

LGBT HEALTH AND WELLBEING

2022
Annual Report



Promoting the
health, wellbeing
and equality of
LGBTQ+ people

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Foreword

This reporting year (2021-2022) has been dominated by ongoing challenges presented by the pandemic and the continued impact that this has had for our community, and for us as an organisation.

We have continued to see first-hand the detrimental impact of the pandemic on people's wellbeing: physically, mentally, socially, and financially. We have ensured that our services have adapted and continue to respond to appropriately, so that we can best support our community.

It has been wonderful that during this year, we have been able to re-introduce some of the in-person services that were moved to online delivery during the height of the restrictions associated with the pandemic. A growing number of our services are now offered both in-person and online, ensuring that we can bring people together in ways that are comfortable and accessible for them. This blended model has been well received by our community members and our ambition is that we can continue to maximise our reach by maintaining both styles of delivery.

Community engagement and feedback has been at the heart of shaping our approach and has helped us to target our work to support those most marginalised. Demand across all of our projects remains high, and we have continued to develop and expand our range of services whilst ensuring that there is a range of regular, core support available for Scotland's LGBT+ community.

As a team we have continued to adapt to hybrid working and explore ways to best to engage with our community members and partners from our various locations. We are incredibly proud of the extraordinary response that our staff, volunteers and community group leaders have maintained in these ongoing challenging times.

Our team remains incredibly passionate and committed to working for change. We would like to thank our dedicated staff, trustees, volunteer and community group leader teams who have continue to show passion, tenacity and adaptability.

As this report illustrates, we have very good reason to look back over 2021-22 and continue to be extremely proud of everything we have collectively achieved.



Mark Kelvin (he/him)
Chief Executive



Yorath Turner (he/him)
Chair

Our work with LGBT people over 2021-22

Over the April 2021 to March 2022 period our work with LGBT community members included:



5,454 engagements

through group activities

397 events

delivered in-person or online



1,095 people supported

through our 1-1 support programme

2,474 engagements

through our national Helpline



131 volunteers

6,089 hours of volunteering contributed

4,281 subscribers

Our newsletters go to 4,281 subscribers



20,909 followers

Social media followers

Introduction

LGBT Health and Wellbeing promotes the health, wellbeing and equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Scotland.

Originally established in Edinburgh in 2003, the organisation continues to grow and develop delivering services in both Glasgow and Edinburgh as well as a number of Scotland-wide initiatives.

Our **four strategic objectives** as outlined in our current Strategic Plan are to:

- Build capacity to achieve better health and wellbeing within the LGBT community
- Develop the ability of services to respond to the needs of LGBT individuals
- Build collaborative partnerships
- Build a positive, proactive organisation

The organisation's **key operational objectives** are to:

- Provide a programme of activities which tackle the life circumstances that contribute to the ill-health of LGBT people
- Reduce levels of isolation and social exclusion experienced by LGBT people
- Strengthen the capacity of the LGBT community to promote the health of individuals
- Support individuals to adopt and sustain healthy lifestyles
- Ensure that LGBT people have equity of access to mainstream health services and information responsive to their needs

Our Values

Equality and diversity: Our team is inclusive and representative of our community. We engage with all sections of the LGBT+ community and our allies. We celebrate diversity.

Respect: We value and treat people fairly. We are open, accountable, accepting, trustworthy and supportive. **Inclusivity:** We are committed to creating services and spaces that are inclusive and intersectional. This means recognising and focusing on those who have been historically shut out from systems of support and those experiencing multiple disadvantages

Participation: Our services are designed by and for the communities they serve. We support, empower and nurture community participation.

Collaboration: We are not an island. We work together with each other, community members and partner organisations to achieve goals that benefit us all.

Excellence: We strive to deliver high quality and innovative services that achieve the best outcomes for our community.

Our programme and services

Our Glasgow and Edinburgh-based teams deliver a range of services, projects and activities for the LGBT community in both cities, as well as a national Helpline and Age Project.

Over 2021-22 all our services have been delivered in a mix of online, in person, by phone and email.

LGBT Helpline Scotland



Telephone, email and online information, support and referrals in relation to LGBT issues

Community Projects



Programme of LGBT social events, community discussions and community groups

Mental Wellbeing



Courses, therapy groups, drop-ins, counselling and one-to-one support to promoting wellbeing

LGBT Age



Support, social opportunities for LGBT people over 50

Trans Programme



Social opportunities, support, and information for transgender and non-binary adults.

