



National Ambulance LGBT Network

Celebrating LGBT History Month: Rewind 100 Years

Guidance Notes for Presentation

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These guidance notes have been put together to support the 'Rewind 100 Years' presentation which is available separately. This presentation consists of 23 slides of information that cover some key events for LGBT people and also for health and ambulance services.

There is very little historical information about LGBT people within the ambulance service. This presentation is a light-hearted look at both areas and the fact we can now celebrate the existence of many different groups of people in our services is testament to much things have changed.

If used as outlined in this document, it is expected the presentation will take around 45 to 60 minutes.

The Presentation

Slide 1 – 100 Years Ago

The year 1918 was a very important one for the United Kingdom. On the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day of the eleventh month (11 November 1918) the First World War came to an end. In the four years of the war, over 900,000 people from the United Kingdom were killed, and over 2 million people wounded.

The same year is also celebrated for the introduction of the Representation of the People Act, which gave women the right to vote. It should be noted that this act did not give all women the right to vote. In 1918 this was restricted to those over the age of 30, and who

owned property. This went little way to achieving equality. Men were able to vote at age 21 and 19 if they had been in military service. It wasn't until the Equal Franchise Act of 1928 that all women over the age of 21 gained the right to vote.

Much recognition is given to the suffragette movement, which campaigned for many years for women's rights. One of the most famous events was the death of Emily Davison (shown top right of slide) who was struck by the King's horse at the Epsom Derby on 4 June 1913. It is believed she was trying to pin the suffragette flag to the horse, but in attempting this she was knocked to the ground. She died from her injuries four days later.

Slide 2 – 1918

Sympathy for women's rights was increased in World War One as many took on traditional male roles while men were away fighting. Amongst other things women took up roles in ammunition factories, driving and conducting trams and many became ambulance drivers.

The photos here show women on frontline duties manning ambulances in cities and often repatriating soldiers when they landed back in England.

The book 'War Girls' tells the stories of women in the nursing yeomanry during the First World War years.

Slide 3 – 1920s

We didn't manage to find much information about ambulance services in the early twentieth century. If we need any more evidence of a male dominated service, we need look no further than these pictures from a St John Ambulance first aid manual from the 1920s.

It appears the standard attire was a tight jacket, cap and handlebar moustache!

Slide 4 – The Pink Triangle

The first symbol of gay identity was the pink triangle. Until around 20 years ago this was the main symbol until it was superseded by the rainbow 'freedom' flag. The pink triangle has a more sinister history which originates in the late 1930s.

In Nazi occupied Germany people who didn't fit into the Aryan race were persecuted, imprisoned and put to death. In addition to the 6 million Jews who died, it is estimated around 100,000 homosexual men perished.

In concentration camps an elaborate set of symbols were used to denote the different prisoners. The yellow Star of David was used to represent Jews and a pink triangle was used to symbolise gay men. The pink triangle was originally intended as a 'badge of shame' and the men who were made to wear it often subjected to the most humiliating treatment. It is interesting that there was no symbol for lesbian women and the black triangle, denoting 'asocial' or feminist woman, was used.

The pink triangle symbol was reclaimed in the 1970s by the gay rights movement. One of the most prominent uses is at the Homomonument in Amsterdam. The monument is a large pink triangle made out of marble sticking out into one of the canals.

One of the few written testimonies of life wearing the pink triangle was written by Heinz Heger. Although well worth a read, this is not an easy book by any means.

Slide 5 – 1948

Just a few years after the end of World War Two, the National Health Service was born. The then health secretary, Aneurin Bevan, outlined plans for free medical, dental and nursing care for all the population.

On 5 July 2018 the NHS will celebrates its seventieth birthday.

Slide 6 – 1950s

Whilst the country was putting itself back together after World War Two, and the new National Health Service was bedding in, gay men seemed to be having a difficult time. After so many men had been killed during the war it might be understandable that rebuilding families was a priority.

The number of men prosecuted for being gay during this time increased to the highest level ever seen. It seemed people who didn't follow the 'family convention' were the target of the establishment. Several high profile convictions started to make people question what was happening.

A report by the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution (better known as the Wolfenden Report, after Lord Wolfenden, the Chair of the committee) was published on 4 September 1957 after a succession of well-known men, including Lord Montagu, Michael Pitt-Rivers and Peter Wildeblood, were convicted of homosexual offences. Although campaigning had begun, it would take another ten years for change to happen.

