

# NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY – 2023

National coming out day is an annual celebration on 11th October. It is an LGBTQ+ awareness day which is celebrated to raise visibility and support for the LGBTQ+ community.



# NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY

Coming out is a unique experience for all LGBTQ+ people. It is something that many LGBTQ+ individuals do lots of times in their lives, whether it is to friends, family, colleagues, peers, or casual acquaintances. Coming out may not feel like a big deal for some, however for others coming out once or repeatedly can be a big challenge. The decision to come out is deeply personal and should always be made on an individual's own terms and timeline. It is important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to come out to someone about your sexual orientation or gender identity.

National Coming Out Day is not a day to pressure anyone to come out, or to shame people who haven't done so. Many individuals worry about coming out for a variety of reasons, such as facing discrimination, safety concerns, bullying, religious or cultural beliefs, privacy, and fear of rejection. It is important to recognise that coming out is not something that all LGBTQ+ people can do safely. However, seeing others come out can offer a sense of solidarity, validation, feelings of hope, and can provide role models for others.

We hope that by us talking about coming out, you are able to celebrate being your authentic self, and support others with their own experiences.

National coming out day is a great opportunity to raise the visibility of LGBTQ+ people, strengthen our sense of community, and embrace the joy and pride of being openly LGBTQ+.

# COMING OUT TIPS

Below are some resources and links that contain information, advice, and tips on coming out.

- **Stonewall** – Coming out as an adult
- **Human Rights Campaign** – Various coming out guides and resources
- **The Trevor Project** - Coming out: A handbook for young LGBTQ people
- **The Proud Trust** - Coming out
- **LGBT Youth Scotland** – A coming out guide for lesbian, gay, and bisexual young people
- **LGBT Youth Scotland** – Trans, non-binary, and questioning coming out guide for young people
- **FFLAG** – How do I tell my parents I'm transgender?
- **LGBT Foundation** – Coming out
- **Icebreakers Manchester** – Coming out tips
- **Allsorts Youth Project** - A 'coming out' resource for young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual (+) or unsure/questioning their sexual orientation
- **Restless** – Coming out later in life
- **Sexual Health D&G** – Coming out





# COMING OUT STORIES

Talking about coming out and sharing our stories can help to strengthen our community and support one another with this experience. Below are some interviews with people in our LGBTQ+ community here at the University of Chester. These include questions about coming out, with some personal responses and advice.

## UNIVERSITY STAFF

**Name:** Lucy Kelly

**Pronouns:** She/her



### **What does being out mean to you?**

For me being out is about being comfortable to be myself, and living my life freely without feeling the need to hide those aspects. It also helps me to support other LGBTQ+ people.

### **Do you remember first realising your identity?**

Looking back I knew I was lesbian for most of my life, however as sexual orientation isn't something that was talked about often in my life, I didn't truly know it was an option or come to terms with who I am until the end of high school.

### **How did you approach first telling someone? What made you choose that person to tell?**

I knew who I wanted to tell and had thought lots about how it may go, but I didn't plan what I was going to say. I told a good friend as I trusted them and felt safe to be open. We were hanging out after school and I brought it up as casually as I could.

### **How did you feel?**

I felt relief for saying it out loud. I knew my friend would be supportive, so felt silly for how nervous I was about telling them! I was also worried that it would change our friendship, but quickly realised it hadn't and I felt they knew me better for it.

### **What advice would you give someone wanting to come out?**

Do not rush or pressure yourself into telling someone if you don't feel ready to. Remember you're going to have lots of opportunities to come out, so don't worry too much if it doesn't quite go the way you thought. I would also say think about who you feel safest with and supported by, as they may be a good place to start.

# COMING OUT STORIES

## UNIVERSITY STAFF

**Name:** Sam Moss-McCleave

**Pronouns:** She/her



### **What does being out mean to you?**

I can be me. Being visible helps me to support students who may be struggling on their own journey.

### **Do you remember first realising your identity?**

I started questioning my sexuality in my teens, but things were different in the early 80's and so I tried to ignore it. I finally came to terms with who I am in my late 20's.

