

PATIENTS' FORUM NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2019

PATIENTS' FORUM

FOR THE LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE LAS SAFE & EFFECTIVE SERVICES FOR LONDON'S LGBTQ COMMUNITIES

LGBT FORUM

Jules Lockett, Alex Ewings and Lee Hyett-Powell from the LAS LGBT Forum presented to our September 2019 meeting. This was the first joint event between the LGBT/LAS Forum and the Patients' Forum. The LGBT Forum described as being:

- Focussed on the needs of both staff and patients.
- Focussed on the cultural transformation of the LAS, e.g. focussing on how safe people feel to 'come out' in the LAS.

FEEDBACK

Jules explained the importance of getting feedback from LAS colleagues and from patients about their experience of the LAS in relation to their sexuality and the importance of promoting shared learning.

SAFEGUARDS

Members discussed the safeguards that were required when people discuss traumatic events in public spaces, and the need to give advance notice of such intentions and interactions.

DEALING WITH STIGMA

A participant described his own experience as a bisexual man and the associated trauma, mental health problems and cultural issues that he had faced. He explained that issues in relation to his sexuality could not be discussed within his family, because they would not be considered to be acceptable, and could not therefore be discussed openly. He said that he came out as bisexual in 2011 but had never told his family – except for his wife. He described the trauma, stigma and negative associations he had feared.

ENHANCING PATIENT CARE

Lee explained how important it is for staff to feel comfortable at work with colleagues and patients, to be mindful of their sexuality and the sexuality of others, and how consistent this is with working effectively to enhance patient care. He said that where staff feel confident and safe about being out, that the working environment is a happier and more successful one. He added that staff in the LAS can have modified name badges with the LGBT rainbow image.

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IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

Peter Scott-Presland described the importance of opening doors for LGBT people, e.g. training for older LGBT people, synergy, the Purple List – a play about older LGBT men with dementia, and the Rainbow Alliance. He explained importance of staff training to ensure the high standards of dignity and respect.

The Rainbow Alliance - NHS Leadership Academy

Rainbow Alliance is a network of staff, service users and carers who are all committed to enhancing the quality of the services, **which Leeds and York Partnership Foundation Trust deliver to LGBT+ communities.**

www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk › [lgbt](#) › [the-rainbow-alliance](#)

FREEDOM TO SPEAK-UP GUARDIAN

Mike Roberts asked if there was any evidence of bullying and harassment of LGBT staff in the LAS, bearing in mind the negative CQC report on this issue at SECAMB. Jules replied that they have no direct experience of bullying and harassment in the LAS, but they are aware of the problem in other ambulance services. She added that the LAS has an excellent 'Freedom to Speak Up Guardian' available to all staff who wish to raise issues about the behaviour of colleagues or managers. Jules added that local station managers should be positive and welcoming if staff have experienced harassment as a result of being LGBTQ, but in practice staff do not generally report on their experiences of their managers.

SPEAKING OUT

Sister Josephine emphasized the importance of people experiencing bullying and harassment as a result of being LGBTQ being able to speak out freely and without fear. She said it was very important that the LGBT Forum has been formed to deal with these issues.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Antony Tiernan, Head of LAS Communications was asked how he would ensure that the LAS is seen as an LGBTQ positive organisation? He said the fundamental issue is to create effective internal communications, because if internal communications are not effective, communications externally will be handicapped. He added that 80 LAS staff attended the Pride March, which provided important visibility for the LAS.

NEEDS OF TRANSGENDER PATIENTS

Alex said that LAS must be equipped, and staff trained, to deal with the needs of these patients, especially those who are going through gender transition. This could include skills in recognising the symptoms of gastroenteritis and hormone related conditions. Staff also need to feel comfortable to ask patients about patients' transgender history. He added that all front-line staff need to be open and sensitive to the need of all patients.

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WORKING TOGETHER – LGBT FORUM AND PATIENTS' FORUM

Joseph Healy, President of the Forum said that he was very pleased to have received an invitation to attend a meeting of the LAS LGBT Forum on October 3rd. He said that the LAS LGBT Forum has six priorities during this year, which are related to meeting the needs of patients and staff and being able to take appropriate action to resolve issues. One of the current objectives is to ensure that the mentors of front-line staff understand any special needs in relation to staff who are transgender.

<https://www.patientsforumlas.net/meeting-papers-2019.html>