Role Models Guide
Celebrating LGBTUA+ at Warwick
INTRODUCTION

At Warwick, many people are happy to bring their whole selves to their work and studies, and they know well that who they are is important to what they do in their lives. Being yourself allows you to be open with your peers and colleagues and form stronger relationships with those around you, regardless of your background or identity.

As a member of the LGBTUA+ community, Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Undefined, Asexual or otherwise, to feel uncertain of how your peers and seniors will react to your wider identity can be a daunting experience. Worrying about whether or not you can be out can have an impact on your wellbeing as well as your ability to be productive and efficient in your work or studies. For example, some will keep their sexual orientation or choice of partner private, resulting in more distant relationships with their colleagues or peers and a greater disconnection from their work life. This isn’t to say that all LGBTUA+ individuals must be out to be themselves, but a supportive environment for everyone is important.

This is why strong role models at Warwick are critical. They show the LGBTUA+ and wider community that having the confidence to be yourself and focusing on being the very best at what you do matters. By embracing our diversity we are stronger, and supporting the people around us ensures that everyone at Warwick can reach their full potential. This guide tells the stories of a small group of LGBTUA+ persons made up of students, staff and alumni who have chosen to share their experiences of Warwick with you. Everyone deserves to feel safe and supported in their work and studies, and this guide aims to demonstrate that you most certainly can at the University of Warwick.

Ross Jagers, PhD student
Department of Chemistry, Spring 2016

I’m one of those career academics who was drawn in to teaching and research during my first degree and then PhD. Whilst I’ve spent the bulk of my career to date in a single institution, I’ve been fortunate enough to work in a range of different locations, including Asia, North America and the UK. In my last role, I was Provost at the University of Nottingham’s Malaysia Campus, home to about 5000 students, and I’d been working there for around 3 years when I was offered the role of Provost at Warwick. In contrast with my role in Malaysia - where I was responsible for the entire campus - my role at Warwick requires that I focus on the academic strategy of the University and the overall resourcing of academic activity. Naturally, I work very closely with all of our academic departments as well as with a range of professional services, most notable Finance and Human Resources. The title “Provost” is one that is unfamiliar to many people and so I often describe myself as the Deputy Vice Chancellor. And I do feel very honoured to be in this role – it’s a great privilege to be part of the leadership team for such a great University.

Like so many of us, I spend a large proportion of my life working, and so where I work and the people I work with are important to me – I am sure most people feel the same. Treating others with respect and kindness and being treated the same way in return feels like a very reasonable expectation to have at Warwick. I feel strongly that kindness in particular should not be seen as a weakness; concern for the well-being of others is not weakness. Kind people can still be analytical and focused; kind people are perfectly capable of exercising tight control; kind people can still take difficult decisions. They simply do so in a way that respects individuals, is supportive, constructive and compassionate.

One of the things I have really appreciated about my working life in higher education, both elsewhere and here at Warwick, is the understanding that Universities are about making the most of the talent of their people - all of them! Ever since I became aware of my sexuality I have never really felt pressure to discuss or explain it at work, and I have never felt a need to hide anything. On the contrary, at work, I have always felt entirely comfortable talking about my partner and I’ve always enjoyed the same sort of laughter and jokes about relationships that happen naturally in the workplace. We did get married recently, although really we were simply swapping a civil partnership for a wedding certificate. We’d celebrated our partnership ten years previously and so didn’t really feel the need to do it again.

When I arrived at Warwick, I was struck by how welcoming, friendly and positive my colleagues were, and by how comfortable I was made to feel. And although she is an infrequent visitor to campus, I think Caryl would say exactly the same! I truly hope that everyone across campus - whether that be our support staff, our students, or our visitors - feel the same way. As Warwick continues to expand its presence across the globe we will work hard to make sure this principle remains steadfast.

Professor Christine Ennew
Provost
Rachel Buckley-Taylor
University of Warwick Students Union, University of Warwick

I’m a third year biology student and the LGBTUA+ officer of the University of Warwick Students Union. My role is to look after and organise campaigns for LGBTUA+ persons and to provide a platform for LGBTUA+ people to express themselves freely in any way they wish. In the Students union we understand that dealing with personal sexuality and gender issues can be difficult, so we’re here to offer advice and support.

