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PRIDE PLANS ONLINE SPECTACULAR TO CELEBRATE 30TH YEAR

Stephen Bailey and Zoe Lyons to host We Are FABULOSO!, Brighton & Hove Pride’s Summer Digital Festival on Friday, July 31, Saturday, August 1, and Sunday, August 2, 2020.

Brighton & Hove Pride has announced comedians and broadcasters Stephen Bailey and Zoe Lyons will host We Are FABULOSO!, Brighton & Hove Pride’s Digital Festival live from a purpose-built studio on Saturday, August 1 with pre-records from Stephen and Zoe for the Warm-Up Show on Friday, July 31, and the Highlights Show on Sunday, August 2. All shows will be streamed on the Brighton & Hove Pride website, YouTube, Twitch and other platforms TBA.

Stephen Bailey is a cocktail of class, caring and comedy, with the most flamboyant umbrella to top it all off. He is a comedian, presenter, television personality and writer, whose friendly and open brand of gossipy humour has made him one of the UK’s most exciting up-and-coming comedy acts and an in-demand talent for all things showbiz/entertainment. Currently, he is the narrator of ITV Be’s Ferne McCann: First Time Mum, the host of Takeshi’s Castle on Comedy Central, and has done loads of other telly including The Apprentice: You’re Fired, Live At The Apollo, Mastermind, Coronation Street and Good Morning Britain… but he still cannot get on Strictly.

Zoe Lyons has been a regular on the comedy circuit for many years and runs and hosts the popular Bent Double night at Brighton Komedia. As well as many regular radio appearances, her television appearances include Have I Got News for You, Celebrity Masterchef and being a series regular on Mock The Week, Live at the Apollo, The Apprentice: You’re Fired, Room 101, Hypothetical, Dave Gorman’s Terms & Conditions Apply, Pointless Celebrities, and winner of Celebrity Mastermind.

Marking 30 years of LGBTQ+ campaigning, protest and celebration while helping raise essential funds for our LGBTQ+ community groups, We Are FABULOSO! will feature live, recorded and archive footage of local and international artists, performers, activists and DJs. As with every Brighton & Hove Pride, the day itself will kick off with a ‘virtual’ LGBTQ+ Community Parade featuring a procession highlighting the amazing work of our essential community groups and charities.

Brighton & Hove Pride has hosted some of the world’s biggest artists, including Britney Spears, Kylie, Pet Shop Boys, Grace Jones and many more, and viewers will be taken on a virtual tour of the Pride Festival in Preston Park site to drop in at all the stages and tents to sample the atmosphere and flavour of this jewel in the LGBTQ+ crown as well as looking at highlights from years gone by.

Live audiences via Zoom will provide colour and atmosphere for most segments and anyone can apply to be on screen at www.brighton-pride.org/audience-wanted/

With an extensive schedule of events centred around the original Pride weekend, there will also be a host of online warm-up events and house parties to get you ready and in the mood for the main We Are FABULOSO! digital festival. All the entertainment will be free to view so viewers across the world should start planning their Pride parties now. Whether from the comfort of your own homes or gathering a group of friends in the garden; as lockdown restrictions are relaxed, it is hoped that some bars will be able to stream the festival live on big screens too. A full schedule will be released nearer the time so viewers can plan their day.

Paul Kemp, director of Brighton Pride, said: “Brighton & Hove Pride is such an important community fundraiser for our LGBTQ+ groups and to not have a Pride event this year really affects our ability to raise these essential funds and could seriously jeopardise the future of some groups. We really hope everyone gets behind this fundraising effort. Brighton & Hove Pride is a time to come together to celebrate and embrace diversity and inclusion in our great city, and just because we are not able to meet in person doesn’t mean we can’t support and celebrate our fantastic LGBTQ+ communities.”

Brighton & Hove Pride’s sole ethos is to promote respect within our community and support local charities and causes through fundraising. In the past six years it has raised over £290,000 for neighbouring charities, projects and community groups, distributed through the Brighton Rainbow Fund and Pride Social Impact Fund. Viewers are encouraged to make a donation so Brighton & Hove Pride can continue its essential fundraising for our community organisations that provide so much support throughout the year.

For more info, visit: www.brighton-pride.org

To donate, visit: www.brighton-pride.org/donate/ and www.brighton-pride.org/fundraising/

@youtube.com/user/BrightonandHovePride/ @brightonpride @PrideBrighton

Brighton Rainbow Fund: www.rainbow-fund.org
BRIGHTON TRANS RIGHTS VIGIL

Brighton Trans Rights Vigil will be at Dorset Gardens on Saturday, July 4 from 1pm but drop in and out as you please. The peaceful vigil, which will include various speakers, will challenge the UK government’s proposed plans to scrap changes to the Gender Recognition Act (GRA), demand that trans rights are not removed, and will be a chance to remember and commemorate those whose lives have been lost to transphobia and transphobic violence.

Organisers of Brighton Trans Vigil say: “In 2018, many of us engaged with the government’s GRA consultation, which sought to make self-determination of gender identity easier for trans people. Transphobic individuals and organisations attempted to undermine and skew the data, including indulging in an expensive Metro advertisement by a TERF group.

“However, on June 15, 2020, it was revealed by well-known critics of trans people, The Sunday Times, that the results showed an overwhelmingly positive response (70%) in favour of supporting the reform to support trans people. This sounded like an amazing outpouring of support for the trans community during Pride Month. Despite this, the Conservative government decided to do nothing, to not act, because they disagreed with the results as it did not fit in with their agenda nor Liz Truss’ transphobic policy proposals.

“Rights such as trans women being able to use women’s toilets and changing rooms, access to sexual assault support services, individual self-determination, and many others are at risk. This poses a threat to all trans, non-binary, and intersex people because *trans rights are human rights*. We have been harmlessly using services and spaces which match our gender, and the response to the GRA consultation proved that the majority of the general public support our right to do so.

“We were already at risk of murder and higher levels of violence, and now the law is potentially being adapted to support the discrimination we face on a daily basis. Trans people will be unsafe at work, unsafe in public spaces, and the law will defend discriminatory practices which prevent trans people from accessing spaces that match our gender.”

Organisers will be uploading an accessibility document regarding the space and travel info prior to the event. Search ‘Brighton Trans Rights Vigil’ on Facebook.

SWITCHBOARD LAUNCHES TRANS SURVIVORS ZINE

Last year LGBT Switchboard, the charity that provides support services for LGBTQ+ people, put out an open call for submissions for the first Trans Survivors Zine and is delighted to now share the final publication, which has been put together by trans and non-binary volunteers who run the Trans Survivors Project.

Trans Survivors Project holds community-led spaces for trans and non-binary people, especially those who have experienced violence or abuse. Typically, there is a craft table at the groups, and quickly it became apparent that there was an incredible depth of talent and expression in the community, so it was decided to create a zine to showcase their gifts and their voices.

Switchboard put out an open call for submissions and held a workshop to create pieces together. Many of the pieces in the zine were inspired by a body-mapping exercise carried out during the workshop. People chose something from the craft table, which spoke to how they felt in our bodies. Items that people picked up included masking tape, rubber bands, particular colour pens and paints, see-through plastic and tracing paper. Everybody seized something different for different reasons, then set about creating something that would capture their bodies and their trans experiences.

Other pieces were inspired by the zine library that was available at the workshop, and yet more were submitted outside of the workshop. The zine explores self-image, self-love, touch, intimacy, being trans in public, transformation, survival and much more.

To see the Trans Survivors Zine, visit: https://issuu.com/lgbtswitchboard/docs/trans_20survivors_20project_20zine_20booklet

Content Warning: Some of the pieces in the zine refer to transphobia, transmisogyny, homophobia, violence and threat and trauma. There are no graphic descriptions of violence in the zine.

To find out more about the Trans Survivors Project and how you can get involved, visit: www.switchboard.org.uk/projects/trans-support/trans-survivors-switchboard/

For more info on LGBT Switchboard, visit: www.switchboard.org.uk

TNB is a drop-in group for anyone who identifies as trans, non-binary, or questioning and/or exploring their gender identity or variance.

It is a safe space both organised and facilitated by trans and/or non-binary people, and offers a great opportunity to socialise. TNB also hosts an informal platform for resources, information and discussion surrounding topics that affect the community.

6-8pm, the third Thursday of the month at Café Domenica, Preston Road, Brighton
VIRTUAL TRANS PRIDE
#WontBeErased

Watch live on transpridebrighton.org on Saturday, July 18 from 1–7pm.

Virtual Trans Pride will be taking place on Saturday, July 18 from 1–7pm. The event will replicate the main stage which is the key attraction at the annual Trans Pride park event. Performers will be streaming live music, poetry, and more from their own home; bedroom, kitchen or garden. To watch live on the day visit www.transpridebrighton.org to see the action unfold. There will also be a live stream via Facebook.

Friends at Amnesty UK have kindly supported Trans Pride with the technical side of things by providing software to facilitate all the video feeds. This means that for the performer no special equipment is needed and for the audience everything can be watched from a web browser with no need to download any additional software.

