Story 1:

My LGBTQ+ story started before I joined the railway, whilst working for myself as a horticulturist. Whilst in this role, I kept my private life very much separate from work life due to the worries that my customers would no longer want me working for them. Once I left to join the railway, many of them then became friends and totally accepted me 100% for who I was. My worries totally void. Once I joined the railway, I kept myself to myself to start with as it’s a male dominated industry. It soon became obvious that sexuality wasn’t an issue, and I could be my true self. To this day, I come to work confident and the true me. I have a great relationship with staff throughout the company and now I’m not just a train driver and Health & Safety rep, but I am on the leadership team on the companies LGBTQ+ networking group. This has been put in place to help anyone feeling uncomfortable, unsure or worried on any aspects of their sexuality. As well and family and friends’ sexuality worries, we are here to support and advise and offer the help staff may need. I couldn’t be prouder of what I am now involved in at work and the connections made throughout the company. This has been a fantastic career from day one and now I have spread my wings and can help others enjoy their careers as I do mine, feeling safe and confident in their workplace and hopefully life.

Story 2:

I joined the railway as an apprentice at Transpennine Express at the age of 18. Almost immediately I could tell I was welcomed to the railway with open arms. Throughout my time working on the railway, I have met dozens of new friends, and hundreds of colleagues who all support each other, and are inclusive of everyone. One of the first things I was told is that the railway is one big family, regardless of your brand, job role, age, religion, sexuality, you are always welcome. And that has rung true. I couldn’t be happier than where I am now in my current job role as a conductor, with hundreds of supportive colleagues and friends, and support networks and other networking groups for everyone, meeting people from all walks of life, with different experiences and knowledge, from across the nation.

Story 3:

I work for East Midlands Railway (EMR) and I always feel that I can be myself at work, we have a great team who always make you feel welcome and valued. I joined the staff LGBTQ+ employee network which I feel is important (as a gay man myself) to be a part of it can help bring up any issues or suggest changes and to have more representation within the company. One of the things I'm very proud of doing is suggesting and helping to set up our *Stronger Together Library* which is an online resource library showcasing LGBTQ+ books, films, TV shows and Podcasts. People can take a look to see what has been recommended and can also suggest their own titles to add to the library. I think it's a wonderful resource to have and have found many hidden gems on there, I can't wait to add more!

Story 4:

I currently work as a team leader in the booking offices and some years ago Lou Mather and others from my company Northern Trains worked hard to produce an EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) policy for our company. I then went on to work with our EDI group and company and was inspired to spread the great work that Northern do to make sure all are welcomed in the workplace. I have become great friends with people from the LGBGTQ+ community and feel great pride that my company are creating a workplace where all are welcome, and discrimination is not tolerated in any form. I am proud to be Northern and I have a real sense of pride in the work we do to promote equality.

Story 5:

Our family of four boarded the Polar Express, a vintage train that looked like it had been plucked straight from the classic children's film. Our two autistic children, aged 6 and 5, were bursting with excitement as we settled into our seats. The train's staff welcomed us with warm smiles and handed out steaming mugs of hot chocolate. As the train chugged out of the station, we were enveloped in the soothing sounds of the locomotive. The rhythmic choo-chooing and clickity-clacking of the wheels on the tracks proved to be a balm for our autistic children, who often find comfort in repetitive noises. They sat back in their seats, mesmerized by the symphony of sounds, as the train picked up speed and the scenery outside began to unfold. The kids gazed out the window, watching in awe as the world outside transformed into a winter wonderland. Snow-dusted fields and forests stretched as far as the eye could see, punctuated by tiny villages and hamlets that seemed to slumber under a blanket of white. Train conductors and staff members burst into song and dance, spreading festive cheer to all the passengers. Santa Claus himself appeared at the door of our carriage, his booming laughter and twinkling eyes sending our little ones into raptures. He handed each of us a shiny silver bell, its gentle tinkle a reminder of the magic of the season. As the train continued on its journey, the scenery outside grew even more enchanting. All too soon, the Polar Express pulled back into the station, the journey's end marked by the sound of sleigh bells and the cheers of happy passengers. Our children turned to us with sparkling eyes, their faces flushed with excitement. "That was the best day ever!" they chorused, their voices filled with the wonder of the experience.

Story 6:

Me and my partner travel down to London to catch some West End shows. We always travel to London via train, as it easier than driving for 3/4 hours and is always a pleasant journey. Last week we went to see the show Titanique, because it was my partners birthday we both treated ourselves and got first class train tickets. The service we got was brilliant and we will definitely be doing this again!

Story 7:

I was once on crutches and commuting to and from work in Wakefield. Because I found it difficult to get on and off the train, the conductor used to get the ramp out for me. This was great support for me as I meant I could still get to and from work – I wouldn’t have been able to do that in a car! I am so pleased he was able to help me – he was really hot too!