LGBT Refugee Project



Support, information and social opportunities for LGBT asylum seekers and refugees

Rainbow Families



Social events and information for LGBT families

LGBT Age: Telefriending



National telephone based service for LGBT people over 50

Community Groups



Support to a range of self organising social and peer support groups

Response to the impact of the pandemic

Whilst the pandemic has impacted across our society it is clear that it has impacted massively on the levels of isolation and emotional wellbeing of LGBT people.

The LGBT community, especially our trans and non-binary community members are facing an increasingly difficult time. Evidence suggests that the health and wellbeing of the LGBT community was even more adversely affected than the general population in Scotland.

It is evident from our work in all of our services that many in our community have been further impacted by issues associated with the cost of living crisis and digital exclusion, particularly for older people, asylum seekers and refugees. We have sought to ensure that this has been at the heart of our response and ongoing development of services to ensure that we can connect with people in a range of ways that also best suit their needs and situations.

Across the year we have worked hard to continue to support community members in a range of ways by providing a blended approach to support.

Our blended delivery of both in-person and online events has provided an essential affirmative space for many be this in 1:1 support, groupwork or via our diverse range of social events. We have continued to be proactive in looking at ways for people to remain connected via our social media channels and through the production of a range of e-bulletins (online and printed versions).

There has also been a growing interest from funders in how our services have responded to the pandemic. This has provided good opportunities to raise awareness of the needs of LGBT people and promote our work to new audiences.

In January 2021 we appointed our new full-time Policy and Research Officer. Our policy and influencing work looks to raise awareness of the needs of LGBT people with key stakeholders, including government, service providers and researchers. A key part of the role will be ensuring we make best use of the data and learning from our work with LGBT communities to enable us as an organisation to act as a strong voice for the experience and needs of LGBT people. We also seek to promote community participation and proactively develop and support opportunities for community members to influence policy.

We have continued to highlight experiences and needs in our influencing work by highlighting the significant challenges that our community have faced during the pandemic and beyond, as well as solutions for positive change.



Our delivery

Our national **LGBT Helpline Scotland** service was originally set up by volunteers in Edinburgh in 1974 as Lothian Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, the helpline has now been supporting LGBT people for nearly 50 years.



LGBT Helpline Scotland
Tuesdays & Wednesdays (12-9pm)
Thursdays & Sundays (1-6pm)

📞 **0300 123 2523** 
✉️ helpline@lgbthealth.org.uk
🌐 www.lgbthealth.org.uk

The helpline’s non-judgemental, non-directive, LGBT-affirmative accessible support provides a real lifeline for individuals right across Scotland, both in urban and rural areas. In response to community feedback, support is also provided through email and online LiveChat. Data is used to ensure the service remains relevant and responsive, and to shape volunteer training.

Demand for the service continues to increase and extended opening hours (2 days to 4 days) has continued to help us connect with LGBT people who are struggling with a range of issues.

We have seen the total level of calls rise significantly from 1,851 in 2020/21 to **2,474 across 2021/22.**



“It made me feel so much less alone. The support volunteer made me feel safe while at the same time informing me of things that I can use to help understand myself better”



“Talking to people who can understand the cultural context of LGBT people in Scotland and maybe share similar experiences really helps. It feels like a safe space to talk about feelings and difficulties, and it really helps talking to someone who knows about the gender healthcare system in Scotland and can give advice on how to navigate it”



We are continuing to provide this service using a blended of inhouse and remote working which has also increased our volunteer capacity and accessibility.

As support is not always linear it is evident that the helpline provides an essential gateway to our wider range of services, especially for the trans community. Calls associated to social isolation, coming out, mental wellbeing and transphobia continue to feature highly.

As well as much needed emotional support, we also signpost people to other information resources and support within our organisation or from our ever growing database that can link callers with other organisations, services and peer support. We have been part of a consortium of other LGBT helplines across the UK and this has enabled us to share themes and share leaning.

Our **LGBT Refugee Project** was launched at the start of lockdown which meant none of our initial engagement with asylum seekers and refugees was able to happen in person. The phone and online support provided has included very practical support to address the severe hardship and digital exclusion experienced by many asylum seekers. This has continued to prove itself to be invaluable in providing New Scots with essential information, signposting, emotional support and opportunities for connecting with their peers.



