

Stonewall

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource is produced by Stonewall, a UK-based charity that stands for the freedom, equity and potential of all lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace (LGBTQ+) people.

At Stonewall, we imagine a world where LGBTQ+ people everywhere can live our lives to the full.

Founded in London in 1989, we now work in each nation of the UK and have established partnerships across the globe. Over the last three decades, we have created transformative change in the lives of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, helping win equal rights around marriage, having children and inclusive education.

Our campaigns drive positive change for our communities, and our sustained change and empowerment programmes ensure that LGBTQ+ people can thrive throughout our lives. We make sure that the world hears and learns from our communities, and our work is grounded in evidence and expertise.

To find out more about our work, visit us at www.stonewall.org.uk

Registered Charity No 1101255 (England and Wales) and SC039681 (Scotland)

Stonewall is proud to provide information, support and guidance on LGBTQ+ inclusion; working towards a world where we're all free to be. This does not constitute legal advice, and is not intended to be a substitute for legal counsel on any subject matter.

Stonewall Young Futures Transcript

Darren's Story

I grew up in a small town in Wiltshire called Marlborough. It wasn't really until I guess, 10 or 11 that I started to understand that I may be a bit different from the other boys at school.

There was this group of boys that kind of linked to my inability to play football and rugby to my sexuality, and they started to call me 'gaylord'.

That was a tag that I was absolutely like terrified of. When I was realizing probably, what being gay meant and feeling gay, that was even more scary.

And I had to kind of conceal it even more. Having lots of fake girlfriends and showing interest in girls and school really wasn't an unhappy time. It was a just a kind of a strategy to conceal, I've come to understand it as an adult.

So London. You know, this great city. I moved here when I was 20, 21. And I think the city somehow put its arms around me and made me feel like it was such a diverse place .

It was the safe space for me to be able to start being myself, but I still couldn't even consider coming out in my career. So I had almost a two track life and I was convinced that being a gay man was just going to be impossible to climb the ladder and it would hurt my career.

And I was ambitious, so I sacrificed being authentic and doing all of that concealing stuff again because I desperately wanted to get further ahead in my career.

But there was a pivotal moment when I joined a company called Orange. You might remember the mobile phone company. I was one of the original gang that joined the brand in its launch in 1998. It was such a dynamic, exciting, diverse business where everyone was equalled. But it taught me the importance of being yourself at work, you know that real 'bring yourself to work' mantra.

And so I joined the company as a gay man from day one. And guess what? No one cared and it just got easier and easier and easier.

Narrative to the story is Orange is where I really broke through my career and got my first senior role after the first year of joining and continued to climb the ladder. They were the springboard for so much good in my career and from that day forward I was always an openly gay man at work.

Over half of my life now has been living as an openly gay man, and I can honestly say that I'm at the most peace with myself I've ever been in my life.

I think coming out has enabled me to live a very full life. I can't imagine how hard it would have been to have concealed for any longer than I did.

Everyone's journey is different and I'm just so glad I got the opportunity to live mine as the whole me and not just show parts of me as well.