### **How did you approach first telling someone? What made you choose that person to tell?**

As I came out later in life, and had a family, I was cautious about who to tell and the words to use. I did talk a lot about celebrities and sports stars who were 'out' to see people's reactions. I told my very close friend whom I trusted. I need not have worried as they were not surprised and very supportive.

### **How did you feel?**

At the time I was very anxious. Once I had come out as a lesbian to my friend, I felt huge relief. They were very supportive. Yes, there were tears, but these were happy tears.

### **What advice would you give someone wanting to come out?**

1. It is your information to share or not to share and you should choose when and how to tell it.
2. It can be very emotional and cause anxiety and only you will know when you are ready.
3. Choose someone that you trust and have a good relationship with.
4. The first time is usually the scariest. It really does get easier, honest. I am so glad that I am now able to be me, the real me.



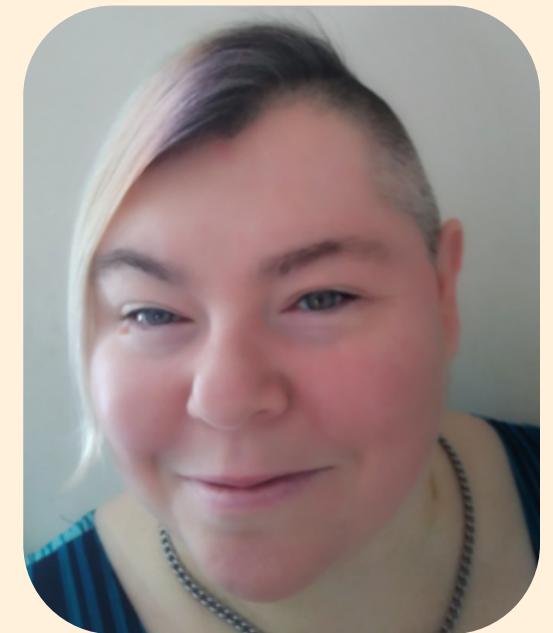


# COMING OUT STORIES

## UNIVERSITY STAFF

**Name:** Sandra Hopkins

**Pronouns:** She/her



### **What does being out mean to you?**

It means being able to talk about my partners, my friends, my community, my activism with others, and them seeing a big part of my identity. As I've got older that's also changed to add purposely being visible so others feel comfortable coming out.

### **Do you remember first realising your identity?**

I remember being around 11 and having my first crush on a girl and quickly realising that no-one else around me was like that. I spent several years wondering if I was going through a phase - was I a lesbian, was I straight (bisexuality wasn't something I was aware of then), having no one around me who was part of the LGBTQ+ community. It wasn't until I went to university that I found a whole new world of information and the LGBTQ+ community and realised I wasn't alone. Along with Section 28, there was a lot of biphobia around at the time and I sometimes found it easier to say I was a lesbian, but bisexual fits my identity best and is who I am. I didn't find the bi community until after I'd graduated and BiCon was one of the best things to happen to me.

### **How did you approach first telling someone? What made you choose that person to tell?**

I came out quietly to my best friend at college and she immediately stopped wanting to spend time with me. So, it took a lot of courage to come out as bisexual to friends at university. When I did, they treated it like a non-issue which was reassuring, they didn't view me any differently. Coming out to family took a lot longer and I had mixed responses initially - my Mum now comes to Bolton Pride with me.

### **What advice would you give someone wanting to come out?**

Do it on your terms when you are ready. You don't have to tell people if you don't want to. I made sure I had supportive friends before I had some of the trickier conversations. Give others time and don't be surprised if some people aren't immediately supportive. Not everyone knows someone close who is openly part of the LGBTQ+ community and they sometimes need patience and time. I don't regret coming out.

# COMING OUT STORIES

## STUDENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

**Name:** Lucas Rodrigues

**Pronouns:** He/him



### **What does being out mean to you?**

Being out to me means being able to be a role model for others. It's about being happy and comfortable with myself and shining a light for others to do the same.

### **Do you remember first realising your identity?**

I was talking with friends the first time that I heard the word gay, they explained to me what it meant, and it just made sense. Then when I was 12, I watched a documentary about a transgender person, and later my school explained to us what being transgender meant. Again, it made sense to me. However, it took time for me to come out to other people.