Though I’m integrated into the LGBT community, my closest friends are of Christian background. I like spending time with people that might not necessarily be interested in the issues LGBTUA+ persons face and enjoy educating my friends in those issues. I understand the fears of the LGBTUA+ people that have faced adversity in their lives, who want to feel safe and secure at University.

It’s totally valid to feel this way however for me it’s a passion to teach people.

In my experience, everyone at Warwick is really accepting and I have many students approach me about my work surrounding welfare and campaigns. It’s nice that they don’t just approach me, the LGBTUA+ officer, but other sabbatical officers of the Students union, too.

For me, my success has been down to hard work. From a young age I’ve been comfortable with who I am and what I want to do with my life; if you have this purpose it’s easier to facilitate the success you want. My Aunt, a Professor of History of Art, is an inspiring and forward thinking person who knows what to say and when to say it. This is what I aspire to be, especially when trying to educate someone; shouting is never an effective means of communication. Everyone needs people to motivate them to do more, and if you can do what you think is right and help other people, that’s great. I’ve met people struggling with their sexuality and it can be awful, especially if you’re also trying to reconcile with your cultural background. It’s not always about coming out, it’s about feeling comfortable. If all you need is to come out to yourself, that’s fine. Sometimes it isn’t possible to come out to your family and that doesn’t make you any less LGBT. Your sexuality is only one part of you and you don’t have to be proactive in the LGBT community to be an inspirational LGBT person.

Inspector Lou Provart
South Norfolk District Command, Norfolk Constabulary

As an operational Police Inspector with the Norfolk Constabulary and the highest ranking out gay male in the force, I’ve worked to bring about transformational change in my role as lead for the Norfolk & Suffolk LGBT+ Police Network. For LGBT police officers and staff to be better served and supported, they needed both LGBT role models around the county, and senior Executive support from the organisation in order to change the culture of policing to a more inclusive environment. In some significant first steps for our LGBTUA+ communities in Norfolk, we’ve had the support of the Chief Constable to raise the LGBT equality rainbow flag during Norwich Pride day, during LGBT History Month as well as the Chief Officers also marching in uniform at the Pride Parade.

Our attention is now turned to our regional LGBT network steering group leading efforts to join up Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Essex into a “Policing with Pride” eastern hub, in order to help share best practice in supporting LGBT staff. This allows us to work on improving the service policing provides for its LGBT communities. To further this end and for greater networking and collaboration across the country, I have led the development of a National LGBT police network which was established in 2015, fulfilling the role of Co-Chair of this national LGBT organisation. I have also addressed the national Superintendent’s Conference, alongside Chief Constable Giles York and Stonewall Chief Executive Ruth Hunt, appealing for more senior role models in policing and for them to foster a more open culture by supporting people to be themselves at work - a significant event for a middle ranking officer to attend and talk about their experiences of being gay in the police.

Between 2009 and 2013, I was a student at the Warwick Business School studying for an MSc in Police Leadership and Management, a bespoke course delivered by Professor Keith Grint, lending much of its work from the MPA / MBA course delivered by Professor Keith Grint, Police Leadership and Management, a bespoke course delivered by Professor Keith Grint, Warwick Business School examining how the leadership and management style influences leadership style. The MSc has also given me opportunities to explore how sexuality influences leadership style, and in turn how that improves community policing to all our LGBT citizens locally.

