

Pride Podcast (Transcription)

Attendees: Emma Humphreys (EH) (CRS)
 Annie Southerst (AS), Vice-Chair and Trustee, Opening Doors London
 Samuel Lear (SL), Associate, CRED
 Beatrice Adu (BA), Conveyancing Executive
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EH	<p>Welcome to this Charles Russell Speechlys podcast. My name is Emma Humphreys, a partner at the firm. This year, we are forced to celebrate Pride only virtually. To do so, we thought we'd aim to cover a variety of conversation on topics via podcasts, not least to explain why it's important to have an inclusive workplace and environment where we feel encouraged to be ourselves around friends and colleagues. Through these podcasts, we hope to provide you with more information and awareness around the LGBTQ community and experiences within it.</p> <p>The podcast has been split so that you can listen to the different topics independently or altogether, one after the other. This "Guide to Pride" series will cover generational challenges, allyship and an insight to Pride itself. I am delighted today to be joined by four interviewees and I will let them introduce themselves and provide their own bit of background.</p>
AS	<p>Hi my name's Annie Southerst. I am a trustee of Opening Doors London. We are a charity that support older LGBT people in the capital. I am spending a lot of time in my retirement helping the charity raise the issues that affect older LGBT people, particularly around isolation and loneliness. I have a background in mental health in the NHS when I was a working person. I have a daughter who is also a lesbian who lives in London and I have two grandchildren with them.</p>
SL	<p>Hello, my name is Sam Lear and I am an Associate in the Real Estate Disputes team at Charles Russell Speechlys and I am also head of the LGBT Allies Network and I identify as bisexual.</p>
BA	<p>Hi my name's Beatrice, I'm a fee-earner in the Real Estate team at Charles Russell Speechlys. I am also head of the Allies Network, part of our diversity group here at Charles Russell Speechlys.</p>
RH	<p>Hi I'm Richard Honey, I am an associate in the Tax, Trust and Succession Team and I am also one of the co-chairs of the firm's LGBTQ plus committee. I am gay and my pronouns are he/him.</p>
EH	<p>Well thanks very much all. Firstly, I'd like to try to establish if you as our interviewees think that the challenges for the LGBTQ plus community have</p>

	<p>changed over the years. I am going to start off with discussing that with Annie, Sam and Richard. To the three of you, laws have changed and attitudes have changed but our focus for this session is whether things have really changed from your perspective and when we're thinking about that, I do think it is helpful to start with an explanation of why we're talking about these issues. Some people will say that they don't talk about their heterosexuality in the office, so why is there a need to have a spotlight of LGBTQ plus issues. Richard, would you mind perhaps giving us your perspective on that?</p>
<p>RH</p>	<p>Sure Emma, it's a really good question because some people will still say that my sexuality isn't important and that we've come a long way, so why should it feature as part of the office environment? Some will say to me that 'your private life is private' and I've had several people say to me 'what happens behind closed doors should remain that way'. But I think that's a misconception and it's an integral part of who I am.</p> <p>Imagine coming to work on a Monday and you are asked by a colleague "what did you get up to over the weekend?" For a heterosexual colleague, it might be quite easy for them to say "I went to the cinema with my girlfriend/my boyfriend, I went on a date", but as a gay man who started at the firm in 2013, I was so conscious about myself that I went back into the closet. How do you respond to something like that without giving away part of yourself? Outing yourself all the time? So you tend to divert on topics, you change the narrative. You feel as if you have to tell a white lie, potentially come across as evasive and you're not really being your true self at work. It's mentally exhausting and every time that a question is asked, you're always thinking 'how did I respond to that before?' – making sure that the narrative sticks for everybody.</p> <p>For me, there's still a stigma over what a stereotypical gay man should look like or act like. I referee football, I have a very close knit group of heterosexual male friends and several people have said to me "well, you don't come across as gay" – but I don't think that's the point. The Stonewall Workplace Survey that was undertaken as part of the Equality Index in 2020 says that over a third of lesbian and gay people at work don't feel comfortable in coming out. Three quarters of bisexual people don't feel comfortable, and two thirds of trans people. And that's just colleagues; that's not the wider public and that's in firms and businesses that take diversity and equality seriously. We spend so much time with our colleagues (or at least we did before lockdown) and so how can we really be our most productive, truest version of ourselves if we can't be honest at work?</p>
<p>EH</p>	<p>Yeah I think it's a really good way of explaining it actually Richard, and I suppose what also feeds into that is the sort of assumptions that come with people's questions isn't it? Because people will say "oh you know, have you got a girlfriend?" It's just so easy for people to make those assumptions and that the question starts off almost as a loaded question, as you say, and then you</p>