Over the last year the project has also moved to a blended model of delivery. Delivery of information sessions have been vital and people have come to these as they know they will get reliable information on issues relating to their asylum claim in a helpful and straightforward way. We deliver sessions on a variety of topics that affect LGBT asylum seekers and refugees and explain what their rights are as a New Scot (and as a person living in the UK).

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“When I came to Scotland, I was unable to reach out to the Scottish Nigerian and African communities for support due to the fear of experiencing homophobia. So, I contacted LGBT Health and Wellbeing to help and support me in my asylum journey, at that time I was destitute but the development worker got me a solicitor who specialises in LGBT asylum cases and she put me in touch with the British Red Cross for accommodation. LGBT Health have really given me a lot of exposure and let me know my rights through the information session and they are always there for me and the organisation has been my lifeline.”

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1:1 support has focussed on practical and emotional support including asylum claims (gathering evidence, preparation for home office interviews, statements and support letters) as well as ways to build new connections. Peer support and volunteering are essential elements of this work. We have also offered practical support around monthly mobile phone top ups, food vouchers and access to digital support.

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“It is really not easy to live alone during this pandemic, but if I will be talking to people around me it will be better enough for me to improve my mental wellbeing and get to make important communication with my lawyer, friends and family. I am so thankful for all the support LGBT health and wellbeing has been offering me. If it had not been them, I would have found it very difficult to cope with my situation as an asylum seeker living in a pandemic.”

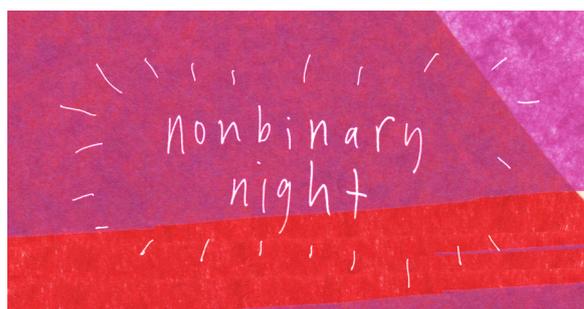
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Social events have also provided a safe and affirmative space for LGBT asylum seekers and refugees to meet up with each other and form new friendships. As a New Scot having a space to meet peers openly has helped people build confidence, self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

Our **Trans Support Programmes** across Glasgow and Edinburgh offers a variety of confidential and free support around gender identity and transitioning, including a range of social spaces to connect with other trans people, and we continue to see an increasing demand for these services.

We offer individual support for anybody with questions about transitioning, or looking for a safe space to explore their gender identity. We can also offer practical support and guidance on issues relating to gender affirmation.

Our Trans social support programme offers a mix of online and in-person social events for people aged 16 and over. This includes a range of trans community groups set up and managed by trans community members.



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“My future felt quite clouded and dark, but for me transition is the path to contentment, and the groups have helped me move forward. I honestly don't think I would have survived without the support. I find it hard to accept help, but I am worthy of help.”

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“I just wanted to send a quick note ahead of tonight's final session, I can't believe it has gone so fast. I really wanted to say a massive thank you from myself for all the support and help over the last few weeks with all the great tips and advice around transition.”

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The **LGBT Age Telefriending Service** initially set up in April 2020 has continued to develop ensuring that that we can reach people right across Scotland especially those who may not already be in contact with us or and those not online.

Demand for our **Mental Wellbeing Programmes, Counselling Services, LGBT Age Social Programme and Community Programmes** (across both Edinburgh and Glasgow) has continued to be extremely high.

We have responded by delivering a wide range of social opportunities, groupwork, counselling and 1:1 support that has provided a timely response to community concerns and provided much needed affirmative social spaces and tailored information and support.

Telefriending
A regular phone call for LGBT+ people aged 50 and over in Scotland

📞 **0131 564 3972**
✉️ **tele@lgbthealth.org.uk**

Over the last year we have continued to see people needing support to discuss a wide range such as legal issues, coming out, transition and treatment options, mental wellbeing and health, relationship and family issues, signposting to other services as well the concerns and challenges associated with coping with lockdown and COVID-19.



“This came at the right time for me. I was feeling isolated which me anxious and overwhelmed. This group helped me connect with people and also learn new ways that made me more relaxed and a bit more positive about things in my life.”