“My time at Warwick Business School has helped me to develop a new public value ethos within police leadership, and has given me opportunities to explore how sexuality influences leadership style.”
I’ve struggled with writing this, not because I struggle with who I am but for me, I’m just me. I’ve worked at the University for 20 years and love the work ethos, atmosphere and most of all they have always treated me well. I have moved through different roles, from admissions to running the student ambassador scheme to graduation to working with adult returners to learning at CLL to finally Taught Programmes Manager in Mathematics. During this time, I also studied for a part-time degree and graduated from Warwick in 2011 with a 2.1 in Health and Social Policy. It’s been brilliant - throughout this time my partner Pauline has been by my side, supported my work, my studies and my chosen family. Oh, and for the last 15 years we have also fostered for Coventry City Council and our girls have been with us for the last 11 years. Does this make me a role model for the LGBT community, I’m not sure! I’m certainly not defined by who I am, I’d like to think that’s what I do, the person I am and how I treat people that might make people consider me as a role model. I’m not saying that at times it doesn’t feel a bit difficult. You can worry that people may not see you for who you are but just that you are gay! I wouldn’t want to offend anyone and that’s not to say that I’m embarrassed or ashamed of who I am, I don’t feel the need to label myself by my sexual orientation but as a human I don’t want people to feel uncomfortable because of me. That would be the same whatever I was, whoever I was with and in any circumstances. It’s so important to be comfortable with who you are and try to be yourself. Honesty first, always! I don’t hide who I am and always talk openly about my family and partner. Why wouldn’t I? It’s who I am. I’ve never felt the need to hide who I am or who I’m with, I don’t apologise for who I am but I am mindful of people’s feelings. Across the board no matter who you are, who you love, this University has always made it very easy for me to be me and for that, I am very thankful.

Dr. Neil Bentley
CEO, WorldSkills UK and University Council Lay Member

Being authentic in life and work is challenging for everyone but it is also important, especially for those of us who are LGBT. I didn’t realise myself how important it was to really understand yourself until I was lucky enough to take part in an authentic leadership programme at Harvard Business School. I had always been “out” at work to colleagues and as a result of striving to be authentic I understood how being more honest about who you are as a whole makes you a better colleague and leader, who happens to be gay. And it is backed up by research which shows that if you are happy and out at work you are a third more productive. When you are open about yourself and stop hiding an important part of yourself - stop policing your pronouns when talking about your personal life - you are building trust into your relationships with colleagues and clients which go a very long way in making you more successful. I learned all this when I was deputy head of the CBI, the UK’s largest business lobby and deputy chair of Stonewall, the LGBT equality charity and it has all stood me in good stead. As CEO of OUTstanding, the organisation which promotes LGBT leadership in business, I was able to work with many successful business leaders in supporting them to be better role models for others in their businesses. With 62% of graduates going back into the closet when they start work, many businesses know they need to do better at being LGBT inclusive to attract the best talent. That’s why it’s important for universities like Warwick to nurture diversity, inclusion and self confidence in its students. When I joined the Council of the University I wanted to bring to bear all my past experience of business and the economy as well as a diversity perspective, to which I know the Council is fully committed. In my current role as CEO of Find a Future, a charity promoting apprenticeships and vocational training, my sexual orientation isn’t an issue at all. If we allow ourselves, we can all succeed in work and life, not in spite of who we are, but because of it.

“If we allow ourselves, we can all succeed in work and life, not in spite of who we are, but because of it.”
LGBT+ identities were never an issue and I had several other lesbian and gay colleagues; what was important was doing excellent research and making the best use of the different skills that people had. I became more confident and relaxed at work once I began my transition which made me more effective, and I found that my enjoyment of my job increased...a virtuous circle. Although I had contacts in the wider LGBT+ community I didn’t know anyone else who had transitioned as a member of staff at Warwick, so when I became involved in the Staff Network Group I set up an informal contact scheme to enable colleagues to discuss issues in confidence away from their day-to-day work environment. Outside of work I became a volunteer mentor at a local LGBTQ youth group where I used my experiences to support others. I believe it is very difficult to reach our full potential if we are unable to express our genuine selves. It is hard to relate to other people when you are feeling self-conscious or worried about keeping something hidden – it’s a distraction and a barrier. It’s important to me to see people who are open about their sexuality or gender identity in any organisation – from an employer to a sports club – that I am, or want to be, part of. It gives me confidence that I can achieve what I want to as myself. Senior LGBT+ figures are also important as they send a powerful message about the culture of an organisation. And whether LGBT+ or not, I admire people who are quietly themselves without compromise, who find original ways of doing things.

Prof. dr. ir. Stefan Bon
Department of Chemistry, University of Warwick

In 1998, I arrived from the Netherlands as a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Chemistry, following which I started my research group working closely with many different industrial and academic collaborators throughout my career. I was out to my colleagues as soon as I joined and was comfortable in my research team at a time when my sexuality wasn’t so accepted in the UK. Of course, things have greatly improved now, but with some groups of the Warwick campus community there remain pressure points on equality. This shows me that we still have some way to go.