	<p>feel uncomfortable in that split decision of am 'I going to lie in answer to that? Am I going to tell the truth? How are they going to react?' I'm guessing that's how it often can play out?</p>
RH	<p>Exactly, and every time that you're asked that question you're faced really with the reality of 'am I going to come out to this person?' and that isn't necessarily true for a heterosexual colleague in the office.</p>
EH	<p>No, I think these sorts of challenges are so varied aren't they, they are challenges that people face in this community. I would be interested to hear about the sort of barriers and difficulties that you faced as you were growing up because obviously, these things, these challenges are present throughout people's lives. Sam, did you have any experiences when you were growing up?</p>
SL	<p>Yes and for everybody the experience would be very different. I grew up in rural Somerset and I went to an independent school which was quite steeped in religion, so I never felt comfortable about showing or expressing the non-heterosexual part of my character. I think one of the aspects of being bisexual is that part of you thinks that you could lead a "straight life" and I did for quite a few years and that's probably a real regret of mine that I didn't use that opportunity at school or even at University to express the non-heterosexual part of my character. But my school knew very much, that I did encounter homophobic bullying, even if it was just teasing or the use of pejorative language. I dare say it's far worse in lots of other places and certainly far worse in history, and hopefully we are now on an upward curve where everyone can feel free to be themselves, even at school level.</p>
EH	<p>Yeah let's hope so. As you say, I think everybody's experience is very different and there will be big differences even between different types of schools, I'm sure. Annie, as a slightly older person, what were your experiences? Did you face, do you think, perhaps greater barriers than you would do if you were growing up now?</p>
AS	<p>Oh without a doubt. I came from the generation of LGBT people who grew up when largely if it wasn't initially, well initially it was illegal to be homosexual if you're a man (it was never for a woman), but certainly post-1969 when homosexuality was partially decriminalised, things were supposed to change. That was very much the time when I was starting to come out, but they didn't change for a long time, so we have swathes of LGBTQ people who lived their lives hiding away from society and not being able to be open about who they were. Not being able to be open at work, having to face difficulties with their families, facing troubles with the law on a regular basis, so things have changed enormously.</p> <p>Personally for myself, I came out in my 30s and I was married to a man at the time and had a small child, so I had enormous barriers to face myself, in terms</p>

	<p>of establishing a new life outside my heterosexual marriage. Alongside that, and alongside a lot of woman in similar situations, having to fight for the rights to see my child. That was probably one of the biggest barriers that I came across. I then had to re-establish my working life. Re-establish my community, become part of a different community. Enormous challenges yeah.</p>
EH	<p>Gosh yes, it's one of those things where I know that to be the case and yet when you say it, I'm completely shocked because the world has moved on so much that actually remembering that it was once illegal, you know, I do actually forget that. It's kind of shocking when you point that out. Things have fortunately changed over the years, I mean, in terms of how you think they've changed, what are the areas where you've noticed the most differences Annie?</p>
AS	<p>All the way around, obviously, you know, in terms of being able to be 'out' in my life, it's not an issue any more. It's still an issue and continues to be an issue with my family. For many years, my Mother was very, very challenging about my sexuality, to the extent when I actually had to say to her, look, you know, this isn't going to work if we are still to have a relationship. So we agreed for me not to talk about it and for her not to ask about it, and that was a sort of massive loss in my life really but I didn't want to lose my relationship with my Mother. So that sort of thing, I don't think it's changed for a lot of people who are LGBT – their relationships with their families, but I think work has changed. I think social life. I think general acceptance in the community has changed and of course the law has changed.</p> <p>My lesbian daughter is married and has two children and they have two women on the birth certificate. I mean, that's the most extraordinary change, going along with her to get one of the children's births registered at Leytonstone Library in this multi-cultural environment, but not an eyebrow was raised about two women being on a birth certificate – It was quite extraordinary and that was a big highlight of my life, I think, in the sense of how things have changed. It's changed all the way around for the better but, you know, there are still challenges. Still challenges for young people, still challenges at school. Still challenges in the workplace I think, with people still feeling as though they can't come out, but yeah massive changes, there's massive changes I think on the gender identity scenario; we have quite a lot of trans members in Opening Doors London and that whole issue of visibility I think for everybody has improved beyond recognition.</p>
EH	<p>Thanks Annie. As you say, there are some very positive stories there, especially with regard to your daughter. Richard, talking about changing, you were saying about difficulties in the work environment – have you seen changes do you think in the office environment, or when you're out socialising? Have you noticed that over the years?</p>