“My mental health has not been at its best during this long period of lockdown and this event gave me an opportunity to think about positive things that will help me recover. Being creative can really help and I learned a lot from the event and the chat.”



“Attending counselling has made me aware of how my mind works in relation to understanding itself, my body and my relationships with others. This awareness has helped me navigate difficult decisions and feelings. Counselling has also helped me with issues of low self-esteem, boosting my confidence and helping me to say what I am feeling more



Over the last year some of the pre-existing **Community Groups** have continued meet online with others taking a break until they were able to meet in person again. We have also established some new community groups that have been a positive addition.

We have continued to look at ways to best support and develop the range of Community Groups that meet. Whilst self managing they are an essential part of our overall work and we continue to appreciate the time and effort that Community Group Leaders give to their groups.



Rainbow Ukes community group members (photo credit: Elaine Livingstone)

Developing our services

LGBT Health and Wellbeing supports the entire diversity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community, including non-binary, queer, intersex and asexual people. Individuals will often engage with us over time across a number of different programmes and services we offer. Over the last year we have continued to look at ways that we can best reach as many people as possible as we know that many people face multiple barriers to engaging.

There is no doubt that our ongoing online delivery has enabled us to extend our reach to some LGBT people who may not have ordinarily been able to due to issues of rurality, mobility, or mental / physical health. We have continued to be proactive in engaging with our community on ways that we can best delivery services as well as addressing any barriers that they may face.

Our team have worked hard to ensure that people are aware of all the services and groups that are available to them as well as listening to suggestions for how we can continue to develop best practice.

Anti-Racism

As a community development organisation LGBT Health and Wellbeing continues to strive to provide inclusive services. We have continued to work hard to ensure that we are proactive in evolving our services to best meet the needs of the whole community. We are working towards being a explicitly anti-racist organisation and aim to increase the number of QTPOC staff, volunteers and people accessing all of our services.



Our board and staff recognise that we all have a responsibility to help make this structural change.

Over the last year we have engaged with CEMVO (a national intermediary organisation and strategic partner of the Scottish Government Equality Unit), to establish an operational anti-racism working group made up of staff and senior managers to develop an equalities strategy that will help us achieve our goal of being an anti-racist organisation.

Collectively we will use our individual experience and learning as a platform to support and make positive change in our organisation to alleviate barriers and influence the wider systemic change that needs to happen for people of colour across Scotland.

Our impact

Our community remains central to everything that LGBT Health and Wellbeing does. Feedback from community members, volunteers and community group leaders has always been important in shaping and developing our services. Listening and responding to what our community want and needs continues to be vital as we navigated the many challenges and restrictions that were in place throughout 2021/22. Below are some of the things people told us about what they gained from their engagement with the organisation. Common themes **across all services** include:

Acceptance



“(My counsellor) created an environment where I feel I am not judged and can be open and honest with him. I am challenged during our sessions to further explore and think about what is said. I believe this can come from having an alternative opinion from your counsellor who isn't involved in your life, so has an unbiased perspective”

“I felt so alone and not understood until I started my session with LGBT health. Meeting someone who really listens and understands has really helped me. I look forward to my sessions as when I say in my thoughts out loud it makes me feel better as t not in my head all the time”.

Understanding



“I feel like I understand myself so much better now, I'm not as confused or worried about what I'm feeling and I'm excited about going to Nonbinary Night”.

I just wanted to say thank you for all your help over the past 5 sessions. It has really helped me to develop a better understanding of myself, my sexuality and my own body. It really has helped me to see that I'm not broken and my needs and rights aren't less important than anyone else's just because social norms say I'm different! I also wanted to share a happy development that we made tonight... I didn't expect such a positive response to this conversation so I wanted to thank you for helping me reach this point!”

Community



“I enjoyed meeting everyone for the first time, you all made me feel so welcomed, even though I was a bit quiet at first. I will certainly be back next month”

“Allowed me to have people to engage with who are trans as I have felt like I've been alone in the closet for almost two years.”

“I've met so many good people because of the trans group. I certainly wouldn't be the same person with the same amount of confidence and comfort in my identity without it. Feel happier and less anxious”

“It allows me to be able to be in a social setting with other trans people. I'm currently still in the closet and it gives me a chance via zoom to be socially out as my true self before coming out fully to the rest of the world.”

