard keeping the momentum up at times, hence my reference to feeling like wading through treacle!

‘On the whole they have been positive locally and definitely hugely positive Nationally. I have a direct line to the Chief who chairs our EDI Board, which is really helpful in getting things pushed forward.

‘The challenges are gaining engagement from staff across the Trust, as is the same with many

networks, you often get a few committed people. I would also say that trying to convince people why we need such networks is also a real challenge, comments such as “why do you need a network, everyone knows about diversity these days, its rammed down our throats often enough” make me want to fight even more!

‘The barriers are time and money. It can be exceptionally draining having to go through so many hoops to get things moved forward. There are benefits though. How do you sum up excellence? I’m considered a subject matter expert, I get approached for my thoughts, comments and advice regularly, which is amazing and I really respect my Trust for taking this approach, I just need more hours in the day!



Ask the Committee



Jonathan Holmes (he / him) – Chair of East Midlands Ambulance Service LGBT Network

'I have found being part of the Trust and National Network extremely rewarding and sometimes frustrating in equal measure. The diverse cross section of staff we work alongside has provided me with a greater insight into issues in our community I was either unaware of or lacked understanding and has therefore helped me in becoming a better informed network leader.

'It does not come without it's challenges, especially when Trust objectives do not always align with network priorities; gaining traction and actual support (instead of verbal support) can be difficult and it does sometimes feel like we aren't achieving anything however when individual staff members have approached me for support with LGBT issues, purely on the basis that they know I



am part of the network, it all feels worthwhile. I find the biggest barrier is time; whether this be being released for network commitments, availability of staff / members for network meetings or the time to be able to promote the network within the Trust.

'Being part of a larger network helps support local networks. The sharing of information and ideas as well as best practice has helped me in promoting and running our Trust network.'



Ask the Committee



Ella Rotherham-Brown (she / her) – Chair of Pride@YAS Network

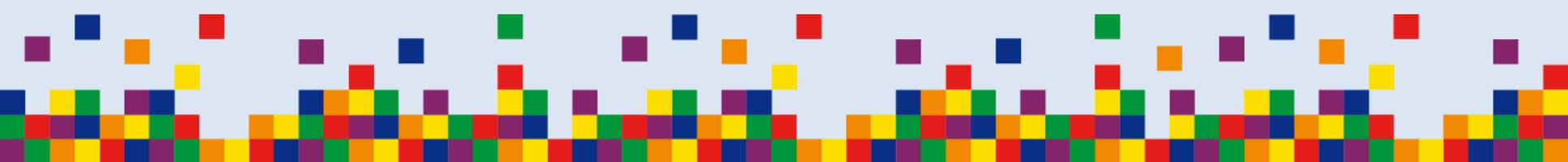
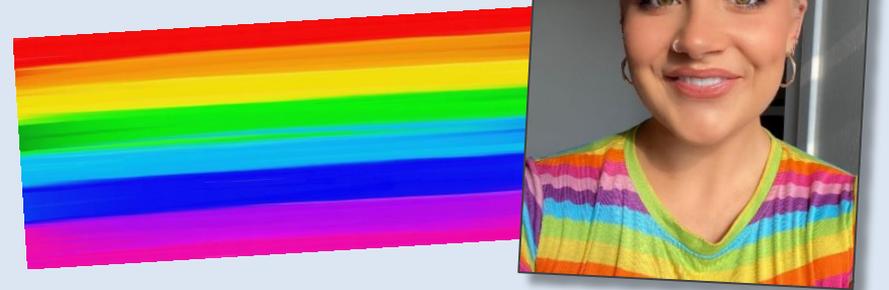
‘I am new in the role of the Chair of Pride@YAS and it was difficult running a campaign, being elected and joining the Network during the lockdown period. We’re an entirely new committee, so it has been incredibly rewarding to become part of a network at a tricky time.

‘However, it has made communication within the committee difficult as we couldn’t discuss things in person and virtual communication only allows for so much. It has been rewarding to be there for our network members, during a time when the mental health of the LGBT community has been so impacted, but it is difficult to feel like we’re providing enough. There have been significant benefits with the interaction with the wider national network, which virtual meetings have allowed for improved interaction and

communication and the same applies for our local network.

‘Yorkshire is a huge patch so it was always difficult for us to ensure people from across the area could attend, which has been much improved as a result from virtual meetings.

‘We’ve also had a lot of support from Trust and Execs which has been really good as it has extended our reach through Team Brief talks and other things’.



Conclusion



I have had ups and downs since becoming a Network Chair. However, the overwhelming feelings I have when looking back at my experiences are of absolute pride, making lasting friendships, making real change, and having so much fun along the way.

My advice, if you have the opportunity to be Chair, Vice-Chair or any other role within a network, go for it. Don't underestimate what the role entails but I am so incredibly grateful for my time as Network Chair.



We Made It!



Target
1,000

In July 2020 we released two new professional development packages and set ourselves a target to get 1,000 certificates issued before 31 October.

We are delighted to say we smashed this with **1,138** people completing a course. That is **1,138** people who are better equipped to deliver informed care!

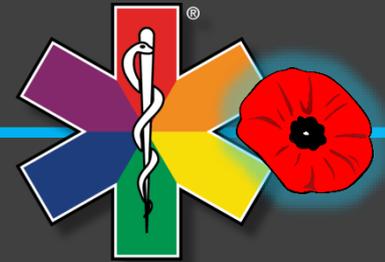
Congratulations for you are amongst the first **1,138** people. It doesn't end there however. We would like the other 34,000 operational ambulance staff to have this knowledge.



**Follow the line to
see how you can
make a difference**



Important Dates



20 November is...

Trans Day of Remembrance

A day to remember people who have lost their lives to anti-transgender violence



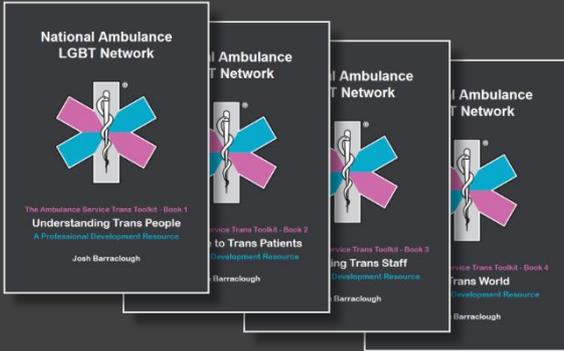
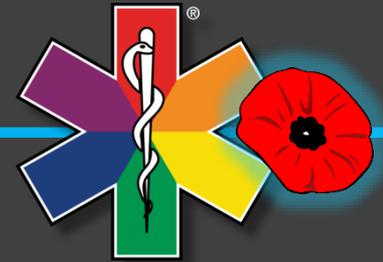
1 December is...

World AIDS Day

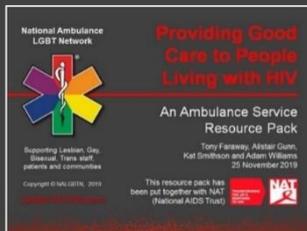
A day to show support for people around the world who are living with HIV and AIDS



#InformedCare



Free access to these two courses
extended to 31 March 2021



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