

# Meet the Volunteers: Carol Dow; Community Ally

In August I attended the Stonewall Scotland training day for allies which was fantastic (and funded by the University). I wasn't really sure what to expect but it was very empowering and uplifting; the trainers were lovely people with enthusiasm and commitment to their jobs. The day focused on how we, as allies, can support and encourage others to help promote an inclusive and supportive environment for everyone in the workplace. We did a little bit of roleplay which (after I overcame my initial shyness) was a lot of fun. One of the tasks we were set was to give a short presentation to the group of how our weekend went without referencing place, who we were with, or their gender; this was an example of how difficult it can be for LGBT persons being quizzed about their social life while unable to speak openly. The difficulty was eye-opening!

At the end of the day we all had to stand and make one commitment. I committed to wearing Stonewall's Rainbow Laces for my Great Scottish Run 10K, for which I was raising money for PoTS UK – a charity that supports people with the condition Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome. Rainbow Laces are part of Stonewall's campaign to stamp out homophobia in sport; wearing them on my run combined and advertised two very different, but equally important, challenges.

On October 2nd I ran in the Great Scottish Run 10K in Glasgow, finishing in 1 hour 12 minutes. I've been training for this run for 5 months after a 28 year gap from running. It was an amazing experience and I raised over £1000 for PoTS UK. My youngest son has this condition. It has been life changing for him during what should be his introduction to independent adult life and it's very hard to watch him have to come to terms with it.

Running 10K is nothing compared to the days he sometimes has.

We were 7 women (!) at the Allies training and we decided to stay in touch, and perhaps have some joint events across our respective places of work. I look forward to helping organise these. As someone with a sister who is a lesbian and a transitioning niece, I am well aware of the enormous difficulties my family have encountered and I'm enthusiastic to help support inclusion and acceptance at work. I am very proud to be part of this Staff Pride Network and to have run in my laces. They will be staying in my trainers.

*SPN will be launching an allies' membership to include all colleagues who agree with the network's aims. More information is available at <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/rainbow-laces>.*