My goal to become a Professor was a long term ambition and I chose to do things a bit differently to my colleagues. It took me longer to get there, but now I’m here it’s been worth it. I’m very happy with the way my research team works, it’s very important that people can be themselves and get along with each other, especially when they’ve come from different backgrounds. I find that the way I respond to people helps create this atmosphere, and this is the most valuable aspect of my team: I hope that as an open and genuine leader I inspire both my research and undergraduate students to be the same, and hope that they are always able to say what they think.

Professionally, I’ve always looked up to people that genuinely care about their people, for example my friend and Australian colleague Bob Gilbert, who is also an exceptional scientist. I also looked up to my PhD supervisor, Anton German, who always gave me the freedom and opportunity to be as good as I wanted to be - something I try to do with my own people, empowering them.

My sexuality is important to me but it’s just one piece of my identity. It’s who I am and a part of me I need to protect, especially if other people do not share these values. There will always be groups resistant to equality so it’s important that the younger LGBTUA+ people at Warwick have role models to look up to and rely on.

Dr. Ben Douglas
Technician, School of Chemical and Process Engineering, University of Leeds

I originally moved to the Department of Chemistry as a postdoctoral researcher, later becoming a Facilities Manager for the Science City Research Alliance working with colleagues and equipment in other departments, both at Warwick and the University of Birmingham. After six years in this role, I now work at the University of Leeds running labs for a Centre for Doctoral Training in the School of Chemical and Process Engineering.

During my time at Warwick I transitioned from female to male, which I suppose was when I became part of the community. My department and HR were wonderfully supportive of my transition. The university has policies and procedures in place that were very helpful, but my colleagues went above and beyond these to make me feel supported.
Rashanne Coke  
Specialist in Banking and Research, Thomson Reuters

From 2010 to 2014 I studied History and Culture and Spanish at Warwick, after which I completed a 15 month graduate scheme at Thomson Reuters.

The LGBTUA+ community at Warwick was a huge part of my development as an LGBT person and I’m lucky enough to say that some of the people I met in my first year are now friends for life. Reconciling my intersecting identities as a Black, bisexual woman was definitely a process, but Warwick provided me with a safe space where I was able to develop what it meant to be my authentic self. Although it wasn’t always easy and did not represent the ‘real’ world, the Warwick bubble gave me the foundations of what I sought in the workplace.

Had I not been involved in Warwick Pride, I might not have experienced the value of having the space to be my true self. I have been fortunate enough to have found this at Thomson Reuters. The company’s commitment to recognising the importance in providing an open, accepting environment for LGBTUA+ folk, women and people of colour alike was one of the things that attracted me to Reuters. During my first year at the company, I co-founded the Bi Engagement think tank, which culminated in the first Bi Visibility Day Celebration/Panel in partnership with Stonewall. The network put me forward for the Stonewall Young Leaders Programme, which I successfully completed in September 2015 and found professionally invaluable.

I’m fortunate to have two great role models at work; the current co-chair of Pride at Work Emma Cusdin, and ex-co-chair Nicholas Creswell. Both are regularly featured on lists of top LGBTUA+ executives and have inspired me to bring inclusivity for LGBTUA+ persons out of solely a HR agenda and onto the agenda of all departments. For these two highly regarded champions of LGBTUA+ inclusion to have the time to professionally guide me is something I am very thankful of.

Federico Floris  
PhD student, Department of Chemistry, University of Warwick

I’m a native Italian completing my second year of PhD studies in the department of Chemistry. I’ve been involved in the LGBT Staff and Postgraduate network since its conception two years ago. Initially I was not open about my sexuality in my workplace. It’s said that when you speak a different language you change a part of your personality as you cannot express yourself the way you wish to; you’re not able to be seen the way you want to be by those you try to connect with. I was already changing other parts of myself in order to adapt to an entirely new lifestyle, and limiting myself, possibly as a result of my repressed upbringing in conservative Italy. Whatever the reason, I eventually knew that I could not continue to hide.

