Pro-Chancellor,
Sophie Cook is an RAF veteran, writer, speaker and broadcaster, who became the first
transgender woman to work in football’s Premier League as club photographer for AFC
Bournemouth. Today, she draws on her experiences to raise awareness of diversity and
inclusion and to campaign for improved mental health care.
As a child growing up in Bournemouth, Sophie – who was born as Steve – felt a deep sense of
confusion and dislocation. It wasn’t until early adulthood that Steve realised this profound
unease stemmed from severe gender dysphoria. Identifying as a female imprisoned in a male
body, he suffered serious bouts of depression and addiction. In his early thirties, Steve made
the decision to transition, undergoing hormone therapy and attending a gender identity clinic.
However, a life-changing event unexpectedly caused him to re-evaluate his priorities and he
abandoned all plans to live as a woman. Over the next 15 years, Steve struggled to function as
a husband, father and son and has spoken candidly about having daily suicidal thoughts. In
2015, while working as AFC Bournemouth’s official photographer, he overcame personal
obstacles and revived the transition process to become Sophie.
Sophie recalls the moment she came out to her colleagues at the football club, and particularly
the support she received from the manager and players. Spurred on by these experiences, she
has since used her public platform to help and empower others. Ovs. 4>]TJ
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