

# Our Stories

What is it like working in our ambulance services?

## National Ambulance LGBT+ Network



Written by members of *Pride@YAS*,  
the Yorkshire Ambulance Service  
LGBT+ Network

August 2024



Celebrating the sexual orientations  
and gender identities of all our  
patients, staff and communities

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## Our Stories

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## Network Logos and Badges



The rainbow and trans star of life symbols are registered trade marks of the National Ambulance LGBT+ Network, and should only be used with permission.

Supplies of the rainbow and trans star of life pin badges are kept by each Trust's LGBT+ network and will advise how you can obtain them.

## LGBT+ Network Information

The National Ambulance LGBT+ Network exists to provide support to LGBT+ staff within UK ambulance services and ensure LGBT+ patients receive the right care.

The national committee is made up of two members from each NHS ambulance service and additional members with specialist roles. The committee meets four times a year.

Further information about the network, copies of our resources, link to our online shop and a calendar of events can be found on our website.

Information about LGBT+ networks in each NHS Trust, including contacts, can also be found on our website.

You can also contact members of the committee using the *Contacts* feature on our website.

**ambulanceLGBT.org**

Follow us on social media:



National Ambulance LGBT+ Network



@NatAmbLGBTUK

## Getting Involved

### Recruitment Teams

Each Ambulance Trust has a recruitment team who will be able to tell you about employed and volunteer opportunities available.

Contact information for recruitment teams can be found on the *Recruitment* page on our website.

### Local Networks

Our local networks are always looking for people to get involved. Have a look at the *Networks* feature on our website for contact information.

National committee members are appointed by local networks.

### Events

We publish a calendar of events that you can get involved with, which includes our annual conference. Special events happen in LGBT+ History Month (February) and throughout the Pride season (June to August each year).

It is always worth contacting your local network to see if they are planning any additional events.

# Introduction



## Alistair Gunn

### Planning and Development Manager and Chair of the National Ambulance LGBT+ Network

**Pronouns: he / his**

“I am completely biased when it comes to working in the Ambulance Service. It is something that always interested me as I was growing up and when I joined the service, back in 2003, I couldn’t imagine anything more noble than jumping in an ambulance to go to support people when they need help. Over twenty years later I still feel that way.

“My career in the service has covered lots of different roles, including operations, operational management and now corporate management. At the end of the chain though are patients who need support and most of us are working hard to ensure everything is right when people need us.

“Back in 2015 I was elected to be the Chair of the National Ambulance LGBT+ Network. In that time the committee and myself have worked to improve the response we give to LGBT+ patients, support LGBT+ staff and increase our visibility in our communities. It’s been hard work, but I think it is really making a difference.

“We conducted a survey of LGBT+ staff in 2023 which showed that around a third of people had experienced some level of ‘negative behaviours’ in the workplace from colleagues or patients.

We chose our words carefully here because most of this is not direct homophobia, but rather clumsiness and banter. It’s still at a higher level than we would like, but my sense is that our ambulance services are no worse than society in general. The other interesting statistic from our survey was that over ninety percent of staff feel safe at work and would recommend the Ambulance Service as a place to work.

“You don’t have to take my word for it though. We’ve created this pack so that you can hear different voices from within the service and see what their experiences have been. We have teamed up with the LGBT+ network in Yorkshire Ambulance Service, *Pride@YAS*, for this first version ready for the UK Pride event in Doncaster.



# Survey Results



## Introduction Continued...

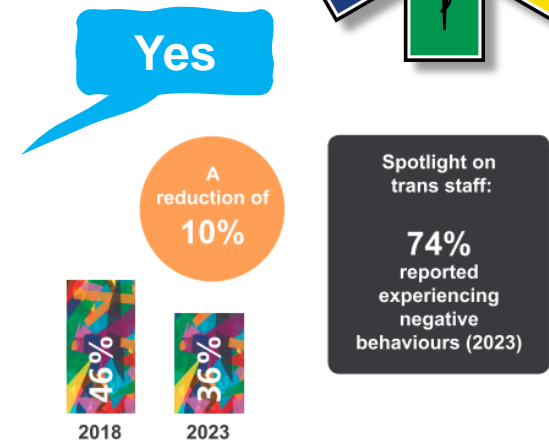
“We will be updating this and creating a version with voices from around the United Kingdom in due course.

“Our ambulance services need compassionate people who are keen to help others and deliver high standards of clinical care, whether out on ambulances or in our call centres. If that sounds like you, I’d encourage you to have a look at the careers available and approach our recruitment teams for more information. For now though, I hope you enjoy reading this pack and good luck with your application.”