RH	<p>Yeah - I mean, Annie your story is incredible and the work that's been put in over the years – it's not just happened overnight, this is a gradual change that's taken place. In the workplace, we've come a long way in only seven years that I've been at the firm. When I first started at Charles Russell Speechlys in 2013, we didn't have an LGBTQ committee and now we're one of the top 25 law firms in the Stonewall Equality Index. It is definitely a much more inclusive environment, and I talk not just personally, but also from gay, lesbian, bisexual friends that I have who also feel that their workplaces are more inclusive and tolerant.</p> <p>But as Annie says, there's still plenty to do. I think that recent events in the media show that there is a huge amount of polarity when it comes to views and discussions, especially on gender identity and trans issues. I think that there can always be more work undertaken to make everybody feel as though they are included within the workplace.</p>
EH	<p>Yeah I think that's a really good observation actually Richard because I remember when I started work 20 years ago at the firm I was with then, I certainly wasn't aware of anybody being in the LGBTQ+ community, and I think it would have been quite difficult for people to come out at that time in that environment. Whereas, as you may know, we have what we call "Partner and Partner" drinks at the firm where Partners bring along their significant other if they want to and we have a drink together to say thank you to the other halves who have helped with all the stress at home. There's a whole variety of Partners that come along and that's really nice and it's nice that people feel completely comfortable to do that. I think 20 years ago that would have been very different indeed, so, yeah as you say, progress is being made definitely and it's good to see.</p> <p>What do we think has had a real impact to derive these changes? Richard, perhaps I'll get you to pick up on that. What do you think has made some difference on that side of things?</p>
RH	<p>I think for me, it's about seeing others who I can identify with. So that's role models in the media or in the public eye. When I was a teenager, I wasn't particularly sure of my sexuality and I only really came to terms with my sexuality when I was at University. Over the last ten years, the number of high profile gay men that I can associate myself with in the mainstream media is vastly different and that is ever increasing. So for my own personal growth, that was really important, and from a wider work perspective I think it's that somebody gains reassurance and confidence from others being visible, or quietly visible even, within the office environment. Seeing somebody else who you can identify with who is open about their sexuality, open about their gender, their identity, for me is really important and we should always strive to encourage others to take that step.</p>

EH	<p>Yeah I completely agree with that. Annie, from your perspective, presumably did you see role models when you were coming out? Is that something that you think has made a difference or do you think there's other factors as well driving change?</p>
AS	<p>There weren't very many role models in my time, it has to be said. I mean, I didn't even know what a lesbian was I don't think really. I fell in love with a woman and things changed. I can remember once walking down a London street and seeing a very butch woman walking towards me and being absolutely fascinated, but I had absolutely no idea that she may have been a lesbian or what that was and I think that was the same for a lot of people of my generation – that when they came out, there were no role models really. That obviously made it very difficult, because you don't have a context, you don't have anything to identify with. Role models started coming out and about in late 80s and 90s when people like Elton John came out and Sir Ian McKellen, but before that there wasn't very much. So no, it hasn't really formed an enormous part of my journey having role models.</p>
EH	<p>Yeah, and I get again that that's just a reflection on the fact that everybody's journey is very different isn't it, and everyone's experience is so different.</p> <p>Of course we're talking here about the changes that we've seen in the UK but things can still be very different overseas. Sam, you and I were talking about this a while back and I think you are aware of some of the difficulties which can be experienced by people when they're away on holiday or perhaps on business abroad?</p>
SL	<p>Absolutely, and it was around the time when you were going to Russia and of course there was a huge international tournament happening not all that long ago with the football World Cup. There was quite a lot of Press attention sort of gibbering towards Russia's stigmas of LGBTQ+ people, and it's sometimes easy to forget when you're booking holidays that the UK is arguably one of the more progressive countries in the World. Although it's perhaps primarily the most progressive, but speaking from personal experience where I choose to go and travel is often determined by that country's attitudes towards LGBTQ people. I would typically book through maybe student travel companies where most of their clients, or at least some of their clients would identify as being LGBTQ, so they will obtain the packages with that in mind. Even with my partner, when we choose hotels in slightly riskier countries, we might choose twin beds and will be careful about how we conduct ourselves in public and it's a balance between being respectful of the country you're visiting and also trying to express yourself as far as you possibly can and that is a tricky balance for lots of people.</p>
EH	<p>Yeah and I can imagine a little something off that because I'm just trying to remember where it was – I think it was Japan where I went on holiday and I read about the etiquette and there was a guidance that, you know, that they didn't like</p>