Entertainers for the afternoon are TBA, check @TransPrideBrighton on Facebook for more info.

In the evening, DJs will take over and play tunes into the small hours for people to party at home. Community groups will have the opportunity to talk about what they do via short speaking slots between the acts, much like how it usually runs on the day.

Trans Pride is keen to financially support performers so will be advertising a giving page to facilitate this.

Trans Pride had to cancel its usual summer protest march, park event and after parties due to the developing situation with Covid-19. Events of this size take months of planning and preparation so even despite gradual easing of lockdown, the park event would not have been able to happen. However the enthusiasm to translate the event onto a virtual platform set volunteers into action.

**WON’T BE ERASED**

The theme for Trans Pride 2020 is #WontBeErased. The context of this theme arises from an upsurge in anti-trans sentiments coming from a influential minority who seek to roll back trans rights, including access to healthcare and complete removal of trans healthcare for trans children. Trans Pride wants to make the point that trans people won’t be erased, nor will other minorities who are also under attack, including, QTIPOC, migrants, sex workers, to name a few.

Sarah Savage, Trans Pride trustee, said: “The cisgender world is trying to erase our rights. Liz Truss’s ignorant comments [about the health needs of trans youth] sparked this off. There has been a concerted attempt to roll back rights and erase progress we’ve made over the last ten years. We must take a stand and not allow this to pass unchallenged.”

“Public reaction to transphobia is for people to speak out. Allies are increasingly becoming vocal in support of trans rights. In 2018 such were the concerns about TERFs coming to protest Trans Pride after the London Pride debacle whereby anti-trans activists hijacked the Pride parade, 200 cisgender volunteers came to steward the Brighton Trans Pride march to keep trans people safe. Every times there is a high-profile transphobic incident, the support is massive from cisgender people.

PROTEST

At its core, Trans Pride is a protest. The annual march will not go ahead this month but there has been a lot of discussion by the committee as to whether this can still happen this year, especially in the context of the recent Black Lives Matter protests and the pandemic, as to whether it’s safe to do such things. Some people want to protest because they feel they are at less risk from the virus and feel some form of visible protest is still needed. It is important to be able to have that space. The community has innovative ways of making their point, and if an as many safeguards are in place as possible, people want their voices heard. Either online or offline and people who are shielding can stay at home and feel they are part of it.

The pandemic has affected the trans community as much as everyone else, but with additional concerns such as access to medication, including hormones, QTIPOC, migrants, sex workers, to name a few. The pandemic has affected the trans community as much as everyone else, but with additional concerns such as access to medication, including hormones, Sarah has seen the community pulling together. She said the queer community has been rallying around its own with effective mutual aid networks. Queer people in trouble have been helped out by other queer people.

For more info, visit: www.transpridebrighton.org
CITY LANDMARKS LIT UP PURPLE IN SUPPORT OF FIGHT AGAINST RACISM

Last month, on Friday, June 5, the Brighton Palace Pier, British Airways i360 and the Brighton Centre were lit up in purple to show support and solidarity for communities suffering from racism and prejudice. Following the death of George Floyd while detained by police in Minneapolis, US, Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) asked all residents to come out on their doorsteps and stand in silence or take the knee to show support for people of colour.

Taking the knee started as a protest at NFL American football games in 2016 by San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick. It is tradition at American sporting events to play the US national anthem before games commence. Kaepernick and fellow player Eric Reid, both African Americans, took the knee during the anthem to highlight racial inequality and police brutality.

Cllr Nancy Platts, the council leader, and Cllr Phelim MacCafferty, convener of the Greens, wrote to Black Lives Matter in Minneapolis, expressing their sympathy and solidarity with people of colour in the city. BHCC also issued a statement:

"We stand in solidarity with the family, friends and community of George Floyd in Minneapolis. We in the UK cannot ignore yet another death of an unarmed person of colour in police custody. As a council, we recognise that George Floyd's death took place in the context of centuries of social deprivation and economic extraction that have been endured by people of colour. As anti-imperialists we recognise that America has been built on the slavery, dispossession and subjugation of its native and BAME population.

"As anti-racists, we stand shoulder to shoulder with all those in America and across the world who feel anger, hurt and fear after yet another instance of discriminatory state violence. Although we are grateful and recognise the good work that the police do in protecting communities in our city and their joint work with the council, it is also crucial that we in the UK recognise that we are still not immune from institutional racism in our justice system.

