



L-R: Kate Davies CBE, NHS England, The Rt Hon. The Lord Etherton PC, Kt, Craig Jones, Fighting With Pride, Dr Gill McGill, Northumbria University, Caroline Paige, Fighting With Pride.

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Conference highlights urgent need for improved support for the UK LGBT+ veteran community

Northumbria University's Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research, in partnership with LGBT+ military charity Fighting With Pride (FWP), held the UK's first annual conference on research with LGBT+ veterans.

Until 12 January 2000, there was a blanket ban on LGBT+ military employees

in the UK Armed Forces. LGBT+ personnel could face intrusive investigations and ultimately be dismissed or otherwise forced to leave the Armed Forces.

It is not known exactly how many military veterans ended their careers as a result of the 'gay ban', but it is understood that thousands were affected by this policy.

Yesterday, on the 23rd anniversary of the lifting of the ban, delegates and distinguished speakers from the worlds of academia, health and social care, local government, charities and the LGBT+ community, united to discuss the past, present day and future of LGBT+ veterans and their experiences during and after military service.

With so little known about this community, the conference sought to raise awareness of a hidden history, to begin to address the gaps in knowledge surrounding the health and social wellbeing support services LGBT+ veterans need.

Among the speakers at the event, was The Rt Hon. The Lord Etherton PC, Kt, Chair of the LGBT Veterans Independent Review. He said: "I am grateful to be given the opportunity as the LGBT Veterans Independent Review Chair to speak at the Research with the UK LGBT+ Veteran Community Conference. The event is an important milestone and the research being discussed will help shed additional insight into the needs of this understudied group."

Kate Davies CBE, National Director of Health & Justice, Armed Forces and Sexual Assault Services Commissioning, NHS England, spoke about health and wellbeing support for LGBT+ veterans, serving personnel and families. She stressed the importance of continuing to call out where there is difference in experience and where there is difference in response from the NHS, adding: "We're immensely grateful for all the work that Fighting With Pride, Northumbria University and many other organisations here today have carried out and their commitment to improving the lives of the LGBT+ veteran community.

"NHS England is proud to support such hugely important work. Sharing research, evidence and co-production with lived experiences, helps us to strategically commission services that ensure that our LGBT+ armed forces veterans and their families receive the dedicated support they so rightly deserve and are entitled to."

The conference also saw the launch of a new report undertaken by the Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families' Research, commissioned by Fighting With Pride.

The report details initial findings of first-of-its-kind research carried out to provide an evidence-base for the development of support for the LGBT+ veteran community.

It shows the stark reality of life for many of those LGBTQ+ personnel serving in the Armed Forces during the 'gay ban' and highlights the urgent need to make sure that the specific health and welfare needs for this uniquely isolated cohort are identified, and effective support services developed.

Dr Gill McGill, Co-Director of Northumbria's Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families' Research, said: "It is an honour and a privilege to host the first national conference on research with the UK LGBT+ veteran community at Northumbria University on the anniversary of the lifting of the ban.

"Working with Fighting With Pride has provided an opportunity for the Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families' Research to carry out unique research to examine the personal impact of the ban upon LGBT+ Veterans.

"We could not do this without the funding from The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and support from NHS England. And, most importantly, we could not do this without the participants who we would like to sincerely thank them for giving their time and telling their stories."

Fostering long-term, targeted support

The conference follows two years of collaborative work between Northumbria University and Fighting With Pride, who in 2021 signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a shared mission of transforming health and social wellbeing support for LGBT+ Veterans.

The [partnership](#), the first of its kind in the UK, marked the commitment of the University and the charity to work collaboratively on research and consultancy projects which will influence national policy and service delivery of support for the LGBT+ Veteran community.

Craig Jones MBE, Executive Chair and Caroline Paige, Chief Executive of Fighting With Pride, and Visiting Scholars at Northumbria University, said: “In the recent history of the United Kingdom no group of Armed Forces Veterans have faced such wilful neglect and intended exclusion. For decades, these men and women, faced the challenges of service life, and so many other challenges placed in their path. In their lives beyond service, they have faced alone the rigours forced upon them by the ‘ban’ and the demons of their past.

“LGBT+ veterans talk of squadrons, ships and regiments, arduous deployments, of friendships made and those they have lost. They love their service like all other veterans and are rightly proud of today's Armed Forces and, given their past, their pride in our Armed Forces is remarkable in itself.

“When this work is completed, FWP and the Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families’ Research hope that many more of our veterans will be proud of their service. We also hope that the organisations that have a duty to support them will redouble their endeavours and work together to bring this community in from the cold.”

- Ends -

Notes to editors

About the report:

Phase one of the report was published at the conference: fifteen LGBT+ veterans were recruited, from across the UK, using purposive sampling to reflect a heterogeneous sample of LGBT+ veterans and serving personnel. All participants enlisted before 12th January 2000 (the lifting of the ban), self-identified as being LGBT+ and as having been affected by the ban. All three services branches of the UK Armed Forces were represented. Peer-led participant recruitment was undertaken by the peer researchers at FWP.

About Fighting With Pride (FWP)

FWP was created on the 20th anniversary of the complete lifting of the ban on LGBT+ service – the ‘gay ban’. FWP is a ‘lived experience’ LGBT+ charity, supporting those seeking help and a resource for those who seek to help them.

The charity supports LGBT+ Veterans, serving personnel and their families, particularly those who were affected by the 'gay ban', ultimately lifted on 12th January 2000. Before then, thousands of LGBT+ service personnel were removed or forced from service and abandoned, after serving with pride. In the years ahead FWP aims to bring this community back into the military family.

FWP works with organisations supporting the Armed Forces Community to build capacity for LGBT+ Veteran support, to recognise their service and help resolve the challenges they face in their lives beyond military service.

- Website: www.fightingwithpride.org.uk
- Facebook: facebook.com/fightingwithpride
- Twitter: [@fightingwpride](https://twitter.com/@fightingwpride)
- Instagram: [fightingwithpride](https://www.instagram.com/fightingwithpride)
- LinkedIn: [fighting-with-pride](https://www.linkedin.com/company/fighting-with-pride)

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk

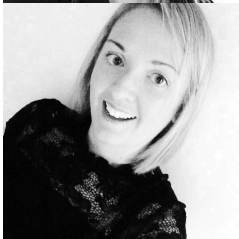


Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk