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Chair’s Report

Hello!

This last year, the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic and second year of my time as the Chair of Birmingham LGBT, has flown by.

The resilience and adaptability of the staff team and volunteers at the LGBT Centre and working on the projects that we deliver is second to none. Some change is good, and we continue to reflect and grow. A ‘new norm’ has developed since the end of the lockdown periods and I’m so proud of how everyone continues to deliver services and find a new rhythm in these rapidly evolving times and carve a new way forward. Thank you to you all.

Forward, being the motto of Birmingham, is something we must all remember. As we move forward together, we do so by embracing the full rich diversity of all those within the LGBTQ+ communities and its vibrant intersectionality, for the good of all. Throughout the year the Board of Trustees and I took a root and branch review of our own equality outputs. Although we of course have equality and diversity at our core and as one of our values (as well as Passion, Community, Respect and Empowerment), we must never be complacent and always continue to learn.

Looking forward, we will further diversify our Board of Trustees to reflect the makeup of Birmingham and beyond and continue to ensure we enable all members of our communities to grow and achieve their full potential. On this front, it’s excellent to see community groups developing and members of our own staff and volunteer team moving on into other roles, after being part of the Birmingham LGBT family. Congratulations and best wishes to you all.

Looking further forward into 2022, our city will host the Commonwealth Games. There are debates to be held around equalities through the Commonwealth so let’s grasp this chance to be heard globally. But let’s remember to champion diversity and equalities with passion and respect and I hope that you can join us in one way or another over the year ahead, be that online or in real life.

I look forward to continuing to work with Director, Steph Keeble and both existing and new board members to ensure this most diverse of cities is heard and seen at its best.

Ian Hyde - Chair
Birmingham LGBT’s mission is to build a vibrant, diverse lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans community in Birmingham in which individuals can realise their full potential and have equal access to all the city has to offer.
Director’s Report

It’s been a challenging year for Birmingham LGBT with much of the period being spent in lockdown due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. We first locked down in March 2020 and had to adapt our services for online delivery, which included phone and digital wellbeing services, counselling and IDVA support services. We also tendered for work from Birmingham City Council to develop a campaign around Covid-19 targeting the community; this included research into the impact of the pandemic on the LGBT+ community which was profound in terms of increased isolation from LGBT+ community groups, from bars, and also once the LGBT centre closed.

Throughout this period, we continued to provide services to the community and introduced new services to meet the needs that were emerging including a telephone befriending service run by trained volunteers and peer mentors and additional counselling to support people with poor mental health. We also secured funding to support LGBT+ people seeking asylum during this period, which enabled us to provide food parcels, netbooks, and dongles to those experiencing digital poverty and therefore could not access vital support networks and services as a result.

We moved events online including the first digital version of the annual SHOUT festival, Shout: At Home, alongside online coffee mornings and quizzes to keep people connected. We reviewed our training and delivered online training to a range of professionals in LGBT awareness, trans awareness and domestic abuse. We reopened with a full Covid risk assessment in place in September, three days a week, for face-to-face services (one-to one) but kept all groups online due to escalating virus rates. Once again, we locked down between January and March 2021 and continued to offer digital services to the community. Several of our projects were put on hold during this period including the Rainbow Project,
a domestic violence groupwork project funded by Comic Relief, and an older people's social care training project funded by Ageing Better. We are planning to pick them up during recovery.

Due to the pandemic, we were unable to open on Christmas Day this year however we ran a social on Zoom and provided people with Christmas hampers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our staff and volunteers for their hard work and dedication to the organisation, the community and their service users through this difficult and challenging time. I would like to thank all of our funders, especially the National Lottery Community Fund, Migrant Exchange and Comic Relief for additional vital financial support during the pandemic. I would also like to say a big thank you to our Board of Trustees for their support throughout the year, especially our Chair, Ian Hyde and our Treasurer, Simon Hale who have both provided me with support and guidance through this difficult period.

I look forward to the challenges of the year ahead as we recover from the impact of Covid-19 on our community.