	<p>kissing in public and so, you know, I took it on board, as you say, respect the etiquette. I don't want it to sound like I'm constantly snogging my husband but you know, you suddenly realise how often you do go to sort of be affectionate and then suddenly you sort of feel restricted and actually I did find that not that comfortable actually. Not that anyone made me feel bad about it, but just that consciousness of how you behave and how others might perceive it. So yeah, I have some sympathy with that and understanding.</p> <p>I think to wrap up this section of the podcast, I think it's got to be useful to call on a bit of hindsight and ask each of you what advice you would give your younger self? Are there any words of wisdom that you would offer for people who want to come out but haven't done so yet? Sam, perhaps we could start with you on that one.</p>
SL	<p>Sure. I would say this is very personal to me and I think everyone needs to make informed decisions about their own lives but what I would tell my teenage self is to be bold, be brave, don't second guess how people might react and be yourself. Don't be scared to test yourself or experiment, but certainly for a bisexual, it's all too easy to try to conform to a heteronormative narrative and to completely ignore a substantial part of your identity. I would tell myself not to do that and to express yourself and be yourself at school and at University, which I only was in part.</p>
EH	<p>Thanks Sam. And Richard, what about you, what words of wisdom would you get out there?</p>
RH	<p>Apart from finding myself earlier (I think University was quite late), the words of wisdom I'd probably give myself would be to start small. Coming out is a journey and it can often feel as though you've got the weight of the world on your shoulders. But that journey feels easier step by step of the way, and each time that you come out, takes a little bit of that weight off. Trying to find someone who's an ally feels as though that journey is easier, because that person will be alongside you every step of the way of that journey.</p>
EH	<p>Thanks Richard and Annie perhaps you'd like to wrap up and tell us what your words of wisdom would be if you could talk to your younger self.</p>
AS	<p>To be proud, to be proud of who we are. Whoever we are and however we are and in terms of coming out, very much to reflect what Richard said, choose very carefully the people who you want to come out to. Choose those people who love and accept you for who you are. Do it gently and don't put yourself under any pressure for having to do this quickly because it can be a very long and very difficult time, but finding support around you of people who love you is really important.</p>

EH	Absolutely, thank you very much Annie. And that will lead on nicely I think to the second part of this podcast which is going to be talking about the importance of allies.
EH	ALLIES So we can all be an ally, and I'd like to find out more about why allies are especially important to the LGBTQ+ community and how we can be good allies to friends and colleagues. So for this part of our podcast, I'm going to be joined by Annie, Beatrice and Richard to discuss this important topic. So let's start off with the key question. What is an ally? Beatrice, would you mind explaining.
BA	I think for me being an ally was just second nature. I just am. But in terms of what is an ally, I would say it is just somebody who either has a personal connection to the LGBTQ community, be it through a family member or close friend and somebody that's a support system for that person. For me, my brother is gay so he's the person in my family who has made me an ally, but I also feel as though if I didn't have a gay brother, I would be an ally anyway because I always feel as though you should be able to be with who you want to be in love with and any sort of injustice like that, it's just, you know, it's not right and I want to be there to show my support in any way that I can.
EH	Yeah that's actually a good point because when I first went to one of our internal LGBTQ+ ally events, as you say, I didn't really quite realise I was an ally and I thought that allies had special badges and special roles. As you say, it isn't really a formal thing in that sense, it is being supportive of others isn't it, and I think that is really important. Why do you think allies are important and why do we need to have this conversation?
BA	Allies are important to show our colleagues, friends, family that are in the LGBT community that they're not alone, that they do have people like me, people like yourself who can be there to support them no matter what they're going through. Obviously my experience as a heterosexual will not be the same, but at the same time, I know what is right and what is wrong in the world or, you know, when my brother is being discriminated against in the workplace and things like that or him having to come out every time he has a new job, just things like that and it just, it makes me realise that I take it for granted that I don't have to do that. So I would like to be there to support my LGBT family, as it were, to show them that we are there for you. We are there to support you and to try and experience the same things that you go through.
EH	Yeah absolutely, Annie what do you think about the importance of allies?
AS	Well incredibly important, incredibly important and sort of looking at it from probably a more sort of bigger perspective, everybody needs to be promoting equality, you know, not just about LGBT issues. Everybody needs to be