"Despite progress following the McPherson Inquiry, BAME people still statistically suffer more use of force in the UK, are over-represented in the prison population and are more likely to be sent to prison than white offenders. According to INQUEST, BAME communities were twice as likely to die in custody. The Runnymede Trust found that, between 1995 and 2015, no police officer was prosecuted over a person of colour’s death in custody.

"It is of great concern that it appears that some within the justice system can act with impunity as they very rarely face criminal prosecutions. We all have a responsibility to tackle racism. Brighton & Hove takes pride in being a City of Sanctuary and a community committed to celebrating our diversity and opposing prejudice and racism. We call on the UK government to take this opportunity to reassess the racial disparities in our criminal justice system. Now is the time to end the severe class and racial inequalities which exist across the world."

For more info on Black Lives Matter in the UK: http://blacklivesmatteruk.com

BEING LGBTQ+ IS HARD BEING BLACK IS HARD

Chris Kenna, a gay, black entrepreneur and CEO of Brand Advance, shares his perspective on the reawakening of the Black Lives Matter movement during Pride Month

I know how it feels to live as an intersectionality oppressed individual. Being LGBTQ+ is hard. Being black is hard. They present different challenges and together present further struggles to overcome in a society that is impregnated with institutionalised racism and bigotry.

A brighter spotlight is currently being shone on these issues than has been for a long time and so it is my and all of our obligations to be vocal about injustices. You’re either against racism and homophobia, or you’re for them - in not taking a stand against them, you’re for them.

As the CEO of Brand Advance, I acknowledge that I am a privileged black man. However, no matter how much money I may earn, I will still experience racial microaggressions on a daily basis. On many occasions I have entered a lift and a woman will move her purse to the opposite side to where I’m standing. Or, when browsing a shop, I will be followed by a security guard while my white partner will be left alone. Even though neither of us are inclined to steal anything, the colour of my skin leads people to think that I would. It is important that these daily acts of racism, however small they may seem, are acknowledged as the acts of discrimination that they are.

Such racism can be seen in the LGBTQ+ community, much as homophobia can be prevalent in the black community. There have been countless times when out in gay bars that I have been asked the hackneyed question, “Where are you from?... No, but where are you really from?” Even though queer people are themselves oppressed, they still need to check themselves for the acts of racist microaggressions that they are committing.

This pervading racism can be seen in the LGBTQ+ community, much as homophobia can be prevalent in the black community. There have been countless times when out in gay bars that I have been asked the hackneyed question, “Where are you from?... No, but where are you really from?” Even though queer people are themselves oppressed, they still need to check themselves for the acts of racist microaggressions that they are committing.

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I do queer people feel as though they can talk openly about their partners to colleagues and superiors? Do black people feel as though they can wear their natural afro hair to work, or to a job interview? The answer is often no, and it is up to brands to change this.

Brands can often be criticised for jumping on the brandwagon for social movements such as Black Lives Matter and Pride. However, they can authentically enact change by taking action during times of societal conversation like we are experiencing now. They must be clear in their communications and be willing to have these difficult conversations both internally and externally. This will benefit them as, ultimately, if a brand is seen to be vocal, then their Gen Z and Millennial customers will be more likely to buy from them.

There is no special move that will make a brand’s actions of support ‘more authentic’. It doesn’t matter if a brand has been supportive of black and LGBTQ+ people throughout its entire history - it’s about speaking up now. I don’t expect brands to understand everything I go through as a black gay man. I will go through my struggle and they must go through their struggle of addressing discrimination through enforcing their internal policies. It is a matter of taking action in sending the right message to their customers and making their employees feel seen and accepted for who they are.

Brand Advance is an ad network specialising in reaching diversity at scale with clients such as Unilever, L’Oreal, Amazon, Mercedes, ASDS, and more. For more info, visit: www.wearebrandadvance.com

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"In solidarity with people of colour who have died after contact with the justice system and in support of everyone protesting for equal rights in America and across the world."

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BLACK LIVES MATTER – BEING A BETTER LGBTQ+ ALLY

Many places across the world celebrate Pride Month in June, marking the riots that began on June 28 at the Stonewall Inn in New York City. These riots mark the beginning of the modern LGBTQ+ rights movement and Queer & Trans People of Colour (QTPOC) were at the forefront of these protests.

We know from our own LGBTQ+ experiences that for a radical transformation to take place, action is necessary; to be a part of the change and support the movement for racial equality requires both bold action and education. So, here are some things you can do right now to support the Black Lives Matter movement and agitate for justice in the UK and the world, along with some educational resources that could prove vital going forward.