Steph Keeble - Director
Year in Numbers

- 113 New Ageing Better participants
- 16 Peer Mentors / Befrienders trained
- 1 COVID public health campaign
- 39 Christmas Hampers given out
- 38 Trans Awareness Talks
- 1 Online Arts Festival
OUR SERVICES
It’s been a really busy year for the Wellbeing Team, with the team adapting to delivering services from their homes while the centre was closed during the Covid-19 pandemic. The growing demand for wellbeing support services for the LGBTQ+ community has meant that the team have had to evolve their skill sets to ensure that we are providing a truly inclusive and flexible service.

One of the major changes for the team this year was the evolution of our wellbeing support service into an LGBT+ affirmative counselling service. We secured funding to offer free sessions with fully trained counsellors who supported members of the community to make positive changes to their mental health and wellbeing. These were made possible by several different funding streams and we are so grateful to be able to offer this much needed service to our community in Birmingham and across the West Midlands.

The Trans Inclusion Project has continued to deliver successful services across the city, including training, policy support and development as well as counselling and trans wellbeing support. The project funding has enabled a wider understanding of trans specific needs across the staff team and we have had a positive impact on the understanding of trans people’s needs within health and support services across Birmingham with consistently high feedback and a waiting list for our training.

Ageing Better continued to support community groups throughout the pandemic, particularly around accessing funding to enable to them to meet online or more safely in person as venues began to open up. We are hoping that we will soon be able to have groups meet safely within the centre once again, as we recognise the importance for safe spaces for the community. The project is very much one of supporting the development of self-sustaining groups, and this has become even more important during these months of pandemic.

The Changing Practice in Adult Social Care project was heavily impacted by the pandemic, with the closedown of care homes and social care settings meaning we were unable to deliver training to their staff. Delivery was officially paused however work continued with Stonewall Housing on developing the training throughout the summer, ready to launch when care homes reopen.

After recruiting a new Festival Manager in the summer, we made the decision to develop SHOUT 2020 as a digital programme. The arts were particularly badly hit during the first year of the pandemic, and the decision was made to create as many opportunities as possible for artists to find work with us. Large artist commissions were refocussed into smaller micro-commissions, allowing more artists the chance to engage with the process. Some of the booked artists were unable to produce their show in a digital format, but for many this proved one of the few chances they had for work all year. Offering the chance to engage with a cultural programme at home worked well, and we will take this learning forwards, offering a hybrid model for SHOUT 2021.

Jo Muskett - Operations Manager, Wellbeing Services
Sexual Health Services

Birmingham LGBT Centre has partnered with University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Trust since 2015 to deliver LGBTQ focussed sexual health services across Birmingham and Solihull as part of the Umbrella sexual health service.

At the start of the year March 2020, the country had entered lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This had a significant impact on our sexual health services as we were unable to deliver face-to-face client services for a significant proportion of the year.

Adapting to the challenging situation that lockdown presented was something we set our minds to in order to continue to provide sexual health information, guidance and support as well as the ability to provide STI and HIV testing to the LGBT community.

Due to the challenges that lockdown restrictions and Covid-19 safety measures have presented, our figures for HIV and STI testing are significantly lower than previous years, however looking forward to 2021-22, with the success of the vaccination programme and restrictions easing, we are hopeful to rebuild our sexual health services to the level they were pre-pandemic.

Adapted STI & HIV testing offer

Our usual assisted STI self-sampling testing or HIV POC testing services were disrupted with the Covid-19 lockdown measures. With the LGBT centre’s closure and without face-to-face services, we adapted our service model to deliver HIV and STI Testing in a new and innovative way. This new method is ‘Guided Home HIV & STI Testing’.

This innovation was launched with a campaign called 123STOPHIV. It was inspired by articles released during the summer of 2020 which theorised that with lockdown and social distancing measures in place, there would have been less high risk sexual exposures to HIV happening in recent months meaning less people with recently acquired HIV (a cohort we know to be highly infectious due to not being aware of their HIV status) in the community, therefore creating a key opportunity to test people for HIV and pathway people depending on results into HIV treatment, PrEP or behavioural interventions.