Slide 7 – Genius or criminal?

Alan Turing is famed for being the father of the modern computer and also being the person who cracked the Enigma Code, meaning Nazi messages could be deciphered. This gave the Allies a massive tactical advantage which undoubtedly helped win the war. Alan Turing was also gay and this was discovered by police when he reported a burglary to the police. In March 1952 he was sent to trial and let off with probation on the condition that he agreed to hormone therapy. This was considered a more lenient option but resulted in the lowering of his libido and him growing breasts.

It has become increasingly understood that the ingestion of female hormones in men led to depression and mental illness. A year after finishing the treatment, Alan killed himself by eating an apple dipped in cyanide.

Slide 8 – 1960s

The following information was lifted from the website:

www.emergencycareassistant.co.uk/history-of-ambulance-staff

The UK ambulance service started after the Second World War in 1946 with an act of parliament called the National Health Services Act which came into power on 5th July 1948. The whole Act of 1946 was replaced with the National Health Services Act 1977. Initially the ambulance service was staffed by volunteers but the Millar report of 1964 which was compiled after three working party groups made recommendations including that patients should be treated en-route to hospital.

As a result of the Millar Report, training schools were set up and ambulance staff trained, these trained staff were referred to as 'Millar trained' and wore a badge of laurel leaves. Training was basic first aid with a few add extended skills in the use of oxygen and entonox. Ambulance staff were referred to as ambulance men or driver attendants.

Early ambulances were kitted out to very basic stands to what is considered today, one of the working groups that the Millar report is based made the following recommendations:

'Each ambulance should have two padded stretchers, 6 blankets, various canvas stretchers including poles, 1 carry chair, wooden splints, burns dressings, a maternity pack and each ambulance person should carry a first aid satchel the report also recommends carrying light rescue equipment'.

Slide 9 – 1967

In 1967 the Sexual Offences Act finally came into being which decriminalised homosexual acts between men. It is interesting to note that this did not apply to females, since no laws had ever been enacted to outlaw sexual acts between women.

The Act itself was fiercely debated and probably only carried that day because the final debate took place late at night. However it came to be, gay men were no longer persecuted by the law, but the setting of age of consent at 21 meant equality was not achieved.

In 2017 the fiftieth anniversary was celebrated. It is interesting that people who lived in the period when homosexuality was illegal recounted their stories and the shame and stigma they experienced. Many older people still bear the scars of this period.

Slide 10 – Stonewall

Stonewall is best known as the lesbian and gay rights lobbying group that has existed in the United Kingdom since 1989. Many prominent public figures have been associated with this organisation including Sir Ian McKellan and Angela Mason.

The name comes from the Stonewall riots (also referred to as the Stonewall uprising or the Stonewall rebellion) which were a series of spontaneous, violent demonstrations by members of the LGBT community against a police raid that took place in the early morning hours of 28 June 1969, at the Stonewall Inn in New York. This is widely considered to constitute the most important event leading to the gay liberation movement and the modern fight for LGBT rights in the United States.

The Stonewall Inn still exists in New York and the organisation Stonewall continues to campaign for LGBT equality in the United Kingdom.

Slide 11 – Gay medics in film and television

Back in the 1960s you were unlikely to see many openly gay characters on television, however there are several notable gay people who played medical roles.

Richard Chamberlain, considered heartthrob by many, played the lead role in a hospital drama that ran from 1961 to 1966. In 2010, during a media interview, Chamberlain (then 76 years old) was quoted as saying he kept his gay life a secret as, *'I'd never have got the best roles. Personally, I wouldn't advise a gay leading man-type actor to come out'*.

Kenneth Williams is best known for starring in many of the Carry On films, the first of which was produced back in 1956 and peaked in popularity in the 1960s and 70s. In two films Williams played Dr. Tinkle, often seen dismissing the advances of female staff. This gave rise to his famous line, '*Oh, Matron!*'

Off air Williams was a tormented soul, a fact revealed in his biography which was posthumously put together from his private diaries and letters. He experienced frequent bouts of depression about his sexuality and his ill health, both of which culminating in the last line of his diary, '*What's the bloody point?*' Kenneth Williams committed suicide shortly after this diary entry in 1988.

