



I identify as Lesbian and have been out since the age of 30 years, I'm now 56 years of age. My experiences within the NHS have generally been good. A previous partner of mine had breast cancer and we were both treated with the utmost respect and consideration. This was in Wakefield. The only thing that was lacking that it would have been very helpful to have been able to talk to other gay women. There was a support group but as we knew it would be heterosexual couples we didn't feel inclined to go. Despite the fact that my then partner had grown up children I was

regarded as next of kin.

The only area that I feel needs real consideration is when I have been for smear tests. It has always been awkward in that they ask you if you have an active sex life and then whether you use contraception and when you say no they don't seem to make the connection that perhaps you could be in a same sex relationship. I don't have a problem with it being on the notes that I'm lesbian I think it would save all the unnecessary questions and any awkwardness. I don't know if there is a move afoot to address this. I've also considered whether some of the female staff may feel awkward about carrying out this procedure.

I have had a few friends that feel their sexual orientation has had bearing on their mental health and that they have been discriminated against. This is really not surprising because myths, misconceptions and prejudices can still be a big issue. I've personally been very fortunate in having a supportive family and group of friends.



Models have been used to protect the story-teller's anonymity