Securing my PhD position was a result of me being able to be my genuine self - my confidence in who I was allowed me to take that step. Ultimately, whenever I can be myself the situation improves. If others can see my true self I can be confident and achieve my best. Sometimes the people around me don’t want to talk about LGBT issues, but the fact that I can be myself is a way to lead by example. It’s not something that I should hide, it’s something that’s part of my life.

Since joining Warwick, I have recruited a wider pool of people into the LGBT Staff and Postgraduate network and being myself has helped me in these networking events. Being authentic is being honest with yourself, a trait I very much value. I wish there were more varied role models in the LGBT community because we are a wide range of people that are under-represented. My life would have been much easier if I had had a relatable gay role model while growing up, and I know many LGBTUA+ people feel the same.

I believe that being part of a minority has shaped me and made me a more empathetic person. It encourages me to be the best person I can and to help others where possible. This is something I hope to achieve in my professional life, using my research to benefit others, as well as in my personal life as I try to treat others with the best they deserve.
My radical academic research (in logic, mathematics, & computing), coming out as a gay man (in 1989), embracing Buddhism (1995) and now exploring my possibilities as a transgender person are all ways of exploring life as I truly am.

For many people being transgender is being in transition. While fully accepting and respecting their position, I do not see my transgender status as being the right female mind in the wrong male body. For me, this unnecessarily limits transition to being a binary gender of either accepting one’s status quo male mind in a male body, or, crafting a new female body for one’s status quo female mind. For me, being transgender is to find & live the best combination of both male and female gender identities. I feel that my upbringing inadvertently ran me into a brick wall of a misconceived asexual introvert unable to develop normally as an outward looking scientific gay male. For neither my (now late) beloved parents nor for myself was such an idea thinkable in 1960s Norwich. Now they have each passed away, I feel more able to embrace my true trans/hijra self.

The first generation of younger people has finally been born empowered to become whoever they truly are. An unimaginable contrast to my own childhood when society was still so sadly imprisoned by the frozen wasteland of emotional self-denial. I have no anger or bitterness for a past that both never was and could never have been. I have no doubt that each person in my family, especially my beloved parents, did the best they possibly could at the time. I pray that all parents of younger LGBTQ people can come to understand and to celebrate in the triumphant happiness of all concerned.

I have always seen myself, my work, and my place in the world as a whole. Due to consequences of my frail health I have requested and agreed with my employer, the University of Warwick, to retire early at the age of 60. However, as Baldrick from Blackadder would put it, I have a cunning plan. I plan to start a second & part-time PhD in Philosophy. I have many outstanding questions from my interests in logic, mathematics, & computation which I want to study in the holistic framework of philosophy. The plan is cunning as, at the end of the day, this is a personal project.
I think it’s great that we have an LGBT staff network at Warwick because it gives us space and the opportunity to meet people from all across the University. My identity as an LGBT+ person is relatively incidental to my identity in the workplace and my colleagues are all very accepting - I find Warwick a comfortable place to be myself. Perhaps more importantly, it’s a place where we are surrounded by diversity of all sorts – not only LGBT+ but so many cultures and backgrounds.

Since finishing my PhD, I have worked mainly at Warwick, including projects in History, Life Sciences and Physics; the Library; and now in postgraduate recruitment. I feel that the inclusiveness of Warwick is what makes a postgraduate degree what it is; so many of our courses look at intercultural exchange, and thrive on people coming here with myriad perspectives.

Probably my first LGBT+ role model in my teens was a preacher who was gay and spoke publicly about inclusion. He opened my eyes to possibilities; today my role models are now often also friends. The people I most respect know when to speak up calmly but unswervingly when they feel it is right. Importantly, you’re not being inauthentic by not immediately disclosing your sexuality to everyone you meet. To me Pride emanates rather than shouts – it’s being happy with who you are, and comfortable with sharing this as just another facet of your ‘you-ness’!

Dr. Stephen Soanes
Postgraduate recruitment, University of Warwick

I arrived at Warwick in 1998 as a fresher, two months after I first came out to my family. At this time, I was struggling with my faith and my new sense of gay identity, as well as the usual settling-in issues that come with moving away to university. Ultimately, coming out for me was made easier thanks to supportive friends and family, but it was finding new networks that has really made it happen.