Today things are a bit different and we see many openly gay characters and actors on film and television. Dr. Christian Jessen, famed for appearing in the television show *Embarrassing Bodies*, is also a gay rights campaigner and brought much needed attention to the subject of mental support for LGBT people.

Slide 12 – 1972

In 1972 the gay rights movement was taking hold in the United Kingdom. The decriminalisation in 1967 got the ball rolling and events in America in 1969 spurred people to fight for equality on this side of the Atlantic.

The first Pride event took place in London on 1 July 1972, the nearest Saturday to the anniversary of the Stonewall riots. Around 2,000 people took part in the event which saw demonstrations about unequal rights for lesbians and gay men. Over subsequent years London Pride got bigger and bigger, and by the 1990s was one of the biggest annual demonstrations, bringing the centre of London to a standstill.

As LGBT rights got equalised, the emphasis of Pride events has switched more to being a celebrating of the LGBT culture. Pride events are now a feature of many towns and cities across the United Kingdom.

Slide 13 – 1970s

Before we address LGBT rights, you don't need to look hard to see how other aspects of equality were challenged by the ambulance service. The slide shows an actual advert, put in a newspaper, advertising for ambulance staff. It is interesting to note that every line of this advert would break equality legislation if published today!

Slide 14 – Role of the Ambulance Woman

A further example of blatant sexism comes from the Complete Handbook for Ambulance Personnel printed in 1970. Clearly this represented acceptable views at the time, but the assertion that women should, '*be placed on the more sedentary aspects of the service*', would not be permissible today.

Slide 15 – Ambulances got better!

Ambulance vehicles have always been very functional, and it is fun to look back and see how they've changed. In the 1970s bells were replaced by two-tone sirens and the amount of equipment carried started to increase. One ambulance design, by Irish vehicle builder Hanlon, dominated the market for many years. The design, with blue beacons in diagonal corners and sliding doors became the national favourite until the company closed down in 1988.

Other vehicle builders took up the mantle and a bigger variety started to be seen on the streets. Builders such as Mountain Range continued to produce specialist ambulance bodies whilst many others worked on van conversions.

The photographs on the slide show ambulances from South and West Yorkshire. The new Ford Transit design, with yellow stripe, was seen as revolutionary at the time and even featured the first 'wail and yelp' sirens.

Slide 16 – 1998

There is not a great deal of Trans history to include in this presentation. One thing that did make a big impact on public opinion was the introduction of character Hayley Cropper in the soap opera *Coronation Street*. Shortly after first appearing in January 1998 the character headed to Amsterdam for gender reassignment surgery. She later went on the marry Roy Cropper in what, at the time, seemed a most unlikely alliance.

It is interesting that the character was not originally planned to be in the programme for so long. It was the on-screen chemistry between Julie Hesmondhalgh (Hayley) and David Neilson (Roy) that made the characters so popular. Hesmondhalgh won a number of awards for her portrayal of Hayley and is celebrated for raising awareness of Trans issues.

During the 16 years that Hayley starred in *Coronation Street* some notable changes did occur in real life. The biggest one was the introduction of the Gender Recognition Act in 2004, which allowed people to legally change their gender. A Gender Recognition Certificate is issued after a person has lived in their new gender for two years. There is no

requirement for gender reassignment surgery to have taken place, and it is noted that many people choose not to have this.

Slide 17 – 1997 to 2010

Under the Labour government, that held office from 1997 to 2010, it is a fact that more LGBT rights were equalised than during any other government in British history. During the Tony Blair / Gordon Brown era, some of the changes were:

- Achieving an equal age of consent
- Ending the discrimination against lesbian and gay partners for immigration purposes
- Giving LGBT individuals and couples the right to adopt children
- Scrapping the homophobic Section 28 bill
- Banned discrimination in the workforce and vocational training with the introduction of the Employment Equality Regulations
- Included homophobia in the definition of hate crimes
- Removed outdated offences such as gross indecency and buggery
- Implemented the Gender Recognition Act
- Created Civil Partnerships

Even though Labour lost power in 2010 they made it very difficult for those who followed to not implement other acts of equality. Under fierce protests from his own party, David Cameron managed to introduce same-sex marriages in 2014. Had this not happened, it is likely the Government would have been seen as reversing a positive trend on equality.

The lives of LGBT people in the United Kingdom have changed significantly over the past 20 years.