Connection



“I wasn't too sure if I would like it, but once I started talking to the others at my table, I felt less anxious as everyone was so nice and we had lots to chat about, things that I like too. I would like to book a space for the next Coffee Posse through in Edinburgh to try. Thanks”

“To meet others in a safe space and have a laugh. Life is not truly back to normal as yet so there is still need to get together as a community online to ensure that people are not isolated.”

“The impact was very positive. The group gave me a lot of support at a time I was feeling really 'stuck' in my life and with my depression, and the sessions were a bright spot in my week that always left me feeling stronger and empowered. The group also gave me structure and connection, two things that have been very absent in my life over the last two years due to mental illness and COVID respectively. I loved having a space where I was totally free to be myself. It was powerful and uplifting to be in a room with other queer and trans people with shared experiences, who could offer advice and support.

Pride



“Coming from a country where LGBT people are persecuted and you have to be in the closet for fear of your life, the LGBT project has made me open up about my sexuality and I do not have to pretend any more the way I used to in my home country. I am so proud that I can do whatever I want with no shame and regret because it is my life and I am learning how to be an honourable member of the LGBT community.”

Confidence



“The sessions of counselling I received were absolutely transformative for me as it was the first time I felt able and safe to fully explore my hopes, worries and doubts around my gender transition. During my counselling and in the months since, my mental health has significantly improved and I have been able to start my transition with clarity and confidence.”

“It’s been so long and my family needs this so badly! Visibility, seeing family like ours, feeling ordinary and special all at the same time”

“I really enjoyed the poetry we read and hearing everyone’s interpretations about it. It was great to hear other people sharing their work in the sessions too, this felt like a really supportive environment where you could just have a go”

People

We know that the people who know most about what our services do, and about the impact this has on health and wellbeing, are the people who use them.

Below are a few examples of how we have supported people and the impact to them

Names and details have been changed in some of the case studies to preserve anonymity.

LGBT Helpline Scotland

Laura's story

Laura is in her early 20s and lives in Livingston with her family and the helpline was the first place she reached out to when she was looking for some support.

Laura originally contacted the helpline by email; at that point she'd never spoken to anyone about how she was feeling. She shared that she was struggling with trying to figure out her sexuality. Everyone in her family and social circle in Livingston had always assumed she was straight and so had she. However, after going along with a few relationships with guys that fizzled out, she was starting to have a realisation that her feelings for women were much stronger than she'd thought. She was filled with guilt and fear and didn't know what to do next. She felt that this was all having an impact on her sleep, her mental health, her relationships and her ability to concentrate on her studies.

We began by listening and providing a non-judgemental and reassuring space for Laura to explore these feelings that she'd been hiding from for some time. Over the course of our emails, Laura gained the confidence to ring us. She got to practice using new language to describe herself, talk through her fears and unpack the guilty feelings. We shared resources and discussed what felt right for her and any steps she might take around coming out. We made sure she was aware of our counselling service should she need some longer-term support and that we run social and support groups for LGBT people.



With nobody else in her life she felt she could turn to, the helpline was a vital support for Laura when she needed it. Rather than her issues continue to build and affect more and more of her life, she was able to work through some of the issues with us, build her sense of self and get linked-in to ongoing support and community.

Telefriending

Graham's story

Graham is a gay man in his late 70's. He lives alone in a retirement community in Glasgow, where he has been resident for some years. He has increasing mobility issues and other physical health problems, which mean that he rarely goes out. He has no close family and has never had a partner.



He contacted Telefriending and has been receiving calls since almost the start of the service. Graham was once extremely active in charity work and in particular, a volunteer on Gay Switchboard for several years. He had a successful career, a circle of friends and colleagues and a fairly active social life. He was a community activist and a campaigner for LGBT+ rights.

Health issues necessitated early retirement from a fulfilling job and then a move to a retirement complex. Graham gradually became less able to do the charity work that had meant so much to him. Over time, his circle of friends diminished and particularly his gay friends.

He has found it difficult to make any friends where he lives. He seems to be the only out LGBT+ person living there. There are two residents he knows to be gay but they are not open to their neighbours and Graham's attempts to form friendships with them have been rebuffed. He has stopped going to communal events because of homophobic remarks. In Graham's words "my world has shrunk to nothing".

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Graham told us: "if you had asked me 20 years ago, would I end up having no gay friends in my life, I would have said that's not going to happen but it shows how life can change".