Donations are also highly encouraged to a range of charities and organisations with the explicit aim of stamping out racism and working towards racial equality at home and abroad. The following are some key local, national and international groups which you might consider donating to.

- Black Lives Matter UK (BLMUK) – a coalition of black activists and organisers across the UK who have been organising since 2016 for justice in our communities. www.gofundme.com/t/ukblm-fund
- Black Lives Matter – a global campaign, which seeks an end to white supremacy and police brutality, and works to counter violence and promote black liberation. www.blacklivesmatter.com
- Allsorts BAMER / PoC Youth Network – a network for LGBTQ+ BAMER/PoC young people within Allsorts Youth Project. www.allsortsyouth.org.uk/bamer-inclusion
- Radical Rhizomes – Brighton network which curates social gatherings by and for Queer, Trans and Intersex People of Colour (QTIPoC) in Brighton & Hove. @ Radical Rhizomes: qtipoc social gatherings in Brighton

For LGBTQ+ people who understand the meanings of our own histories, and what equality really means, this is not an option. Racism affects LGBTQ+ peoples across the world who live in cultures stained by institutional racism, including here in the UK. In many places across the world it is overwhelmingly the hangover of colonial laws that makes being queer illegal. White supremacy is a white invention, prejudice is an ugly export of our island. We believe that as well as sharing news of protests and activism from across the UK and the world, it is important to use Gscene to direct you towards people and organisations who can explain and educate far better than we can. It’s up to us, each of us individually, to educate ourselves and raise awareness about oppression and systemic racism.
SWITCHBOARD CEO TO LEAVE IN SEPTEMBER

Lyndsay Macadam, Switchboard chief executive, is leaving in September to take on a new role with the Scottish Women’s Autism Network. Lyndsay has headed up the organisation for the past year, developing new services with partner organisations, building on Switchboard’s work with those in our communities who face the greatest inequalities and bringing in additional funding to expand the support services Switchboard offers LGBTQ+ people in the city.

Lyndsay said: “I’ve really enjoyed my time as CEO at Switchboard and it has been a huge privilege to lead Brighton & Hove’s oldest LGBTQ+ charity. I’m so very proud of the work the Switchboard team does in supporting and connecting LGBTQ+ individuals and communities - it has been an incredible year and I will miss Switchboard enormously. It’s been a difficult decision to take, but personal circumstances have led me to relocate to Scotland with my partner.”

“I’m pleased to be leaving the charity in a solid position to continue to provide services and support to meet the evolving needs of all our diverse LGBTQ+ communities and I know that it will continue to grow and thrive under a new chief officer. I’d like to thank the dedicated Board of Trustees and the wonderful and talented Switchboard team of staff and volunteers for their support, passion and commitment - without them there would not be a Switchboard.”

Dawn Draper, chair of trustees, added: “Lyndsay has done a fantastic job of delivering on the Switchboard strategy and consolidating our identity as she has led the organisation through our 45th anniversary year. In the past few months she has successfully adapted all of Switchboard’s services, more or less overnight, in response to the Covid-19 crisis and led the team through huge and unexpected change.

“While we’re sad to see Lyndsay go, we’re fully supportive of her decision and we wish her all the best with her relocation and future plans. We’re thankful to the commitment that Lyndsay has shown in the role – she is leaving Switchboard in a strong position with a clear purpose. We are already in the process of recruiting a new CEO who will lead the organisation forward in to the next chapter.”

For more information about Switchboard, visit: www.switchboard.org.uk

BRIGHTON & HOVE LGBT SWITCHBOARD SEeks NEW CEO

Switchboard Connecting you to LGBTQ support Switchboard is looking for an inspiring and effective chief executive officer, with the vision and ability to lead the charity in fulfilling its strategy. The organisation says Covid-19 has had a profound impact on the delivery of its services but, supported by a committed staff and volunteer team, it has mobilised homeworking to continue helping the local LGBTQ+ community in need by phone, email and digitally during this period.

Closing date is noon on Tuesday, July 7. Interviews will be held on Friday, July 17 and it’s likely they will be held via Zoom. If you’re interested in applying, download the recruitment pack from: www.switchboard.org.uk/were-recruiting-chief-executive-officer/ then send a CV with a covering letter highlighting your skills and experience against the person specification (no more than three sides of A4), and a completed Equalities & Diversity Monitoring Form, to: lyndsay.macadam@switchboard.org.uk. You should note that CVs received without a covering letter will not be considered.

