



# Who are you? What do you want?

**D**on here, your LGBT+ officer. This is your newsletter, not mine! So I need your feedback, recommendations, stories. To kick off though – here’s what’s on my mind



### Group experience

In my **Pride article**, I talk about the amazing energy of the Pride march. I want to tap into this – to take our equality and diversity work to a new level. A couple of options:

- Discuss **directly with me**, how we do this and/or
- Join our LGBT+ self-organised group – name to be agreed!

This group will meet locally (MS Teams and/or face to face) and discuss, campaign and organise around the issues we identify. We’ll work with - but also go beyond other LGBT+ groups (eg Stride Network) because:

- We have UNISON’s influence and resources
- We can influence UNISON policy
- We’ll tailor our own local actions
- Our focus will evolve - wherever we take it.

Can anyone join? No - the group needs to be a safe space for LGBT+ people, to discuss our issues and share our stories. But I also know that many allies also want involved – so let’s discuss how we do this as well.

I’m the group’s resource eg to facilitate, resources, help organise, influence etc. Just imagine that Pride energy - combined with UNISON resources – plus our group focussing on what means most to us!

Also, look out for **these posters** – the first of many, designed to encourage people to join and get involved. Please print and post this, if you don’t see it locally.

### LGBT+ November Conference, Edinburgh

Seems ages away – but bookings and motions are now – and there are a limited number of delegate and visitor places for LGBT+ colleagues – ask here. I’ll say more nearer the time.

### LGBT+ Stories

Everyone has a story – and good comes from sharing. Can be about anything – and in this vein, here’s a story from me – why Star Trek continues to be so big for me:

I grew up with the original series - Kirk/Spock/Bones - but only later learnt how diversity ground-breaking it was – prominent people of colour among the main characters, the first inter-racial kiss and lots of thinly-veiled plots on racism, discrimination – but also showing a potential utopian future.

Ahead of it’s time in 1967, there’s lots we wouldn’t accept now – sex stereotypes, mysogyny – and despite it’s creators intentions, the networks wouldn’t allow any LGBT+ stories for fear of negative network reaction – particularly in the influential US religious belt.

The later series (Next Generation, Deep Space 9, Voyager, Enterprise) slowly progressed diversity (female and black leads, admirals etc) but in my opinion, nothing as radical as the original was, back in ‘67. And although there were subtle LGBT+ story lines – nothing was overt – and more to the point, none of the main characters were LGBT+, which I think was a real cop-out.

Fast-forward to 2017 and Star Trek Discovery revolutionises LGBT+ representation. We have the first overtly gay characters – and

encouragingly, complex and well written transsexual characters, central to the story. It’s wonderful – but it’s taken 50 years –unbelievable!



### At last! Discovery trans characters Adira and Gray - are played respectively by the non-binary actor Blu del Barrio and trans actor Ian Alexander

But as if to compensate, Discovery really goes for it – attempting to show the real diversity of our planet – some people call it ‘Star Trek Diversity’ – notable because it’s so unusual.

For me it’s been worth the wait – real LGBT+ characters – who’re still alive at the end of the show! The storylines are still current and relevant - but I miss the ‘subtle as a flying brick’ writing of the original that capture my love of the show and it’s values.

I’ll conclude with a few anecdotes that capture my love of the show

- Martin Luther King persuading actor Nichelle Nichols to stay on as Lieutenant Uhura – as an aspirational future vision for Black Americans;

- Sir Patrick Stewart (Captain Picard) telling how an American cop inspired him to return to Trek, with his story of how he watches Next Generation to balance the horrors of his work;

- Me at a convention - where I encourage a blind fan to share with Levar Burton (Lt Geordie LaForge) how he inspired him - to become a real blind engineer.

So...what story do you want to share? Time to sign-out for this newsletter. A final thought -

Live long and prosper!