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Having always lived and worked in Northumberland I have appreciated how important being part of a community is. Although struggling with my sexuality growing up I never felt that I didn't belong or that being gay was something that meant my lifestyle or career choices would differ.

I feel I play an active role in my community-not only in my volunteer role as crew in the RNLI but as a teacher working with some incredibly insightful and interesting learners.

I have always taught in Northumberland and have worked in mainstream as well as special education provisions from the furthest north to the south of the county. Being a teacher is much more than planning, delivering lessons and assessment-it is preparing children/young adults to be part of a community and a valued member of society. What was even more important to me, knowing my own struggles, is that your sexuality, gender, socio-economic background, faith or disability should never be a barrier to leading a successful life.

I grew up having no LGBTQ role models and as such it took much longer for me to understand what that sense of 'belonging' felt like. My sense of belonging did come from work colleagues though, who were equally insightful and promoted what value I had as part of a community.

I am so enthused to work with youngsters now that value diversity, promote equality and challenge stereotypes. As a school we have worked with a vast array of agencies to really bring the value of community to the forefront of what we do.