### **What advice would you give someone wanting to come out?**

Take your time and make sure that you are safe. Have fun with it, and don't worry too much. Know that you'll be alright.





# COMING OUT STORIES

## STUDENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

**Name:** AJ Jackson

**Pronouns:** They/them



### **What does being out mean to you?**

For me, it's about finding my place in the world and being comfortable with myself and with others. Being out allows me to talk about my identity and be visible to others to help them find the language and the spaces to do the same.

### **Do you remember first realising your identity?**

Discovering my identity was twofold for me, initially my coming out experience was related to sexual orientation in my 30s after keeping it hidden due to being involved in the military. Then, more recently I came out as non-binary at the age of 50!

### **How did you approach first telling someone? What made you choose that person to tell?**

The first person I told about my gender identity was my tutor. I trusted them and that they would be respectful of my disclosure and that it would be confidential. Their support helped me have the confidence to then tell others.

### **What advice would you give someone wanting to come out?**

Trust your own thoughts and feelings and take your time. You don't have to have the answers or know where your journey is going to take you.





# UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

## LGBTQ+ Student Support Network

This network welcomes all University of Chester students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning. Our "+" sign represents gender identities and sexual orientations not included in the term LGBTQ and ensures we will always be inclusive of everyone in our community.

If you would like to join our LGBTQ+ Student Support Network, you can do so by clicking [here](#), or emailing [studentservices@chester.ac.uk](mailto:studentservices@chester.ac.uk) for more information.



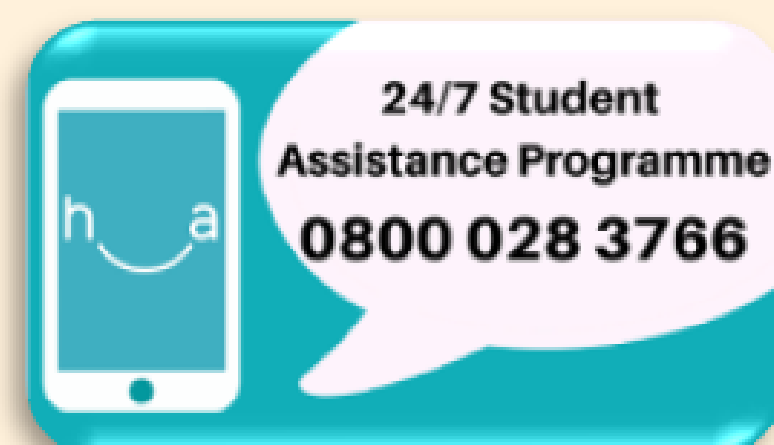
## Wellbeing and Mental Health

You can speak to a Student Wellbeing Adviser or Mental Health Adviser for confidential and non-judgemental support and guidance. To book an appointment contact our Student Services Helpdesk on 01244 511550, or email: [studentservices@chester.ac.uk](mailto:studentservices@chester.ac.uk). Appointments can be face-to-face, telephone, or MS Teams.



## Student Assistance Programme

This is our 24/7 dedicated student helpline to support you through life's issues or problems. This includes a range of advice, counselling, and in app support. You can see more information on Portal [here](#).



## Informing the University

If you would like to amend your student records to reflect your identity, you are able to change your name and pronouns. To do this, you need to request in writing the changes you would like to be made, and send this to [sp@chester.ac.uk](mailto:sp@chester.ac.uk)

# UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

## Reporting

Sadly, we know that some people can experience discrimination as a result of coming out. If this happens, please know that you can talk to our Student Services teams for non-judgemental and confidential support. You can contact us via telephone on 01244 511550 or via email at [studentservices@chester.ac.uk](mailto:studentservices@chester.ac.uk) to ask about the support available.

You can report hate crime and harassment to the University via our [Report a Concern](#) tool. You can also report via the [gov.uk](#) website.



## Sexual Violence Liaison Service

The university has a dedicated team of qualified sexual violence liaison officers (SVLOs) to support students who have experienced sexual harassment and/or violence either recently, or in the past. You can find out more on Portal [here](#).

## Portal

Check out our [LGBTQ+ portal page](#) for lots of information, including the following topics: using the correct language; coming out; talking to your GP; social, legal, and medical transitioning; and support services.

