

National Ambulance  
LGBT Network



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

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# Celebrating Five Years

We look back at  
the five years of the  
national network



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# Introduction

Although five years is quite a long time it seems to have flown by. Five years ago we sat in a room at Brighton Hospital listening to an idea to create a national network. Five years on and it's time to reflect on what has changed.

We are absolutely delighted how far we've come and we can see the difference our initiatives are making. Nothing demonstrates this more than the rainbow star of life pin badges that are now a common sight in our services. We have even seen people wearing them on television, which is a true sign that cultural change is happening.

Our fifth birthday fell in the middle of the Covid-19 lockdown and meant we were not able to celebrate in the way we wanted to. The original plan was to have our annual pilgrimage to Brighton Pride where we're march with people from every service, be cheered by the crowds and more than likely get basted in the sun.

Instead we decided to reflect on the first five years and talk about some of our favourite photographs. There have been heart-warming moments, celebrations and some things that are just plain funny.

We hope you enjoy having a look at the photos and reading our reflections. And here's to the next, hopefully productive and equally fun, five years.

*Alistair and Kirsten*





## Kirsten's Photo



## The Very Beginning

The very first meeting took place in Brighton on 31 July 2015. It was a boiling hot day and people from every NHS ambulance service turned up to be part of this, not really sure what to expect!

It's quite amusing to think back to that day and how far things have come on since. It's also great to see that a large number of people in this photo are still part of the committee or connected with us in some way. Little did Alistair and I know what we had let ourselves in for when we agreed to take on the Chair roles...

Very happy memories of this day!





## Alistair's Photo



## Before it Began!

This was the first time I'd been to Brighton and arrived with two lovely colleagues from Yorkshire; Simon and Matt. The night before the first meeting we made the most of our visit, and after famously saying I'd 'stay out for a pizza and a couple of drinks' went on to redefine 'a couple'.

This photo, taken on the morning of the first meeting, doesn't adequately show the three hangovers being suffered. And if you could go back and tell me that I would become Chair and what would happen in the next five years, I would have said you were crackers!





## Kirsten's Photo



## Love is Love

Ambulances are of course synonymous for many of us, where both good and bad things happen, where life begins and where it ends. The concept of love couldn't be clearer with the amazing decal of 'Love is Love' on this South East Coast Ambulance at Brighton Pride.

Celebrating the NHS' 70th Birthday, this powerful message is so important, we love who we love and we do so with pride and passion that is so reflective of the ambulance family.

Oh, and of course we like to be a bit flamboyant in our approach too!





## Alistair's Photo



## Manchester Pride

In 2019 ambulance services across the UK managed to rank up a presence at 56 Pride events across the country. That is a new record and we managed this by working as a network to bring people together to support each other's events.

One of the things I love about Pride events is seeing the joy the faces of staff as they are cheered and high-fived by the crowds. For those who may not too confident about expressing their sexual orientation or gender identity this is moment to cherish.

It's not often we get to celebrate who we are, but when we do it is very powerful.





## Alistair's Photo



## Dancing Paramedics

In 2017, after Brighton Pride, one of the top ten highlights was described by one LGBT newspaper as, 'the dancing paramedics'.

That year, and ever since, a flash mob style routine is done to the song YMCA. If you've never 150 ambulance flinging their hands in the air and swishing their hips simultaneously, you've missed out!

Now it seems the dancing paramedics are a real thing which people look at for. I'm considering a career change and becoming an agent.





Kirsten's Photo



## Gays Expected!

They say a picture paints a thousand words, so when this fabulous sign appeared on social media, it was one I couldn't resist for the 'family album'.

Brighton Pride is one of the most amazing Pride events in the summer calendar. If you haven't ever joined us for the parade, you really don't know what you have been missing!

For me it is one of the most inclusive events. The people of Brighton are so welcoming and you can really feel the love for those of us lucky enough to work in the NHS and the Ambulance Service.





## Alistair's Photo

**'We are  
victors, not  
victims.'**

La Chun Lindsay



## Powerful Words

One of my favourite speeches from our conferences was La Chun Lindsay speaking at Brighton in 2017. She described her life challenges; growing up in rural America and moving to Wales to challenging the issue of being black and lesbian in a male dominated workforce.

Despite this La Chun became the Managing Director of GE Aviation. In her powerful speech she said; 'We are victors, not victims'. I have held those words ever since, and the simple belief that we can be successful and make change happen. If we don't stand up and make a difference, who will?





## Inspirational Speakers

Some of the wonderful speakers from our conference. Caroline Paige, Tracy Myhill, Helen Belcher and Rob Berkeley. We have been keen to explore intersectionality right from the start.