This campaign involved service users being posted a HIV POCT and a STI self-sampling kit to carry out at home. Our sexual health staff arranged video calls to service users to guide them through the testing process and to interpret the results for them, offer any advice and support and make any necessary referrals to other services.

This service was promoted via social media along with other pertinent information on HIV & STI prevention.
Peer Groups

The sexual health team facilitate various peer support groups for sections of the LGBTQ community with specific needs or where there may be barriers to accessing other services. These groups include: RANG – a group for South Asian and Middle Eastern MSM, Married Men’s Group (MMG) – a group for MSM who are married to women, LBTQ Women’s group and Unuh - group for African and Afro-Caribbean MSM. Due to lockdown restrictions, we were unable to run face-to-face peer group meetings at the LGBT centre so adapted to the circumstances by delivering our peer groups online via Zoom. These have been generally well engaged with as they were a valuable method of staying in contact with others during the stressful period of the pandemic and lockdowns.

New Facebook groups have also been developed during lockdown. The Women’s Forum is a private Facebook group run by our LBT women’s worker Georgia Hinton. This group has been very successful and has approximately 250 members. The group has ground rules and criteria for admission and the aim of the group is to provide peer support and a safe online space for LBTQ women. Well Body and Mind Men is a private Facebook group for GBT men. This is run in a similar manner to the women’s forum and has approximately 120 members. In the initial stages of lockdown, the sexual health team developed several of the online methods of engagement with the community. These included online quiz evenings and weekly Monday morning socials. These were all well engaged with during the first several months of lockdown however we have gradually phased these out as restrictions started to ease and we were able to offer services once again.

We also created additional groups and workshops during the pandemic, including.

- Let’s get quizzical – LGBT quiz night for the LGBT community this was hosted over zoom with a focus on sexual health and ran monthly throughout the year
- LGBT – e-café – a weekly social get-together hosted on zoom
- RANG – social support over zoom for South Asian / gay bi-sexual and msm
- MMG – married men’s group
- Anxiety workshop – an online workshop exploring ways to manage anxiety
- LBTQ + women’s social – social and peer support group for LBTQ+ women hosted twice monthly over zoom
- Poetry workshop – a series of 4 digital poetry workshops hosted on zoom
- LGBT socially distanced walks – a series of guided walks around places of historical interest in the west midlands, including art deco buildings / a badges and buttons tour of the jewellery quarter
- Between the sheets – sexual empowerment and assertiveness workshop for LBTQ+ women
- The price of pleasure – a participant led discussion on the lifestyle choices of gay / bi / msm – ‘the impact of the highly sexualised commercial gay scene and compulsive use
Chemfidential is Birmingham LGBT’s Chemsex support service which aims to support those who may need help relating to chemsex or problematic use of substances (colloquially referred to as chems). The service supports individuals around a multitude of issues, including harm reduction measures such as consent and setting boundaries, approaches to safer sex, awareness of chems and possible detrimental effects, and can facilitate links into counselling, psychosexual services and drug services where needed.

Birmingham LGBT is funded by Children in Need to deliver a youth service for Trans, Non-Binary and gender questioning young people between the ages of 13 and 19 years of age.

At the start of the year in March 2020, the country had entered lockdown due to the Covid 19 pandemic. This had a significant impact on our youth service provision as we were unable to deliver face-to-face client services for a significant proportion of the year.

Adapting to the challenging situation that lockdown presented was something we set our minds to so we could continue to provide a service and contact to prevent the effects of isolation on this vulnerable group of young people.

Pre-pandemic the Emerge youth group was a thriving, regular social group numbering approximately 20 to 30 young people. During lockdown and for Covid-19 safety restrictions we have had to run the group online. Various methods were trialled such as Zoom and maintaining contact by email however these were not successful. As lockdown started there was some additional disruption to this service due to the lead youth worker’s post becoming vacant for a short period. Attendance numbers at the group dwindled both due to lockdown and the disruption in lead youth worker facilitation, however the one-to-one support engagement and referrals into the service have maintained a steady pace. Significant engagement took place once we had recruited a lead youth worker, supported by two sessional youth workers.