	<p>promoting fairness and acceptance and show respect. I mean this is just sort of basic tenants of how we should be living our lives and it needs to be encouraged by everybody - by organisations like yourselves, people at work, people at schools, people in communities, you know, everywhere around. Everybody needs to be promoting that and anybody who is going to stand up and say this is what we should be doing, that's great.</p>
EH	<p>Yeah absolutely and it is that mix I think isn't it between, you know, offering support to colleagues and that may indeed, be calling out inappropriate behaviour and language as well, so it's that wide support isn't it. Richard, have any allies played a part in your journey and if so, what was the impact?</p>
RH	<p>Definitely, I mean Annie spoke earlier about choosing your allies carefully and I'm really glad that I did. As I mentioned, I came out to myself first at University, but it was only going through that process when you're away from home by yourself, it does feel very isolated. One of my really good friends at University, who I won't name, but I'll make sure he listens to the podcast, we were in our local pub on campus at University on a Friday after lectures and I just knew it was the time to say something. I felt so comfortable in his presence that I just came out and said, "look I've got something to say, I'm gay" and he didn't question, he didn't try and get answers, he was just a really good listener and doing nothing but listening. It wasn't advice, he wasn't telling me how to live my life, he was just there at the time I needed it, and from thereon in, the journey became easier and he was always there to talk to and I will be forever grateful to him for that.</p>
EH	<p>What a nice story, yeah, and hopefully that would be most people's experiences now that we do live in a much more supportive world. Thinking about how people do behave towards each other, and I just touched on the kind of need to call out I think, inappropriate language or inappropriate behaviour, but there's also that side of needing to make sure that we are being inclusive. Annie, what sort of thing did you think people need to think about to ensure that they are being inclusive in how they talk and behave?</p>
AS	<p>Well I think it's important for people to have some understanding of our world's first of all. Understanding of our history – you can find about that anywhere really, and nothing like from the horses mouth, especially from people who have lived long LGBT lives and have been at the sharp end of discrimination and prejudice, so talking to people, finding out about it is really important and not being afraid to call it out when you need to, although that sometimes, is quite frightening for people to do that. ASK, ask, be curious, be curious in that way that comes from a sort of caring viewpoint and if you can get involved, get involved in volunteering, get involved in your LGBT group, yeah, have some fun with this.</p>

EH	Well that sounds like a very good plan. Yeah, I remember when one of my very good friends came out to me and I was certainly very curious and full of questions! Richard, what would you say in terms of thinking about how people behave towards each other and sending out that supportive message?
RH	Annie I think you're quite right and that asking is really, really important. I think we all have to accept that mistakes will be made, especially if somebody's asking from the right place because they're genuinely interested in what you've got to say or how you feel. They might tangle their words up, they might trip over themselves and we, as individuals, also need to accept that they will probably feel as though they want the ground to swallow them up at that point and so that acceptance goes two ways. I also think it's about not making assumptions about people and our choice of language. I wrote a blog post last year for the firm about ways that we might think about how we could use language and Emma you spoke earlier about 'Partner and Partner' drinks, trying to assume that somebody has a boyfriend, girlfriend, husband or wife. Could we use 'partner' instead as a term to broach that conversation and trying to be more gender neutral? I've had friends who've said to others "oh the gents toilets are this way" – just because somebody is presenting as a male, doesn't mean to say that they identify as male and there are certainly things that all of us can do to think about the language that we use on a day to day basis. We can always do more.
EH	Definitely, and as an ally, especially now I know I don't need an official badge to be an ally, if someone comes out to me, how can I show my support and how should I respond? I mean, Richard told that very moving story of his experience with his friend and I think a lot of people actually would feel quite nervous if they were in that situation and would perhaps welcome some tips from you guys as to what might work in terms of showing support and responding. Beatrice, what do you think? Did your brother tell you any stories about his experiences when he came out?
BA	He did, so basically he was sort of found out by our sister when he was 13. He kept a diary and she read the diary, so that was his experience basically of coming out. We have discussed that, it's a bit of a... my story's slightly different in that we didn't actually grow up together and we didn't actually find each other until we were in our 20s, so me going on his journey with him, now we're all grown and old and him telling me his experience of coming out. He lives in Australia as well, long story... back then it was, yeah there was nobody really that he had that could support him at the time, so just having conversations with him as to what kind of things I could do if faced with a similar situation going forward really, so that was really helpful for me to have that support from him and that guidance.
EH	Yeah well and that must have been really important for him to have your support as you say, when he's far away and trying to get his head around things. Annie,