## Connections the Matter

We are proud to have worked with a wide selection of organisations in these first five years and been supported by a whole load more. What's more, we fully intend to make many connections as our work continues.





Alistair's Photo



## Cefnogi Pobl Draws

One of our most successful publications is the credit card sized Supporting Trans People z-card leaflet which offers ambulance staff practical guidance, understanding of correct terminology and unique clinical presentations.

Gareth, one of committee members from Wales, is not unusually small, but rather we had some large display cards made to celebrate the launch of the Welsh language version.

So far it is translated into four languages with more literally on the cards!





Kirsten's Photo



## Lessons in Origami

One of the funniest experiences of the last five years was the day before our third conference in Manchester.

Alistair arrived at the University with boxes and boxes of flat packed conference folders, which were in no fit state to hand out to delegates the following day.

Never one to be backward in coming forward, we rallied the troops, including the Chief Exec of North East Ambulance Service, Yvonne Ormston. This picture captures her 'joy' at what can only be described as the most complex origami trick ever.

Never again!





Kirsten's Photo



## Conference Nerves

Ahh, there we are in Manchester again, only this time we had plumped for a much bigger and far more intimidating venue. As is always the case Peter Cripps, our photographer, is never far away especially when we are just about to launch something exciting like a conference!

This photo was captured literally minutes before the event began, and reminds us of a special moment. We don't mind admitting that opening a conference is a little scary but when Michael, who was Interim Chief at North West Ambulance Service at the time, asked us, 'Are you nervous because I am?', everything seemed okay and we just about managed a smile.





Alistair's Photo



## The Wedding Cake

Every time we've done a conference we've been absolutely delighted at the hospitality of the host Trust. In Manchester we really loved the 'wedding cake' that appeared in the morning break. Kirsten and I were asked to make the first cut.

Being an LGBT conference we didn't want to appear too much like a couple and this little demonstration seemed like a good idea.

I wish to make it very clear that no Deputy Chair's were harmed in the taking of this photograph!





## Kirsten's Photo



## Getting into Trouble

Once a year those committee members working on projects, head to the National Emergency Services Museum in Sheffield for a two-day task and finish event.

Alistair and I are often found having our photos taken in somewhat compromising situations as you've seen before with the wedding cake scenario, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that at some point the old bill would catch up with us!

Well at Sheffield this wonderful bobby did just that and took us for a trip to the cells, thankfully the committee raised our bail and we got out in time for our train home!





Kirsten's Photo



## Good Yorkshire Grub

Alistair has often gone on about Yorkshire hospitality and it's not unusual for us to have a bit of good old fashioned North-South banter, so when he said, 'How about pie, peas and gravy for lunch?', I did a double take.

No, he wasn't joking. He was in fact saying it with a stony seriousness, which I realised meant now might be the time to question this one.

So in for a penny, in for a pound (quite literally in this case) it was agreed that this was the lunch we would supply for our task and finish workshop and two words sums it right up; absolutely lush!



Alistair's Photo



## Gold Star of Life Awards

This is a very special photo for me. During our third conference Kirsten and I wanted to thank the many people that have supported the network. We decided to do an impromptu, and unrehearsed, award ceremony.

We were amazed and heartened how seriously people took this and afterwards there were requests to get a photo with everyone on it.

I absolutely love this photo. Staff networks are about having pride and bring people together. This is certainly one moment that encapsulates just that.





## Kirsten's Photo



## Conference Photos

Birmingham and our fourth conference, which hosted by West Midlands Ambulance Service. Each year we have grown both in the numbers of delegates attending, but also in challenges.

We've learnt to tackle difficult and sensitive material and now embrace those opportunities, so to see this wonderful photograph of all our delegates in Birmingham makes me so proud.

We have always wanted to open up our conferences to others, so for our colleagues from St John Ambulance being up front and prominent in this photo, is just wonderful and is another aspect which demonstrates just how far we have come as a network.





Alistair's Photo



## Development Days

One thing everyone on the committee is passionate about is providing support to staff and patients. This really showed at our first task and finish event, which was also Time to Talk Day.

This group photo says it all. We stand together to ensure we help people maintain good mental health, and will always be available to catch people when things fall out of place.

Our committee is always learning and often because of the passion and commitment of people who want to make a difference.



## Kirsten's Photo



## Task and Finish Days

We have had some amazing experiences at our task and finish days.

Now a regular date in the diary (Covid-19 allowing), members of the committee who are working on projects on behalf of the network gather in Sheffield, in the midst of winter, sometimes with snow on the ground.

The National Emergency Services Museum has hosted us for the last two years, opening the museum to us with full access to their artefacts. Such special memories of our past, present and future plans.