The young people of Emerge preferred to keep in contact via platforms such as WhatsApp and the favoured platform for facilitating online group meets was Discord. Once Discord was engaged with the group has started to re-form and develop.

Online group attendance numbers average six to eight attendees. We hope to resume face-to-face meetings for this group as soon as we are able once Covid-19 restrictions ease and we can ensure safety of group members and staff.

Matt Lopez – Sexual Health Services Manager
Volunteers form an essential part of the Birmingham LGBT team helping us to provide services and supporting the operation of the LGBT Centre. Volunteers also support our work by carrying out a meet and greet role at events including Shout Festival, Pink Picnic and Pride.
Volunteering

This has been a busy year with 5 new roles being developed. Our befriending role and service was launched in May to support people who are socially isolated because of lockdown. Seven befriending matches were made, with 2 people receiving calls throughout the year from their volunteer. Mentoring was adapted to run over the phone and online with volunteers supporting people via email, video calls and phone calls. Eleven mentoring matches were made throughout the year. People had support with coming out to friends and family, gender affirmation, reducing anxiety and increasing wellbeing, and social networking. Despite lockdown we were still able to reach almost 50% of our estimated volunteering hours.

Birmingham LGBT volunteering service falls under the Sexual Health Services and aims to improve wellbeing, sexual health, and opportunities for LGBTQI+ community across Birmingham, Solihull and West Midlands.

Our volunteering roles are developed to support services across the organisation, creating opportunities for inclusion, visibility, and collaboration within and across the communities we serve and work with.

- Meet and Greet (supports whole organisation)
- Sexual Health Outreach (Sexual Health services)
- Admin Support (whole organisation)
- Peer Mentoring (whole organisation)
- Training Support (whole organisation)
- Befriending (whole organisation)
- Men’s Forum and Social (Sexual Health services)
- MMG Online Group Facilitation (Sexual Health services)
- RANG Workshop Support (Sexual Health services)
- LGBTQ+ Women’s Online Support (Sexual Health services)

All volunteers follow our recruitment process of completing an application form and attending an informal interview over the phone or via video call, before being accepted onto our core training programme. Four cohorts of volunteers attended online training throughout the year. New volunteers attended three sessions of two hours over three days via Zoom. Afterwards DBS and reference checks are run. Additional training for each role is given once checks and DBS are both successfully completed.
Meet and Greet: this role has been placed on hold throughout the pandemic. Requires core training and support from on-duty staff showing new volunteers onsite safety processes and procedures. Relevant policies and reception handbook need to be read before working solo on front desk and supports services across the organisation.

Sexual Health Out Reach: this role has been adapted to run online with volunteers supporting staff at online quizzes, Women’s and Men’s forums and support group meetings, MMG and RANG groups have also had volunteers in attendance. Usually, we require at least two hours shadowing staff on reception to be more informed of the services we run, alongside introductions to the Sexual Health Team with a schedule of events, pop up clinics and condom runs. Once core training and introductions are complete, volunteers have direct contact with relevant staff members for volunteering activity. When the time allows, volunteers will be invited to support sexual health staff in person at the centre or off-site at specific events.

Admin Support: this role has mostly been placed on hold. One volunteer has been supporting the volunteer coordinator create a toolkit to help volunteer mentors access internal/external support services. Requires an introduction to our administrator who will train and coordinate volunteer activity once core training complete. Admin support is ad hoc and supports services across the organisation.

Peer Mentoring: this role has been adapted to run online with training and sessions taking place online, via video calls, phone, and email. Requires core training and a further full day of training. 10 new volunteers received Peer Mentor training throughout the year bringing the total number of peer mentors to 17. Mentoring supports clients accessing services across the organisation and social groups. 107 mentoring hours have been delivered this year.

Befriending: this role was developed during lockdown and launched in May, with 7 people who had trained as peer mentors signing up to additional training for the role, as they are accessing the centre phone lines to make calls to participants. Training for this role is delivered with the Peer Mentor training, as there are similarities within the roles. We have 10 new volunteers trained to make befriending calls. 105.5 befriending hours were delivered this year.