For informal discussion on the role please contact chair Dawn Draper: dawn.draper@switchboard.org.uk

For more information about Switchboard, visit: www.switchboard.org.uk

#WESTANDTOGETHER - SUPPORT AND ADVICE ISSUED FOLLOWING READING ATTACK ON LGBT COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Following the Reading knife attack in which three members of the LGBT community were killed, Brighton & Hove City Council and One Voice Partnership condemned the violence and issued statements of support for the local LGBT community.

The attack took place in Forbury Gardens on Saturday, June 20. The men were named as friends David Wails, James Furlong, and Joe Ritchie-Bennett and described by Martin Cooper, CEO of Reading Pride, as Friends of Reading Pride. Several other people were injured at the scene.

One Voice Partnership said: “We do not tolerate violence against innocent people, wherever it takes place. Together we speak with one voice against all forms of hate, extremist perspectives, and terrorist actions in the city and elsewhere. Together we stand firm that these acts of violence and hate must not go any further. “The One Voice partnership reaffirms its commitment for Brighton & Hove’s ‘city values’ based on pluralism, equality, fairness and respect for all. It’s now even more important for all our communities to demonstrate that we will not let any terrorist action divide us and continue our great tradition of unity and respect for all.

As a City of Sanctuary, we will work to protect those rights of all our residents equally.”

BHCC said the threat level from terrorism to the UK remains unchanged at ‘Substantial’, and, with Sussex Police, is asking residents and communities to report suspicious behaviour or activity on the anti-terrorist hotline: 0800 789 321 or 999 in an emergency.

You can also report online to Sussex Police at sussex.police.uk/contact-us/report-online.

For further info and support: www.safeinthecity.info/getting-help/preventing-terrorism-and-extremism or www.gov.uk/ACT Racists, religiously motivated, and hate incidents should be reported at: www.safeinthecity.info/getting-help/racist-incidents

Read the full story about the Reading attack at www.gscene.com/news/reading-terrorist-attack-lgbtq-community-mourns/

ALLSORTS CELEBRATES VOLUNTEERS

Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard seeks new CEO

Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard is looking for an inspiring and effective chief executive officer, with the vision and ability to lead the charity in fulfilling its strategy. The organisation says Covid-19 has had a profound impact on the delivery of its services but, supported by a committed staff and volunteer team, it has mobilised homeworking to continue helping the local LGBTQ+ community in need by phone, email and digitally during this period.

Closing date is noon on Tuesday, July 7. Interviews will be held on Friday, July 17 and it’s likely they will be held via Zoom. If you’re interested in applying, download the recruitment pack from: www.switchboard.org.uk/were-recruiting-chief-executive-officer/ then send a CV with a covering letter highlighting your skills and experience against the person specification (no more than three sides of A4), and a completed Equalities & Diversity Monitoring Form, to: lyndsay.macadam@switchboard.org.uk. You should note that CVs received without a covering letter will not be considered.

For informal discussion on the role please contact chair Dawn Draper: dawn.draper@switchboard.org.uk

For more information about Switchboard, visit: www.switchboard.org.uk

#KeepProud videos with some of our wonderful Community Volunteers.”

The #KeepP Proud campaign was launched during the coronavirus pandemic to help Allsorts maintain and expand its vital online LGBTQ+ youth services during lockdown.

To donate to the campaign, visit: www.crowdfunder.co.uk/keepproud

Alternatively, you can donate £5 by texting KeepProud to 70470. Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate text.

For more info on Allsorts Youth Project, visit: www.allsortsyouth.org.uk

Allsorts Youth Project, the charity which listens to, supports and connects children and young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or unsure of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation, marked Volunteers’ Week last month by sharing videos of community volunteers from their #KeepP Proud campaign. Pictured is Marquita, community volunteer and co-founder of Trans Can Sport.

Allsorts Youth Project says: “During Volunteers Week we celebrated the contributions millions of people make across the UK through volunteering. To celebrate, we shared #KeepP Proud videos with some of our wonderful Community Volunteers.”

The #KeepP Proud campaign was launched during the coronavirus pandemic to help Allsorts maintain and expand its vital online LGBTQ+ youth services during lockdown.

To donate to the campaign, visit: www.crowdfunder.co.uk/keepproud

Alternatively, you can donate £5 by texting KeepProud to 70470. Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate text.

For more info on Allsorts Youth Project, visit: www.allsortsyouth.org.uk

For more information about Switchboard, visit: www.switchboard.org.uk

#KeepP Proud
MINDOUT PRIDE FUNDRAISER

MindOut, the LGBTQ+ mental health service, will be suffering huge loss of income this year as a result of Pride events being cancelled or postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. During lockdown, MindOut has seen increased experiences of anxiety, depression, suicidal distress and self-injury and needs your help to keep its lifesaving services running.

