

A Good Officer.

What makes a good officer?

In my opinion a good officer, has to be someone who can do their job, but at the same time, being helpful, supportive and able to put aside prejudices.

During my twenty month sentence I can say that 'good' officers are hard to come by. They're like finding the Leprechaun's gold at the end of the rainbow. Or so I thought.

My incarceration began at HMP Birmingham. Amidst the shake up of it going back to the public sector, I thought that finding a 'decent' officer would be nigh on impossible. How I was wrong.

I thought my time would be harder in prison as I'm openly gay and thought I'd come up against homophobes who wanted to cause me harm. As a result of this meant I spent the majority of my time in my cell not feeling comfortable enough to come out and socialise with others.

An officer noticed this and approached me, one association period, and asked if I was alright. To which I half-heartedly replied 'Yes'. There was no feeling this officer, she went on to say that if I needed to talk about anything then I could talk to her. I thanked her and she left my cell.

A few days went by and still my mind wasn't right. Again the same officer approached me and asked if I was okay. This time I felt compelled to open up to her, which isn't like me at all.

I opened up to her about my sexuality and the concerns that I had. We sat for what felt like hours talking, she told me about a new LGBT group starting up, and asked if I would like to come along. I was hesitant, she picked up on this and asked what my concerns were. I told her that my concern was making myself vulnerable by going to the group.

She went on to reassure me that this wouldn't happen as she'd be there and wouldn't tolerate any untoward behaviour.

This female officer, was brilliant, she brought me out of my comfort zone, and supported me along the way. She spoke to and treated me like a human being and not just a person with a number.

Thanks to her, I went on to become HMP Birmingham's first ever LGBT Representative for the wing. I was now the face of the group, helping others join and supporting them with their own issues.

To sum up this officer helped me with my confidence and gave me a sense of purpose whilst in prison. She really made me feel at ease, and for that I thank her. I really appreciate what she did for me.

I've now moved establishments and am more confident and have no worries about telling people about my sexuality.

This is in my opinion A Good Officer, and what any new officer should strive to be.

I really can't thank her enough. She's changed me for the better.