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We have been able to assign two telefrienders to Graham, so that he gets a weekly call and apart from carers those calls are often the only contact he has in a week and certainly the only contact he has from another LGBT person.

We have also been able to signpost to other organisations, who have, for example, been able to give Graham support for IT issues. He has also enthusiastically taken part in research projects about LGBT+ social care, which he sees as a chance to improve the care for those who follow him.

LGBT Age

Sandra' story

Sandra who is bisexual and in their late 50's, lives alone in a rural area of the west of Scotland. Sandra was experiencing loneliness and social isolation for some time before lockdown due to chronic ill health and having no LGBT support networks around where they lived. This had a negative impact on their mental health, self-esteem and confidence.

During the Lockdown, Sandra started to engage with the online Coffee Posse events that she found via our website, as she was looking to find LGBT social groups to attend. Initially when Sandra joined the online Coffee Posse event, she seemed very quiet and was happy to just listen to other members of the group chat at first. Gradually over the months, Sandra would join the meeting and would start engaging in conversations.

Sandra asked if she could be on the mailing list for Virtual Hug. During the Lockdown, we created a regular newsletter as a 'check in' via an online version and paper copy. We called it 'Virtual Hug'. This is a way to keep our community of older LGBT people across Scotland connected.

Virtual Hug is a warm embrace but also a useful tool that can refer to when needing support. We include updates about our support services as well as support from other organisations. We include articles around key topics that affect older LGBT people and raise awareness around these topics.



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Sandra found Virtual Hug a life-link to the wider LGBT community. She had mentioned “It was giving me a sense of connections, reading stories from other individuals who are like me gave me some hope.” She continued “coming along online has been refreshing, and not having to worry about traveling to and from during those dark times. I am starting to find me again.”

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Sandra continues to access LGBT Age social events, has gained friendships and new connections.

LGBT Refugee Project

Amma's story

Amma is a 44-year-old lesbian woman and asylum seeker. Amma lives in Glasgow and has been in contact with LGBT Health and Wellbeing's Refugee Project for almost two years. When attending a conference in Scotland, Amma found herself unable to return home due to threat of persecution because of her LGBT identity. Leaving her PhD behind, Amma had to begin a new life in Scotland where she had no friends, family or connections. Amma didn't know of the existence of LGBT organisations in Scotland, and was largely unaware of her rights as an LGBT person fleeing persecution. Amma felt unable to reach out to the Scottish West African and wider African communities for support due to a fear of experiencing homophobia.

Amma heard about LGBT Health when she spoke to a person who had successfully claimed LGBT asylum, they recommended contacting our Refugee Development Worker to help support her in her asylum journey. When Amma called for the first time, she was stranded and had no support network. Amma to the Red Cross, who subsequently helped her file her asylum claim with the Home Office. Amma was also put in touch with a lawyer who specialised in LGBT asylum cases to assist her throughout the process.

Amma was exposed to a wealth of educational resources through the Refugee Project, including the opportunity to attend events with Immigration Lawyers intended to inform LGBT asylum seekers of their rights whilst in the UK, including the right to healthcare, education and financial support. Amma found a support system within the Refugee Project, whilst discovering a space where she could boldly be herself.

Amma has joined LGBT Health as a volunteer as she wants to help spotlight the work LGBT Health can do for the LGBT+ BAME population, and asylum seekers and refugees specifically.

Amma feels like there isn't enough accessible information out there for those claiming asylum and wants to help change this to ensure those in similar situations know their rights. Amma is currently studying at college and hopes to continue with her PhD at a Scottish University if/when she receives her right to remain status.



“LGBT Health and Wellbeing has really, really given me a lot of exposure and let me know my rights. They have always been there for me. You always know that you have people to rely on, you know. When you are going through the worst, you have a family somewhere. LGBT Health and Wellbeing have been my lifeline. They directed me to one of the best lawyers who is really good in LGBT cases when it comes to asylum.”



Transgender support

Tracy's story

Tracy is a 56-year-old disabled intersex trans woman who has been engaging with LGBT Health for around four years. As the UK's only Lieutenant Colonel transgender disabled doctor, Tracy served in the Royal Army Medical Corp for 21 years before she was in an accident where she was paralysed. Since the accident, Tracy's health needs have gotten more complex and her mobility is now very restricted, meaning she isn't able to leave the house as much as she used to.