Check out some of the National Ambulance LGBT+ Network Staff Survey results from 2023

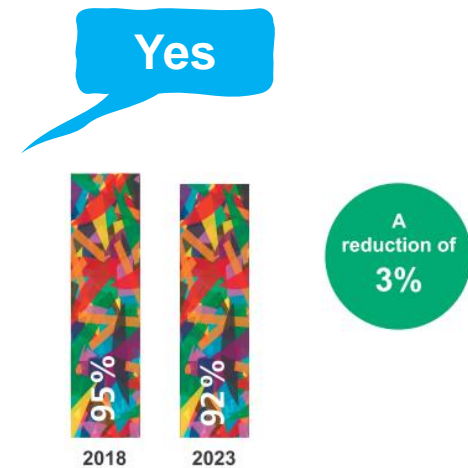
## Are there incidences of negative behaviours?

In 2023 we asked this question and we saw an improvement since we asked the question in 2018. This means we are moving in the right direction but still have more work to do, especially to support our trans staff.



## Ambulance services are safe places to work?

In 2023 we doubled the number of respondents to the survey to 958, and we were delighted to see that over 90% of people think ambulance services are safe places for LGBT+ people to work.



# Dave's Story



## Dave Kirk

**Health and Wellbeing Engagement Advisor**

**Pronouns: him / he / his**

“My background is policing. During my 15 years as a Police Constable I specialised in various departments and became a Physical Training Instructor (PTI), training officers to use (or not to use) their personal safety equipment, such as handcuffs, batons and taught them up to firearms levels regarding use of force. I left and became a trainer of mental health, resilience, and wellbeing, then joined the ambulance service, working as a 999 Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Dispatcher.

“I am now one of two Health and Wellbeing Engagement Advisors in the Trust. Within this role, I review and revise current health and wellbeing practices to keep them up to date. I also visit stations to boost morale and find out what is happening from staff to feed that back to the Senior Management Team, should they require the information.

“Part of the role also consists of being there for all staff who need to talk to someone. I can advise, refer, or



*Dave is seen taking part in York Pride with colleagues in 2024.*

safeguard, where necessary, to assist them with their health and wellbeing.

“Within the Trust I have come out, having ‘being in the closet’ for many years. I was comfortable to do this, and I am now the Deputy Chair of *Pride@YAS*, which I am honoured to be. Being a Health and Wellbeing Engagement Advisor, I now assist others with their individual identity where necessary too. I feel supported by the Trust in relation to my sexuality.

“Yorkshire Ambulance Service, as an employer, is very good to all individuals and I would recommend it as a diverse employer.”





# Aysha's Story



## Aysha Alton

**Project Officer, Leadership and Organisational Development Team**

**Pronouns: she / her**

“My name is Aysha Alton, and I am a Project Officer within the Leadership and Organisational Development Team at Yorkshire Ambulance Service. I proudly identify as female. Though I've been with YAS for less than a year, my journey here has been shaped by a diverse and rich career history.

“Before joining YAS, I dedicated my efforts to NHS services within mental health and palliative care. I also spent some years in the vibrant worlds of fashion and theatre, where I could express my creativity. These roles taught me the profound impact of compassion and support in the healthcare field, and creative in how we operate.

“At YAS I feel empowered to bring my authentic self to work every day. The organisation's leaders not only encourage but celebrate individuality and authenticity, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment. This has allowed me to thrive and feel genuinely valued.

“Ambulance services, often misunderstood, are in fact a beacon of compassion and open-mindedness. YAS is actively working to break down barriers and support the LGBT+ community, ensuring that everyone feels welcome and respected. If you're looking for a place where you can truly be yourself and make a difference. YAS is the place to be.”



*Aysha (right) is seen at Leeds Pride*



# Adam's Story

## Professor Adam Layland

### Director of Operations and Partnerships

#### Pronouns: he / his

“My name is Adam, the Director of Partnerships and Operations for South Yorkshire in Yorkshire Ambulance Service. I came out as gay when I was 18 after battling with it myself, alone, since I was 15.

“I started as a volunteer in the ambulance service as Community First Responder before getting my first employed job in the control room of Staffordshire Ambulance Service. I became a Paramedic in 2008 after studying at Sheffield Hallam University, and I've worked in various roles in ambulance services in the East and West Midlands, London, Great Western and now Yorkshire. I became a Professor in Healthcare Leadership in 2020 after working in academia and at a national level for NHS education.

“The ambulance service hooks you in, regardless of your role. Being a paramedic is truly the best job in the world, and as my career has developed, I've always remained clinical, as that what matters to me most. I've always felt in

the development of my career that I've thrived of having impact, and each role has given me broader impact and to be in a position to support all our Paramedics in South Yorkshire is incredible.

“When I first joined the ambulance service, I hadn't accepted my own sexuality so I didn't share what I was going through, and even in my first role as Paramedic it took me some time to share my sexuality. The manner in which I was accepted gave me the confidence to always be myself wherever I have been. It's always challenging when people assume you're heterosexual but I've developed ways in which to correct people, although sometimes it isn't worth it.