	what do you think in terms of how people can show their support and how to respond if someone does come out to them?
AS	The same principals apply as we've talked about really. About being gentle with people and just sitting with them and listening. With all those sort of skills, those listening skills that we all try to use to help people feel comfortable in our presence. Nothing different really, and to follow up with it – if you've had that conversation with someone and someone has sort of talked about really personal stuff and taken some risks in talking about their sexuality or their gender identity, maybe it's good to keep in touch with them. They've trusted you not to just ditch that as a one off.
EH	Yeah that's a really good point Annie, and Richard your story was very powerful about the person who was an ally for you. Is there anything else that you want to say, I mean I think as you said earlier that the listening was obviously key for you and obviously that person showed you great support. Is there anything else you want to add?
RH	Apart from listening, buy me a drink frankly. After having gone through all of that and the emotion that comes with it, that was the thing that I needed straight away.
EH	[Giggles] yeah. Indeed, celebrate. Thanks all.
EH	GUIDE TO PRIDE On to topic 3. A Guide to Pride. Now I've never been to Pride and this year was going to be the year but I wasn't sure what to expect. Now although I can't attend anymore due to the joys of COVID-19, I would like to know more about it, so I'm going to be joined by Annie, Bea and Sam for this third and final part of the podcast, to tell me a bit more about it. So let's start off with what is the purpose of Pride, also perhaps a bit of history, how long has it been running for? Sam, perhaps you could tell me more.
SL	Of course, yes so the purpose of Pride will vary for different people but broadly speaking, it is designed to be a platform to raise awareness of LGBTQ+ issues and to give people the chance to campaign for freedoms that will allow them to live their lives on a genuinely equal footing. In terms of its history, it's quite a colourful one, so it emanated from the Stonewall riots back in July 1969 and it was on the 1st July 1972 where the first London Pride took place where there was around 2000 people in attendance and this has now up to 1.5 million who attended last year's Pride and I think for me, it has changed quite significantly over time as well, so back in 1972 it was far more about campaigning for equal rights and it was less of a celebration than it probably is now.