Volunteer case study/blog contribution: Alice Mottram

When asked about their motivations for volunteering with the Birmingham LGBT Centre, most of the volunteers on my training cohort stated that, besides altruistic responsibility, they wanted to meet new people. Having moved back to my hometown in the Midlands and lacking a social life beyond my parents, I too wanted to connect with others like me in my local area. Volunteering with the Centre would enable me to both give back to and gain a community. When I had first inquired about volunteering with the Centre last December, the coronavirus was something happening elsewhere in the world. Now that we are in the midst of a global pandemic, the Centre has had to adapt its services. I am a member of the first cohort of volunteers whose training has been conducted online over Zoom; a video-telephoning technology, which allows users to host group meetings in which you can see and hear one another. The internet currently marks the limit of our safe social contact. Without a platform like Zoom, we wouldn’t have been able to engage with training.

So it was that in April, sat at home with a laptop, I first met the other volunteers in my training cohort.
We appear to one another onscreen in a panel of talking heads; sat variously at kitchen tables and on balconies, in front of band posters and potted plants, with dogs in laps and cats lounged across the back of sofa cushions.

During our first session, we took turns sharing personal details about ourselves: our sexual orientation and gender identity; our relationship to the LGBT community; our motivations for volunteering. In a later session on diversity and inclusion, we discussed whether we had ever had to hide our sexuality and if we had ever been discriminated against or harassed. Without having ever met in person, we have shared our sometimes difficult stories with one another. I have felt safe and at ease to speak openly in these sessions, and I have enjoyed listening to others. I think this speed with which we’ve opened up has been extraordinary.

Unfamiliar situations and new people often make me feel anxious. I have learned to worry about whether or not it is safe for me to disclose that I’m a lesbian, how I can come out to people, and how they might react. I have learned to moderate my posture and the pitch of my voice, like that might provide me with some plausible deniability if I feel the need to disguise my lesbianism. For me, it is a rare experience and one which I do not take for granted to be surrounded and supported by other self-identified LGBT people, where I am able to be myself without reservations. Despite the Centre having closed its doors, volunteer training has provided me with this safe space.

Without having experienced training in person, I wonder whether our quick familiarity and candour among the trainee cohort has been in part facilitated by the video call platform. We are each safely behind our screens; free to turn off our cameras or microphones, to leave the meeting and shut our computers if we want.

But, I cannot deny that I look forward to the day the Centre can reopen as a community centre in the offline world. We all wanted to volunteer so that we could meet new people, and we have, kind of. I still want to meet the people with whom I’ve shared some of my most difficult memories for real, without the pixellated vision of a webcam or the delay of a temperamental internet connection. We’ll be able to complete our training with a tour of the Centre, and maybe we’ll go into the Village afterwards like friends do.

I hope that when we are able to look back on this crisis, we might have a renewed appreciation for face-to-face social interaction, the irreplaceable value of community spaces, and our responsibilities of mutual care. These are lessons which I will endeavour to remember when I can, at last, fulfil my role as a volunteer.

Sian Finn – Volunteering & Peer Mentoring Coordinator
Trans Inclusion Project

Birmingham LGBT continued to deliver the Trans Inclusion Project throughout the period offering culturally competent wellbeing support and counselling to members of the trans community. During this period, we supported 18 trans and non-binary people in the counselling service and 34 trans and non-binary people in the wellbeing support service. We also continued to offer awareness raising training and policy support to the health and social care sector as part of this project.

I found our talks very informative and extremely helpful. You helped me see so many things more clearly which helped me tremendously. I always looked forward to hearing from you and your calm approach always helped me so very much. I can't thankyou enough for your kind words, your encouragement, and your gentle soul. You have given me hope for the future and may I say have considerable compassion to help in any circumstance.

Beneficiary Counselling Service

Training

This year I delivered a number of successful Transgender Awareness Training sessions. Following the announcement of lockdown restrictions in March 2020 and moving to home working, these training sessions were converted into an online format and delivered remotely. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with participants particularly praising interactivity, use of technology and the sessions being a welcoming environment where they felt safe to ask questions. Demand for these sessions has been extremely high throughout the year, and a good number of people have signed up to a waiting list for future sessions. The sessions also provided a strong opportunity to build relationships with health and social care organisations in the Birmingham and Solihull area, which will prove useful when engaging with them for policy support and consultancy work moving forwards.