In these first years at Warwick I was initially less comfortable than I am now - I was putting up barriers that reinforced a sense of distance and shyness, even though I enjoyed all the (mainly straight!) nights out and increasingly got immersed in my History BA. By my third year, I had started to meet other LGBT+ people, and while I lost my faith, I gained likeminded friends and confidence. My undergraduate years at Warwick (especially a synthpop society and Pride) were important to making that happen.

Sandra Beaufoy and Claire Algar
Equality and Diversity team and LGBTUA+ Allies, University of Warwick

Warwick University is proud of its diverse community of staff and students and is committed to ensuring there is equality of opportunity for all, fostered in an environment of mutual respect and dignity. The Equality and Diversity team strive to make Warwick a safe and productive environment for everyone and work to protect against many forms of discrimination, including that towards LGBT+ persons.

We understand that in order for us all to reach our full potential we must feel confident enough to bring our whole selves to our work or studies, not fearing discrimination or disadvantage based on who we are. Warwick is a diverse community, made up of many different people from many different backgrounds. By working with University management, departmental leaders and staff networks, we promote equality and diversity in every area of University life, so that all staff and students can succeed with us. In collaboration with the LGBT staff and postgraduate network, we’ve celebrated LGBT History Month, promoted Gender Sexual Orientation workshops for staff offered by the University Counselling Service and delivered LGBT identity seminars, both to celebrate our LGBTUA+ community and foster good relations between those who share this protected characteristic and those who do not. We hope that Warwick is a safe and supportive place for our LGBTUA+ community and we will continue to ensure that this is the case.

In fact, radical inclusivity, beyond politeness and rhetoric, is at the heart of both Stuart and Kate’s faith and ministries. Both Stuart and Kate affirm “we believe in a God that is inclusive, diverse and dynamic and who respects both the integrity and uniqueness of each person.”

They delight in celebrating that diversity across our university community and are committed to the full and equal inclusion of the LGBT+ community in every aspect of life and faith.

You don’t need to be a Christian or even believe in God to meet with Stuart or Kate. They promise to respect your own faith position (or lack of), aiming to meet with each student and staff member in a way that is most appropriate and helpful. Kate and Stuart assert, “this isn’t about a new wishy-washy-religiosity. This is about our taking seriously the call to follow the generous, confident, inclusive example of Jesus Christ.”

Reverend Kate Pearson and Reverend Dr. Stuart Jennings
LGBTUA+ Allies, University of Warwick

Support at Warwick

SUPPORT AT WARWICK

Stuart and Kate, Chaplains at the University, spend much of their time listening and supporting both staff and students exploring their identities within the demanding space of academia. They can be found in the University’s Chaplaincy, a place where everyone on campus, whatever their beliefs, can find space to pause, reflect and be heard.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY
For more information about equality and diversity at Warwick, visit warwick.ac.uk/services/equalops

LGBT STAFF NETWORK
To find out more about the events and activities of the LGBT Staff Network, visit warwick.ac.uk/services/equalops/news/lgbt_staff_network

WARWICK PRIDE SOCIETY
To find out about the activities, events and support provided by Warwick Pride, the University’s LGBTUA+ student society, visit warwickpride.org

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES
Warwick offers a support and welfare structure to help with all kinds of different problems. To find out more about this provision, visit warwick.ac.uk/services/student-support-services

STUDENTS’ UNION ADVICE CENTRE
For information on the support that Warwick SU can provide, visit warwicksu.com/advice

WARWICK NIGHTLINE
Nightline, a confidential non-advisory listening service, is available during term time and provides support for anyone that needs to talk. Find out more about them at warwick.nightline.ac.uk

WARWICK CHAPLAINCY
For more information about the support that Warwick Chaplaincy offers, visit warwick.ac.uk/services/chaplaincy

COVENTRY & WARWICKSHIRE FRIEND
Coventry & Warwickshire Friend is an LGBT Charity that provides confidential information, advice & support, socials and befriending services to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans (LGBT) people in Coventry & Warwickshire via its telephone helpline & support group. Find out more at cwfriend.co.uk

STONEDWALL
Stonewall is a national lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans equality charity that campaigns, provides support and runs events across Britain. Find out more about their work at stonewall.org.uk/about-us