EH	And in terms of the March itself, could anyone participate in that? How do you get to participate in that?
SL	Anyone is entitled to participate in the march, I'm talking specifically about London here where it is ticketed to actually walk the march, but if you just want to attend and be there on the side-lines that is completely free and there are no barriers to entry in that respect. Typically speaking, tickets are given to various organisations and companies so, when I march, I went as part of Legal Best which was a network of law firms and we had 25 tickets between us all, so the numbers are limited in terms of whether you can participate in the march but this does vary across the countries, so I have rocked up to other Pride marches in Bristol and Exeter and have just you know, joined the back and marched down the various streets.
EH	So Annie, how has Pride changed over the years?
AS	Well I've been going to Pride for about 30 years now and when I started and it started, you know, it started in 72, so this was at least ten years after that I started going to it. It was still a fairly small affair. It was still a very much a march, a campaigning march, a march wanting to give us more visibility and to start people thinking about how things needed to be changed. Visibility I think was a massive, massive bit of it. It was very community in those days, you know, it was a march and then it became after the march, you'd have a party, but the party was in a park, it wasn't spread out through London. All the charities would be there with their tents and there'd be a women's tent and a men's tent and you'd see your mates, and you know, you'd plan what you wanted to do in terms of your activities and getting together and more campaigning. That was an extremely exciting time. It felt a very different feel from now, very different feel indeed. I mean, people partied – it was a big party and I can remember being in the women's tent and we'd all be dancing and then I thought I'd go and have a look in the men's tent and you'd walk into the men's tent and you'd be sort of blown over by the smell of poppers. It was just a crazy time really, but at the time, it was obviously very very important in terms of influencing change.
EH	Yeah, it must have been, it must have been absolutely, it must have felt really quite wild in those times and as you say, you know, it's not that long after that it had been illegal and then, not only is it legal but everyone as you say is out there partying, celebrating the change. I love the fact there were separate men's and women's tents, that's just hilarious. Yeah, I can imagine that must have... did it feel like... it must have felt like a real release?
AS	Oh yeah, highlights of the year without a doubt. Going to Pride, I mean I was living in the North of England at the time and we would all come down for a few days and meet up, and yeah there was always, you know, great acts on. It was in a sort of small community environment in a park and then things started to

	change and suddenly people started, yeah we would have to pay to go and people would often have sponsorship and then the whole thing became rather more commercialised. I think the BBC at one point in time wanted it to be like one of their Summer gigs that they put on and it all started to change and now, of course it's very different.
EH	Yes, so let's talk about what happens now and well let's start off with usually, what time of year is it Bea, and what does it involve?
BA	Usually, during the Summer months so either June or July. I believe this year's one was meant to be at the end of June, last year's was in July. And in terms of what we do at CRS, we've started having pre-Pride drinks and a met up just in a café close by to the march, so we do that on the morning of Pride and it's been such a great event because we've invited friends, family, other law firms as well, so that's what we do on the morning of Pride and then whoever's part of the march then goes off and does the march and we go and watch and then all meet up again afterwards, so it's yeah, it's pretty much a day of celebration.
EH	And a good time had by all I understand from talking to those who went last year. Annie I believe there are also different Pride celebrations around the country is that right?
AS	Yes, I haven't been to very many of them around the country. My activities are usually concentrated on supporting Opening Doors London. We have a bus that is always at the beginning of the parade because obviously some of our members have some mobility difficulties, and, you know, I mean I love it now again. I went off it a bit but I love it again now that I'm involved in Opening Doors, because for our members, this is, you know, the highlight of their year and there's a proportion of members who were never able to go to Pride in the early days, because it was too risky for them and they didn't want to be seen and they didn't want to be visible. It was taking too many risks but now they can come and they can enjoy it and we have a handful of people every year who come to Pride and for them it's their first experience of Pride and that's extremely special and I love being part of all that.
EH	Yeah I bet, I bet that must be really special and I hadn't realised until we were having the discussion at work that it's, that it also encourages that family attendance, you know, that it's not just for those in the LGBTQ+ communities and, I think that's really nice and Beatrice you mentioned that, you know, the drinks that we had for example, people are coming, you know, they're coming with their children, it's a very family feel isn't it?
BA	Yes it is. Particularly last year we had quite a few people from, I know for myself from Real Estate who brought their children with them and it was great, it was lovely and you know that's how it should be every year I would say.