I have attended quite a few training sessions over Zoom since lockdown happened and this has to be the best one i have attended so far. It was interesting, interactive, and very well planned out. I am a trainer within my current role and would say it has really given me food for thought after attending the training.

Demand for these sessions has been extremely high throughout the year, and a good number of people have signed up to a waiting list for future sessions. The sessions also provided a strong opportunity to build relationships with health and social care organisations in the Birmingham and Solihull area, which will prove useful when engaging with them for policy support and consultancy work moving forwards.

The Trans Advisory Group continued to meet via video conferencing and helped develop a set of draft templates which will be used to work with organisations to implement policies regarding supporting transgender staff and service users.

Robyn Foley - Strategic Development Officer
IDVA Service

The Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) service at Birmingham LGBT is a vital service funded by Henry Smith, for LGBT people who are experiencing abuse from their partners, ex partners, or family members.

Domestic abuse encompasses various types of abuse such as physical, sexual, financial, psychological, stalking, forced marriage, amongst others. Our IDVA service therefore offers a safe space for service users to discuss their options and seek advice and support, tailored to their situation. This provides a platform for service users to then make informed decisions about their situation.

Our IDVA service also provides crisis intervention support, as well as advocacy, emotional, practical support, and safety planning.

We started the year in lockdown and had to adapt our service to support people online and over the phone. Victims experienced a range of additional difficulties with many services being in lockdown through this period and many finding it difficult to access support if they were locked down with an abusive partner or family member.

From April 2020 to March 2021, the IDVA service supported 88 new service users, in addition to providing ongoing support to current service users.

The Rainbow groupwork project was put on hold during this period as the women were unable to attend the project sessions virtually. During the year our Senior IDVA went on maternity leave so we had reduced staff cover for six months of the year.

In March we applied to the Police and Crime Commissioner’s office to extend the service to offer LGBT specialist IDVA services in the following areas Wolverhampton, Coventry, Dudley, Walsall and the Black Country.

*Steph Keeble - Director*
SHOUT
FESTIVAL OF QUEER ARTS AND CULTURE

YOU ARE STEPPING INTO QUEER HISTORY!
50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY OF CELEBRATION, OF FINDING YOURSELF AND EACH OTHER
50 YEARS OF PARTIES AND PROTEST.
SHOUT Festival

SHOUT Festival 2020 took place in the context of the global pandemic that forced almost all arts events to turn online. Emphasising the mantra that “community isn’t just a shared physical space” and taking place during the second national lockdown in November 2020, the online festival sought to give artists and audiences a sense of community and connection.

Some of the festival programme was drawn from planned live events or projects that had been in discussion for face-to-face activity, which were then reworked by artists: but much of it was specifically designed for online, in response to open calls and micro-commissions.

By operating online, without the constraints of needing a slot in a venue, SHOUT was able to provide opportunities for more artists, especially early-career artists and those working at a very small scale; and those developing ideas at work-in-progress stage.

"As a couple of older women, we’re often really tired on weeknights, plus the city centre can feel a bit sketchy and unsafe for us, so this is much more accessible. Last year I think we came into town to see one or two things, but this time we’ve booked 8 or 9. Loving all of it so far, and we’ve seen some stuff that had broadened our view of what is possible by way of queer performance art. I can feel tears come as I write this, as lockdown is so grim and scary, and having an opportunity to feel connected to our community, to experience something challenging and exciting, and to learn about the experiences of others, is just joyful. Seriously, it’s a lifesaver for which we are really grateful."

– SHOUT At Home audience member

KEY STATS & FINDINGS:

- SHOUT: At Home welcomed over 8,500 attendances, which is more than three times the number of live attendances at events in the successful 2019 SHOUT Festival.
- Audience feedback highlighted that the online activities provided a ‘worthwhile cultural experience’ and helped people to ‘feel connected to the LGBTQ+ community. For many of our community, attending queer arts events online was an important part of feeling connected during a pandemic that limited our face-to-face social contact.
- The online festival enabled audiences to attend who had not previously been able to, for reasons of geography, disability, or time. 44% of the audience had never attended SHOUT Festival before, while 52% were from outside the West Midlands.
- SHOUT maintained its trend from 2019 of attracting young and diverse audiences, with 25–34-year-olds the most likely to attend, and 25% of the audience were non-white.

