

Up Close and Personnel

When you meet someone for the first time what is it you tell them about yourself? Is it your job or where you live? We hope to offer you more of who the person we are profiling is, their pastimes or passions and what motivates them - Words by David Price

Pam Frost - Valuing our Differences

Pam Frost is undertaking an 18 month placement, working as Interim Director of Learning & Development within the Trust, as part of the Top Talent Breaking Through Programme. She lives with her civil partner and her two teenage daughters, who happily accept that they have two mums.

Pam says: "I very much wanted to have the opportunity to undertake this interview because, in the three years that I have worked for the Trust, I have come to appreciate that there will be a significant number of people living in Surrey and North East Hampshire who are, or who may be, coming to terms with the fact that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, who feel isolated, lonely and may be experiencing problems with their mental health".

Reflecting on her own experience, Pam describes how she tried to deny and suppress her own sexuality and she says that only when she fell in love with her now civil partner, Michele, did she feel able to become the true and whole person that she is now.

"After a very long personal journey, I was able to accept and appreciate my sexuality," she says. Since then, I have come to realise that I was stigmatising myself, based on my own fear as to how I might be stigmatised by the society I lived in.

"I was fortunate enough to

have the right support from my family, close friends and health care professionals, when I needed them. I started by telling a few close and dear friends. Some were surprised but others had guessed.



L-R Alexandra Martin, Interim Associate Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Medical Director Dr Malcolm Hawthorn and Pam Frost Interim Director of Learning & Development

What really helped was the acceptance and the assurance from all those I spoke to, that it didn't make any difference to how they felt about me."

Since working in the Trust, Pam has made a commitment to give personal leadership to this area of Equality and Diversity.

She says: "We are fortunate as a Trust to be working in partnership with a charity

called Gay Surrey. A recent lifestyle survey undertaken by the charity, which supports gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people living in the county, suggests that there is a significant amount of self

harm, substance misuse and suicidal tendencies reported by gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals."

"We are determined as a Trust to ensure that we become more sensitive, more compassionate and supportive to the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people who need and receive our services along with some members of our Trust workforce."

Malcolm Hawthorne, the Trust's Medical Director is the Trust's Board Champion and Lead for the transgender part of the equality strand. Pam, Malcolm and Alex Martin, Interim Associate Director of Diversity and Inclusion, are working together to progress the Trust's work in this area.

Pam describes how the Trust recently participated in the Stonewall Equality Workplace Index and in response to the results of this survey, which was completed by a small number of the Trust's workforce, a Trust-wide Action Plan is now being developed to progress the issues highlighted in the survey.

"As part of this work," she says, "the Trust has been able to form a small lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff network. We have met twice as a group, but we are very keen to open an invitation to other people working in the Trust to join us."

Pam reflects on a quote by Oscar Wilde in which he referred to homosexuality as being 'the love that dare not speak its name'.

She adds: "I want people in the Trust to really believe that they can speak of this different kind of love."

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of the issues Pam has highlighted in this article, she would be delighted to hear from you. Her contact details are:

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