Slide 18 – 2000

This amusing cartoon shows one of the other legislated changes that occurred under the Labour Government. Before the year 2000, people could be dismissed from their military post for being lesbian or gay (transgender was not included). Years of campaigning about this had got little movement and it took the European Court of Human Rights to intervene before sense prevailed, protecting people who were offering to risk their lives for their country.

Until this point the Armed Forces Policy and Guidelines on Homosexuality claimed that the homosexual lifestyle was 'incompatible' with military life, 'because of the close physical conditions in which personnel often have to live and work, and also because homosexual

behaviour can cause offense, polarise relationships, induce ill-discipline and damage morale and unit effectiveness’.

Slide 19 – 2006 to 2012

At the start of 2006 there were 31 ambulance services in England. These were reconfigured into ten larger regional units and this came into effect on 1 July 2006. The ambulance services in Scotland and Wales were already nationally managed.

Many changes were introduced to services in the following years. The former London Ambulance Service Chief Executive, Peter Bradley, had started to shape thinking with his well-respected report *Taking Healthcare to the Patient*. As ambulance services started to reform themselves, and also responded to increasing demands, a new problem started to emerge. Never before had ambulance services struggled to recruit enough staff, and with the upgrading of training into Higher Education, and new employment opportunities in the wider healthcare economy, meant staffing levels were becoming challenged.

Initiatives to support staff and increase retention have forced new thinking, and it is probably out of this that the benefits of staff networks had shown. Visibility in communities means ambulance services are seen as inclusive employers and happier, supported staff are more likely to stay. Today almost every ambulance service has a LGBT Network.

Slide 20 – [Date]

We suggest using this slide to add information about your own Ambulance Trust. This may include some landmark developments connected to your LGBT Network and some of the events you have taken part in.

Slide 21 – 2015

In August 2015 South East Coast Ambulance Service gathered representatives from each Ambulance Trust to look at developing a national network. The photograph shows those people who attended the event and many of these people are still involved today.

This wasn't the first attempt to get a national network off the ground however, and the two previous attempts failed due to lack of support. The support offered by South East Coast Ambulance Service was invaluable and culminated in the first national conference which took place in Brighton a year later.

Since then the National Ambulance LGBT Network has gone from strength to strength and is firmly established with support from the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives.

Slide 22 – 2016

Vehicles specially decorated for Pride events are not an usual site now, and the ambulance service join the other emergency services at many events around the country. The photograph on the left shows all three services represented at the National Ambulance LGBT Network conference in 2017.

A year earlier, in Yorkshire, an ambulance was decorated with the rainbow star of life logos and remained in service for three months after the Leeds Pride event in August.

Slide 23 – 2018

In 2018 the National Ambulance LGBT Network created a second variant of the logo to represent the Trans element of LGBT. The term LGBT encompasses two different things – sexual orientation (LGB) and gender identity (T) – and two protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010. Because understanding and support for Trans people is not as developed it is hoped this new logo will help to raise awareness of this as a separate issue.

The Trans Star of Life logo combines the Star of Life symbol with the Trans flag colour scheme.

Serving Our Communities with Pride

One of the three objectives of the National Ambulance LGBT Network is to be, 'visible in our communities'. Our photograph here shows staff coming together at the Pride event and we shouldn't underestimate the impact this has on the communities we serve. As well as showing we are inclusive employers it means patients will view our services as supportive of their needs.

Add Your Bit of History

If you have some additional information to include in future history developments, or a piece of ambulance LGBT history to share, please let us know. Visit our website where you find a number of ways to get involved. The National Ambulance LGBT Network website address is www.ambulanceLGBT.org.

Additional Reading / Bibliography

The following items are suggested follow ups to the information contained within the presentation. Graphics of each are shown on the appropriate slides.

Books

- **War Girls: The First Aid Nursing Yeomanry in the First World War**
By Janet Lee
Published in 2012
- **The Men with the Pink Triangle**
By Heinz Heger
Published in 2010
- **It's Not Unusual: A History of Lesbian and Gay Britain in the Twentieth Century**
By Alkarim Jivani
Published in 1997
- **Stonewall**
By Martin Duberman
Published in 1994

Films

- **The Imitation Game**
Starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightley
Released in 2015
- **Pride**
Starring Matthew Warchus and Bill Nighy
Released in 2014

All the above resources were available at the time of producing these guidance notes.