- Adam Pushkin - Creative Producer
Ageing Better LGBT Hub

The year April 2020 to March 2021 was to be the last year of the Ageing Better in Birmingham programme, but the National Lottery Community Fund took the decision to extend the programme across England by another year, so that each Ageing Better programme could continue to support community groups and activities for people aged 50 and over during the difficult times of the pandemic, when increases in isolation and loneliness were an inevitable outcome of the very necessary pandemic measures.

The work of the Ageing Better LGBT Hub was severely hampered by the Covid-19 restriction measures in this year; it’s difficult to fulfil your purpose of bringing people together in social groups when doing so isn’t possible. However, the groups and I worked hard to support their members, and many of the groups were able to transition to online events, increased use of social media (such as WhatsApp groups) and keeping in touch by phone and text.

I supported 13 groups, five of which successfully applied to the Ageing Better Transition Fund to resource moving to online activities. I held meetings with each group to discuss what their plans were and how we could help to develop them. I also took the opportunity to make groups aware of the emergency community offers that were becoming available across Birmingham, to support older adults in need of extra support with food and medicines.

Around 350 events were held by existing groups, and 113 people of all ages, who had not been involved with Ageing Better group activities before, participated in these events alongside regular group members. There were discussions with a variety of other people who were planning and promoting new activities.

There are barriers to engagement with online activities, such as lack of skills and confidence, having no access to suitable equipment and the expense of paying for online data. I worked with the Ageing Better team to overcome these barriers as part of the Ageing Better Digital Pilot, which worked with a small number of groups with differing needs. I supported InteGreat Theatre, the diverse theatre group for hearing impaired and hearing people, with advice and access to a new tablet, so a member who was shielding (while in-person meetups were possible) could continue to take part in the rehearsals and benefit from socialising with the group. The device meant they could be ‘in the room’ with the others:

"It has been really interesting trying to think outside of the box and come up with new creative ways to create drama using the [devices]. It certainly is challenging but has given us a new way to run our drama sessions and opened up more opportunities for us for recording rather than having everyone’s faces on a zoom layout."

InteGreat Theatre
All the groups were sent information and tips on setting up online events, using social media apps to keep in touch, and put in touch with local services who could support them to gain skills and confidence. As restrictions lifted after the first lockdown, groups were sent guidance on how to meet safely in person again.

Birmingham LGBT wanted to reach out to other people who were isolated or had become isolated during the lockdowns. We set up an online ‘e-CAFÉ’, a friendly, informal, safe space to chat, facilitated by me and other colleagues from across our teams. Some of the café sessions were themed, including one about gardening on a budget, an interesting topic which also enabled greater wellbeing.

These, and other additional activities we organised, were advertised through our newsletter which was being published fortnightly, providing another way to keep the LGBT+ community informed about social activities, keeping us connected. Our work with care providers includes meetings with Gracewell of Sutton Coldfield (a private nursing home), which led to a new Pride event attended by staff, residents and senior managers from the Gracewell network, which made ITV news.