Alistair's Photo



## Be Yourself!

Here's Jonny from East Midlands Ambulance Service perfectly demonstrating what we're all about. Be yourself, because doing so is honest and fun and real.

The great thing here is that I know every single one of the ambulance Chief Executive's are fully supporting our work to make services safe places for LGBT staff. We are striding towards the day when no-one should have to hide their identity.

The decoration on the ambulance says it perfectly; 'Let your love show'.





## Kirsten's Photo



## The Committee

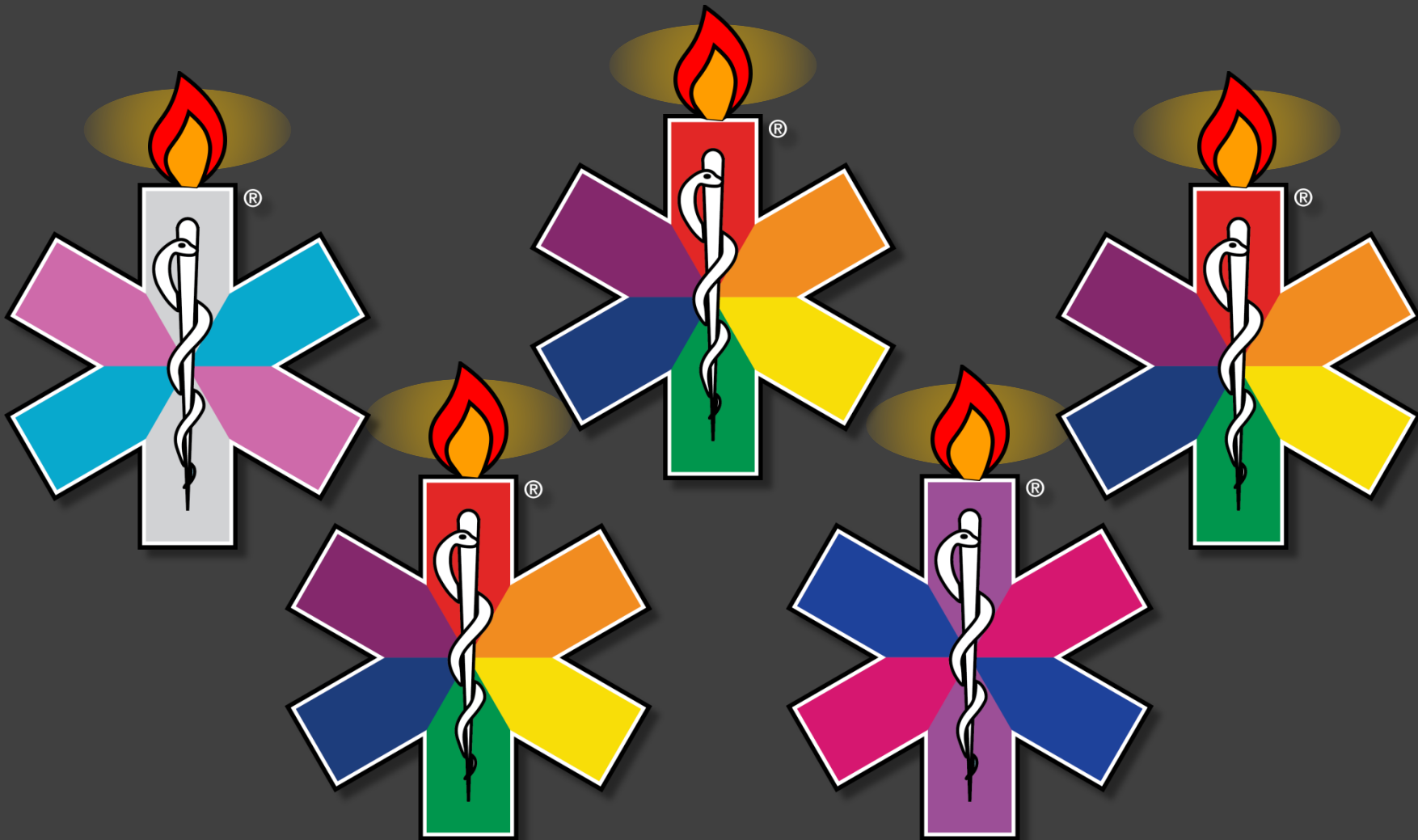
Well that brings us full circle, from our humble beginnings on the swelteringly hot day in Brighton in July 2015 right up to 2020.

We've come together from all corners of the British Isles to form what I hope you recognise as a truly successful National Network.

We couldn't do it without the dedication and commitment of each and every one of the committee members, both past and present.

So it's a great big thank you from Alistair and myself to everyone that has stepped forward to make us what we are today.





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