MindOut says: “We’re asking our supporters to donate some of the money they would have spent at these events so we can continue our lifesaving work. Please help us to continue to support hundreds of LGBTQ people with mental health challenges.”

You can make donations until August 31. To support MindOut, visit: www.justgiving.com/campaign/MindOutPride2020

The charity’s counselling, advocacy, support groups and peer mentoring are now available online, it has launched a telephone befriending service, and has extended its online support service opening hours.

For more info, visit: www.mindout.org.uk

SWITCHBOARD INCLUSION WEBINAR

LGBT Switchboard, the charity that provides support services for LGBTQ+ people, is running a LGBT+ Inclusion webinar on Thursday, July 9 from 2pm. This 2.5-hour online workshop is for any staff (including managers and volunteers) who would like to learn about how to better include and support LGBTQ+ service users and colleagues.

This session is interactive, engaging and reflective, and will provide a safe environment for participants to understand some of the challenges and inequalities that LGBTQ+ communities experience.

The webinar will support participants to take steps to reduce inequalities, become better LGBTQ+ allies and improve support for LGBTQ+ people accessing services or working within teams.

Learning outcomes:
- To understand a range of LGBTQ+ identities and the language used to describe these
- To understand some general health inequalities and other challenges experienced by LGBTQ+ communities, in order to support LGBTQ+ inclusion efforts
- To have a basic understanding of the requirements of the Equality Act
- To learn about LGBTQ+ allyship
- To explore steps that services can take to be more inclusive of LGBTQ+ service users and staff
- To review information for signposting people to LGBTQ+ specific support

Places are £30, with a small number reserved at £6 for those without access to a training budget.

To book a ticket, visit: https://tinyurl.com/y7mo8w3w

For more info on LGBT Switchboard, visit: www.switchboard.org.uk

EQUAL POWER OFFERS FREE TRAINING FOR ASPIRING WOMEN CAMPAIGNERS

Equal Power coalition, which is led by the Fawcett Society and includes the Centenary Action Group, Citizens UK, 50:50 Parliament, Muslim Women’s Network UK and the Parliament Project, is running free online training for women campaigners who aspire to community organising, local council or national politics. This programme includes sessions on getting into politics specifically for women who are black, Asian or part of a minority ethnicity.

Training sessions cover:
- How to become a local councillor or MP
- Community organising and leadership
- Using your voice online
- Getting into politics and campaigning as Black, Asian or part of a minority ethnicity
- Meeting others tearing down barriers that are keeping women out of public life

Each session is 90 minutes or less at either lunch, early evening or on a Sunday.

Women can sign up for several different sessions or just one, whatever works for you. The programme includes a great range of inspiring speakers, including Marsha De Cordova, Battersea MP and shadow secretary of state for Women & Equalities, and actively encourages BAME, disabled, working class and young women to take part – all of whom are underrepresented in politics. Equal Power expects high demand for the courses and places will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

To sign up, visit: www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/free-online-equal-power-workshops-for-women

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New Narratives programme to raise profile of BAME creatives

Brighton-based Writing Our Legacy has announced a new online literary programme, New Narratives: We Need to Change the Stories We’re Telling, to continue delivering its mission to raise awareness of the contributions of BAME writers, poets, playwrights and authors born, living in or connected to Sussex and the South East. Designed in response to Covid-19, the programme runs till December 2020 and features ‘pay what you can’ online talks, socials, workshops and a retreat, featuring leading names from the literary world, including Dean Atta, Catherine Johnson and Jacob Ross.

Other aspects of the programme include mentoring sessions and a project to distribute Writing Our Legacy’s Hidden Sussex (2019), an anthology of poems, prose and short stories from writers of colour who live in or have connections with Sussex, to universities across the UK.

Amy Zamarripa Solis, chair & programme manager for Writing Our Legacy, said: “Now more than ever it is vital for BAME-led arts organisations such as Writing Our Legacy to support our writers, creatives and communities and create safe spaces to come together. We are witnessing the world in a critical situation with global protests against the murder of George Floyd, challenging racism and inequalities in the US and the UK, as well as Covid-19. We are also experiencing potential for positive change by working together as a human race.

“Literature and the arts give hope and inspiration, gives people new ways of expressing themselves. Our programme aims to unite people of all walks of life together online and shine a light on the amazing writers, musicians and artists we have in Sussex and the South East.”