Maria Hughes – Ageing Better Network Enabler
## Financial Statement

**Income & Expenditure as of 31st March 2021**

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<td>26,619</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24,384</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total income</td>
<td>107,826</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>730,774</td>
<td>838,600</td>
<td>865,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure on:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charitable activities</td>
<td>8 80,116</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>692,100</td>
<td>772,216</td>
<td>768,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET INCOME / (EXPENDITURE)</td>
<td>27,710</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38,674</td>
<td>66,384</td>
<td>96,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSFER BETWEEN FUNDS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</td>
<td>27,710</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38,674</td>
<td>66,384</td>
<td>96,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund balances at 1 April 2020</td>
<td>213,055</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>199,115</td>
<td>452,170</td>
<td>355,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund balances at 31 March 2021</td>
<td>240,765</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>237,789</td>
<td>518,554</td>
<td>452,170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities also complies with the requirements for an income and expenditure account under the Companies Act 2006.
Balance Sheet as of 31st March 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangible assets</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7,439</td>
<td>9,240</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debtors</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50,425</td>
<td>57,894</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash at bank and in hand</td>
<td></td>
<td>469,004</td>
<td>400,857</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>519,429</td>
<td>458,751</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(8,313)</td>
<td>(15,821)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net current assets</td>
<td></td>
<td>511,116</td>
<td>442,930</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total assets less current liabilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>518,555</td>
<td>452,170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income funds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted funds</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>237,790</td>
<td>199,115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted funds – designated</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted funds – general</td>
<td></td>
<td>240,765</td>
<td>213,055</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>518,555</td>
<td>452,170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The company is entitled to the exemption from the audit requirement contained in section 477 of the Companies Act 2006, for the year ended 31 March 2021. No member of the company has deposited a notice, pursuant to section 476, requiring an audit of these accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.
Funders

Birmingham LGBT would like to thank the following funders for their support:

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust
National Lottery Community Fund (Awards for All & Reaching Communities)
Arts Council England
National Lottery Heritage Fund
Southside Bid
Manchester Airport
Gowling WLG
The Leathersellers' Company Charitable Fund
Henry Smith Foundation
Comic Relief
Children in Need
Garfield Weston Foundation
Ageing Better in Birmingham (BVSC)
Browne Jacobson LLP
Galliard Homes LTD
Talisman Trust
Serco
Unite The Union

We would also like to thank our partners, stakeholders, volunteers and beneficiaries.
Community Group Profile

Bards and Books is one of only two LGBT book clubs meeting in Birmingham. They have around 14 members, nearly all of whom are over 60, and for nearly seven years they have been meeting monthly at the Birmingham LGBT Centre.

They thoroughly enjoy sharing their views on the book or poetry set for that month and have lively, informed and joyful discussions. The meetings really do make a difference to their wellbeing and provide vital contact for some who would otherwise be isolated.

In April 2020, they had to suspend their meetings, but the group decided that it was vital to try to keep going online, using Zoom. The free version did not allow the meetings to go on long enough, and a paid subscription was urgently needed. Bards & Books applied to the Ageing Better ‘Transition Fund’ and were successful, awarded funds to cover a year’s subscription to Zoom and an in-person visit to Birmingham’s historic Winterbourne Gardens, when relaxing of the lockdown allowed.
Christmas Day

This year due to the pandemic we were unable to run our annual Christmas day celebration at the LGBT centre as we were only open for one-to-one appointments with social distancing and masks. We are aware that Christmas is a very difficult time for many LGBT people who may be estranged from their families of origin and that it would be a very difficult year due to the pandemic so wanted to try and do something so people would not be alone and isolated. This Christmas we decided to run a Zoom get together on Christmas Day with a quiz and chat time and also to fundraise so we could deliver Christmas hampers to people who would be spending Christmas alone.

The fundraiser was successful, and we ordered food and gifts for 50 hampers, staff took time out to make up the hampers and a number of staff offered to deliver the hampers. We delivered 39 Hampers in the days coming up to Christmas and 35 people booked on the Christmas Zoom social although not all attended. Those that did enjoyed the opportunity to socialise with the community.

“I have said Thank you for my Hamper on your Instagram post but would like to Thank you on here too 😊 It means a lot that generous people have donated to give joy to people at Christmas. So thank you all that have donated to make Christmas a bit better this year. Happy Christmas to you all xx”

“Looks like one of your rainbows in there. Birmingham LGBT you make us proud you really do always doing what you can for the community. Bless you all”

“I have now got the hamper - it is absolutely beautiful and such a touching gesture. Thank you to everyone involved!”

“Could you please thank everyone connected with the Christmas hampers. I was a bit emotional after receiving mine.”

“I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas.”
BIRMINGHAM LGBT IS THE CITY’S LEADING CHARITY ADVOCATING FOR AND SUPPORTING THE LGBT COMMUNITY.