“I would recommend the ambulance service to people from the LGBT+ community as I am passionate about leading a service which aims to be the most inclusive place to work. I strongly believe that to deliver high quality care, you have to be able to feel and be yourself – and I know from experience that I couldn't do this when I was hiding who I was.”



# Craig's Story



## Craig Allison

**Team Leader, A&E Operations**

**Pronouns: he / his**

“The Ambulance Service has come a long way in promoting and supporting LGBT+ people, which makes me feel very humbled and proud and it's really nice to see new people join the service and thrive in their career with so much more confidence, security and safety although there's a long way to go.

“I started my career with the former North Yorkshire Ambulance nearly 25 years ago, with a bank contract on the Patient Transport Service. I then moved on to A&E as an Ambulance Technician, then Paramedic, before Clinical Supervisor and Locality Manager. After working in a number of different roles, I am currently an A&E Team Leader. I am also a bank Senior Clinical Adviser in the Integrated Care Centre, which I thoroughly enjoy and find very rewarding.

“Back in 2002 while working on the coast, my station officer approached me and said he was aware of some blatant homophobia and asked me how I'd like to deal with it. I

could either make a complaint or move to another area. I chose to move and I'm still in that location today.

“It is true that we've come a long way, more so in the last decade. When I was subjected to some hurtful homophobic behaviour which made me quite unwell, suffering from anxiety induced heart arrhythmia which took two years of invasive treatment to solve. At the time I didn't feel confident to challenge the behaviour but did escalate it with HR. At the time the support I was offered didn't address these issues in the right way but I know that this feedback has been incorporated into improvements and I would still encourage any colleagues to reach out for help and support.

“When I was successful in gaining the Clinical Supervisor role, a manager approached me and recognised that I always strive to prove myself to





# Find Out More



## Craig's Story Continued...

“people, but in fact I just needed to be myself. In my time with the service I have received multiple commendations, awards and I know I am well-respected across YAS.

“There’s a long way to go, but I do feel confident that ambulance services are safe for LGBT+ staff and a lot of work has taken place to encourage and enable people to challenge bad behaviour and ensure things are investigated properly. I’m proud of all the commitment and hard work that colleagues are doing to improve equality and I hope this means we will have a better experience in future.”



**Each Ambulance Trust has a recruitment team who can tell you about current employment and volunteering opportunities. Find contact details at**

**[ambulanceLGBT.org/recruitment](https://ambulanceLGBT.org/recruitment)**



# Sasha's Story



## Sasha Ruan

**Associate Ambulance Practitioner, A&E Operations**

**Pronouns: she / her**

“I’m Sasha, currently an Associate Ambulance Practitioner out on the road working in South Yorkshire. I identify as lesbian. I moved to YAS from another service where I felt comfortable just being me and of course I was hoping it would be the same here. I can say I shouldn’t have worried at all because there has not been one day where I’ve felt my sexuality is an issue both with my colleagues or patients.

“I work on a ‘floating’ rota so I work with different people all the time and I can honestly say I’ve laughed every single shift. I’m pretty open about my sexuality and have always been happy to answer questions which has helped some not so LGBT+ exposed colleagues to understand that it’s not abnormal just different to what we are told is the gold standard growing up.

“I know that if I ever had an issue I could speak to my Team Leader, any of the *Pride @YAS* team or my union. There is plenty of support available if needed. You just have to look around and you’ll see that YAS is working towards being LGBT+ friendly and we are treated no differently to anyone else. YAS has become a great place to work and I’m pretty sure it will only get better as my career continues.”



# Ryan's Story



## Ryan Lee

Associate Ambulance Practitioner, A&E Operations

Pronouns: he / his

"I joined YAS in 2015 as a PTS Apprentice before progressing through the service and on to A&E Operations in West Yorkshire. Throughout my time in the service, I have become more involved in the staff support networks, taking up the role of chair of *Pride@YAS* in 2022. I also represent YAS as a member of the National Ambulance LGBT+ Network committee.

"I enjoy coming to work, I find that although the ambulance service (like other employers) doesn't always get things right, there appears to be a real passion from senior leaders and colleagues to develop work around LGBT+ issues to better care for our staff, volunteers and patients.

"The support of *Pride@YAS* has allowed me to develop my own skills and confidence, I think my involvement in the staff network has been vital to my progression in the trust - I would recommend working for YAS if you are LGBT+, we have recently been working hard to develop our support for trans staff in particular. YAS is a safe and welcoming organisation to work for."



Ryan (far left) is seen at York Pride



Get involved!



[ambulanceLGBT.org](http://ambulanceLGBT.org)



National Ambulance LGBT+ Network



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