EH	Well I think we're definitely going to work on that and everyone is going to be so up for a party next year. [Giggles] There's no doubt about that, we're going to need a bigger budget. One of my other key questions about Pride is that when I was at University, I was at the University of Sussex and one of the best gay nights I used to go to was a fabulous night called Wild Fruit in one of the clubs there, but I have to say that the outfit that I used to wear to that evening. Given I'm now in my 40s, it would probably just not really appropriate for me to wear those now, so I am slightly concerned about what I might have to wear to get dressed up. Or do I even have to get dressed up? So Sam, tell me more what will my attire be when I get to party in 2021.
SL	Whatever you like basically. I've got friends with me who have dressed as plainly as it gets and I've had others who have worn the most colourful outfits they could possibly have fetched from the local fancy dress shop. It really is a day to express yourself in whatever you possibly want, regardless of how you identify, so you go ahead and dress in whatever outfits you like.
EH	I'm not getting the wild fruit outfit back out but I might go quite colourful I think. Annie what would you suggest? What do you wear when you go?
AS	Ooooo something bright, something few rainbows, a bit of face paint, you know, yeah, bright colours. Usually shorts and bright shirt I think and some jolly shoes and some of the rainbow stripe things that you put on your face with, like a, face paint thing.
EH	Well that sounds good. Sam will tell you, I'm all about the dressing up, so bright and colourful dressing up, I can definitely do. Just leaves the British weather to play ball. What's it like to participate in the march? Sam, you mentioned that, I think you'd joined in. How did you find it?
SL	It was an interesting experience actually, because we were held in a pen for about two hours at the start and this was in 2018. We didn't know why, it was a baking hot day. It was the same day when England played Sweden in the World Cup and we were genuinely unsure as to what was going on and then we found out later on that it was due to anti trans protestors holding it up. So I remember having no shade for two hours and thinking I really hope this march begins soon, but when you're actually marching itself, you never quite prepare yourself for the sheer number of people you come across in such a short space of time. When you attend the march from the side-line, you can see the parade go past, but when you're actually marching in it, you are essentially walking past hundreds and thousands of people in such a short space of time which is quite an unusual situation. You're wearing bright colours, all being very happy and being in attendance of partying and celebrations, so it was great fun. It is very tiring on the legs, and it is longer than you expect but ultimately very enjoyable,

	so I always urge people who are interested in marching to do so. I know a lot of organisations will provide that opportunity for you.
EH	Annie presumably you've participated in a march. Do you enjoy it as well?
AS	Well I love... well I love it these days but I do adopt a particular role. I go with ODL and I usually march alongside and I have a thing where I try to spot older women who are watching on, you know, behind the barriers and I go up to them and I give them a big kiss and I say "you are now a lesbian" and I have managed to convert many during the different Prides over the last few years.
EH	[Giggles] I like your strategy. I understand there's also Black Pride. How did that come about, is that sort of rated in the same way. Bea I think you said you've been to that?
BA	Yes I have been. My understanding is Black Pride was part of the main Pride march and then they sort of split off and created their own day separate to the main Pride. I believe because they wanted to celebrate being a person of colour and LGBT as well so it's held usually the day after the main Pride march in Vauxhall, in the park, just near Vauxhall station, and it's a lot of fun. It'd say it's probably a lot more intimate in terms of because it's in one location, the park is great, there's loads of different tents there as well. Different foods are there. They have a DJ that plays music all day, so for me it's more of a festival sort of feel and I quite like that as well on that side of it. I'd definitely recommend if we can, you know, not all too hung over from the day before, to try and head down to Black Pride next year.
EH	Well that sounds a great idea. It sounds to me like somebody just came up with the idea of making sure we had two days of partying and not one. I'm all in favour of that. So hopefully 2021 will see the return of Pride and I will get to play my first visit, perhaps we can conclude this podcast with some words of encouragement as to why people, including heterosexual people should also consider attending Pride next year, Bea what would you say to people to encourage them to attend?
BA	As an ally and as heterosexual, I'd say just go. Even if you don't have anybody LGBTQ in your family or a friend, it's just a great day, it's a great chance to meet new people as well. Yeah, it's just a lot of fun. I would just highly recommend going, just for the social aspect of it as well.
EH	Sounds good to me. Sam, what about you? What would you say to encourage people?
SL	It's a huge amount of fun. It's a massive street party in the centre of London for a day. Everyone is there to have a fantastic time and to support you and love is the key message, so I would strongly urge anyone who is even remotely

	intrigued or interested by the idea of attending, to do so. It really is one of the best days of the year, and for me surpasses Christmas as the day in the calendar.
EH	Wow that really is selling it. Annie, to round us off, what would you say to encourage people to come along to Pride next year?
AS	It's a wonderful day for affirming who you are and affirming your lives and your life's choices, if you are LGBT and for everybody else, it's affirming of equality, it's a firming of speaking up for our human rights.
EH	And as we record, I think everybody is conscious that that's never been more important, so thank you very much for that Annie and thank you for joining us. It has been really really interesting to hear everyone's stories, yours in particular actually to give us real context to it all. Thank you to our listeners for joining us. We really hope that you've found this interesting and useful and if you would like to get involved here at Charles Russell Speechlys, we obviously the diversity and inclusion groups, so please do get in touch with any member of those.