Tracy began engaging with LGBT Health by attending Coffee Posse – our café meetup space for LGBT people aged 50+ in both Edinburgh and Glasgow. Through Coffee Posse Tracy had the opportunity to spend time with fellow queer people socially, in a way that suited her access needs as a wheelchair user. With the new LGBT Health premises in Edinburgh being fully wheelchair accessible, more recently Tracy has also been able to



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“At LGBT Health there is a sense of belonging. I have made some wonderful friends from the organisation both online and in person. You don't feel alone all of a sudden. Instead of seeing a disabled, trans woman they see me. They give you a sense of belonging.”

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When talking of our new premises Tracy said: “LGBT Health making people feel included, not excluded. Now this feels like this is an inclusive space for everyone!”

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Tracy engages with the *Trans Social Lounge* (part of the Trans Support Programme) where she attends monthly film nights. After a Christmas social event organised by LGBT Health staff, Tracy recognised some trans people in our community wanted a regular informal space to hang out online so she introduced the trans *Friday Night Social Chat*. Tracy thinks the Zoom hangout provides trans people with the opportunity to be themselves and socialise in an unstructured and organic way. The event is run solely by Tracy and is promoted by the Trans Support Programme as a relaxed space for all trans community members.

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“I enjoy it [Social Chat] because we can be who we are. It doesn't matter if we are in pyjamas or a nightdress, we just show up and have fun. It is this fun that can lift the wellbeing of a person. It shows we are the same and we connect, we are not just a community but we become a family.”

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Mental Wellbeing Support

Maggie's story

Maggie recently moved to Edinburgh from Manchester. Initially she felt her main issues were dealing with loneliness and limiting beliefs. She said she wanted to get back to being childlike when he didn't care so much about their people.

She had experienced trauma in the past. She spoke about experiencing difficulty with friendships, family and relationships. This has felt to her that she has been used and punished with the result being that she finds it difficult to trust. She spoke about her relationship with her partner and how they didn't believe her and used the gas lighting behaviour when she wanted to be heard.



Maggie spoke about having agoraphobic tendencies where she can stay in house unless needs to go out to do something. Maggie also spoke about being black and gay and how people used that against her in a negative way. She explained about being 'people pleasing in the past' but feels she has been used and laughed at most of her life when she is being herself.

She explained about wanting joy back in her life and having the freedom to be herself. She expressed she had a lot of to be thankful for as she has money, a home and food. At one point she had been homeless and sleeping on a friends couch.

Maggie was asked what she wanted to get out of support and resilience. We discussed that a good place to start was to explore ways of building her resilience at the same exploring ways that she could self-nurture and make steps to building a solid foundation for herself. We discussed further what joy was to her and how she could at her own pace find ways to look at her fear of going outside. I spoke about what heightened awareness can feel like and how trauma can affect us. Maggie was incredibly insightful and over a period of time we worked on ways to feel better about themselves which in turn brought joy and confidence to their life.

Volunteers

Our volunteers include trustees, community group leaders and those working directly across our services. Volunteers continue to play an essential role in supporting the delivery of our strategic aims. Like our staff team the ask of volunteers has at times been different over the last year especially as our services have continued to adapt and change. Some volunteers have been able to volunteer more whilst others have had to take a break.

Volunteer supervisors within the staff team have continued to work hard to support individual volunteers as well as bringing thematic volunteer groups together to ensure that people feel connected and have opportunities to learn and reflect on their work with us.

Rick on the journey to becoming a volunteer

Rick is in their late 20's, identifies as nonbinary and lives in Edinburgh. They began attending online events during late 2020 and attended regularly for "connection", "fun" and "companionship during a particularly lonely time".

Rick as a varied background of community volunteering, mainly focused around their interest in mental health and suicide prevention. They considered themselves historically to be "anxious, affected by PTSD in social situations" and unable to offer much in terms of social volunteering.

After attending events they began to use the space to build their confidence gradually, through speaking to new people in the room.



"I really didn't think I was ready of able to do this kind of volunteering, but meeting the volunteers and staff helped to make me feel at ease and learn about the role by observing first. I'm really looking forward to getting more involved and the next in-person"



Feedback from staff members on the impact of volunteers:



"The volunteers in our Edinburgh Events Team have been a crucial source of support, ideas, energy and motivation during this past year. The shift to online delivery was only made possible by the flexible, 'give-it-a-go' attitude of my team and the underlining care and compassion they bring."



"There could not be a counselling service without our volunteers. They are an integral and hugely valued part of what we do. I never cease to be impressed by the commitment, energy and enthusiasm that volunteers bring to their roles within LGBT Health. We're very fortunate to have them"



Having achieved **Investors In Volunteering** firstly in 2010 we started our 3 yearly renewal of this accreditation in late 2021. This was successfully achieved again in 2022. This process has given us another excellent opportunity to review our systems for supporting volunteers as well as gaining feedback from them. In our IIV assessment report many of the volunteers interviewed spoke about the satisfaction they get from doing something worthwhile, and helping others.

Feedback from volunteers:



“This is the first organisation where I feel that my minority characteristics are my strength, and are valued. Been a journey of affirming myself, it's a lovely experience. I've been trying to fit in, be as British, Scottish as I could, making sure my accent was proper, become like others, but here, we celebrate our difference and uniqueness”



“I really didn't think I was ready of able to do this kind of volunteering, but meeting the volunteers and staff so often at the Rainbow Lounge, helped to make me feel at ease and learn about the role by observing first. I'm really looking forward to getting more involved and the next in-person event – my first was tiring but really enjoyable”



Over the course of the year **131 people volunteered** with the organisation and collectively contributed **6,089 hours of volunteering**.

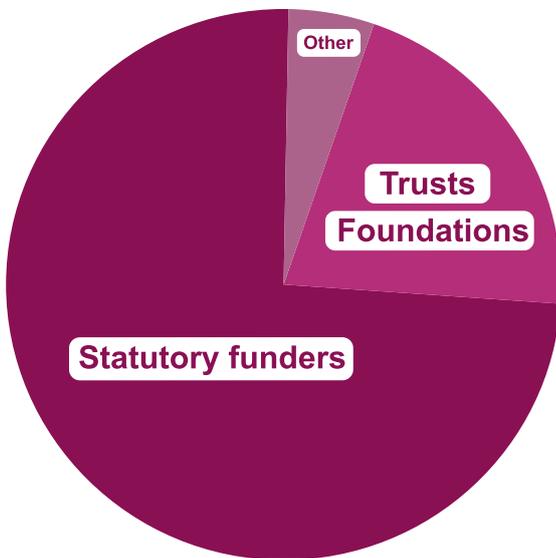


Finance summary

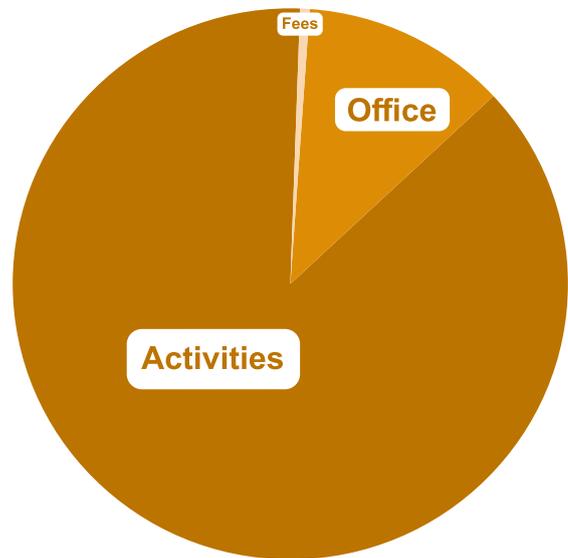
Our organisation's income increased to £907,675 (£847,878 in the previous year), alongside an increase in expenditure, activity costs began to increase due to a small move to face to face delivery and a general increase in costs. Income came from a smaller range of sources than over the previous year, but this is what was to be expected as there was less requirement for short term, covid focused funding.

We received project and core funding from 17 different funding streams across 13 different funders.

Income



Expenditure



We are extremely grateful to our statutory partners, the many trusts and foundations, and the individual and corporate donors who fund our work. Together, these contributions enable us to deliver our key support services to Scotland's LGBT+ community.

Key funders over 2021-22 included:



Registered Office

LGBT Health Living Centre
(Operates as LGBT Health and Wellbeing)

Duncan Place Community & Enterprise Hub
4 Duncan Place
Edinburgh
EH6 8HW

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