New Narratives is a Writing Our Legacy programme, delivered in partnership with Sussex-based, regional and national organisations including: New Writing South, Crawley Wordfest, Diverse Crawley, Africa Night Fever, Brighton & Hove Black History, Diversity Lewes, and Worthing BME Group. The programme is funded by Arts Council England’s Emergency Response Fund.

Writing Our Legacy, in partnership with New Writing South, is also launching the new literary magazine, Covert, with a call for submissions from BAME writers and artists for the upcoming first edition, which has the theme Sussex Fortuneteller: What Do Writers See in the Future? The first edition of Covert will open for submissions on Wednesday, July 1, 2020, and invites writers of colour to send through original fiction, poetry and artwork. Fifteen writers will be selected, and each will receive mentoring and editorial feedback from guest editors Umi Sinha and Dean Atta, with an editorial team made up of Amy Zamarripa Solis (Writing Our Legacy), Shahra Duggal (New Writing South) and others. The deadline for submissions is Wednesday, September 30, 2020 and the magazine will be launched at an online event in December 2020, with copies for sale and to read online.

Lesley Wood, chief executive of New Writing South, said: “Over and over again, with the smallest budget and the biggest heart, Writing Our Legacy brings excellent new work by BAME writers and artists out into the world. Covert magazine is a bold old/new way to showcase some of the UK’s most exciting emerging writers whose fresh ideas and strong voices inspire our minds and nurture our souls. New Writing South is proud to support this work and we warmly encourage all writers of colour to submit stories and poems.”

For details of events and how to book for New Narratives, visit www.writingourlegacy.org.uk

For more info on New Writing South, visit: www.newwritingsouth.com

Brighton & Hove Libraries awarded Library of Sanctuary status

Brighton & Hove Libraries has become only the second library service in the country to be awarded Library of Sanctuary status. The announcement coincided with this year’s Refugee Week in June. Brighton & Hove Libraries held a number of online events for all ages to mark the week – including the flash fiction writing competition, National Reading Group Day book discussion, recommended reads, themed storyline sessions and family crafts.

The Libraries of Sanctuary initiative has been set up recognising good practice of libraries which welcome people seeking sanctuary and other new arrivals into their community and seek to foster a culture of welcome and inclusivity. It’s overseen by City of Sanctuary UK, which supports a nationwide network to build a culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary and promotes understanding, recognition and celebration of the ways in which people seeking sanctuary enrich society.

The work at Jubilee Library features in City of Sanctuary’s new resource pack for Libraries of Sanctuary and will be shared with other library services across the country.

The Network of International Women made a Library of Sanctuary banner for the library. Women from the group also volunteer to deliver multi-lingual story times and put together displays and supporting materials. There’s also been a significant cultural exchange with staff and volunteers through the volunteer scheme with volunteers bringing in traditional dishes from Iraq, Yemen, Morroco and Egypt to share with staff. The library team work in close partnership with organisations in the city supporting sanctuary seekers and staff have donated toiletries for new arrivals in the city.

Cllr Carmen Appich, chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee, said: “It’s great news that we’ve achieved Library of Sanctuary status. The award further demonstrates our commitment to offering sanctuary to refugees and asylum seekers in the city. Everything being done gives a very important message that we are a diverse, welcoming community and all have valuable skills to offer. It’s a timely achievement. As well as Refugee Week, it chimes with the Black Lives Matter movement and our new commitment to amplify our actions to become an anti-racist council.

“We’ve done a lot to make our library service welcoming to all seeking sanctuary, but we know there is still lot of work to do. Across all council services, we are committed to ensuring opportunities are open to all and everyone gets to live a full life free from discrimination and harm.”


For more info on New Writing South, visit: www.newwritingsouth.com
CHARITY CRAFTATHON CHALLENGE

Four crafters – Making MxTakes, MxMarmite, Destai Designs and Coronation Soap – will embark on a Craftathon Challenge to raise money for Trans Pride Brighton on Saturday, August 29 from 10am-10pm.

The team will spend 12 hours making items they normally sell, including handmade vegan soaps, jewellery, dice bags and resin coffins. The Craftathon will be streamed live on the Charity Craftathon Twitch channel with a sale on items they sell during the challenge.

In September 2019, Coronation Soap participated in the first Charity Craftathon Challenge, which took place over 24 hours and raised £180 for Rape Crisis (England & Wales) and Survivors UK. Coronation Soap created this challenge as a means for folk who are unable to participate in mainstream charity challenges to have an accessible means to fundraise for charity.

They say: “Trans Pride Brighton was established in 2013 to promote the rights of the transgender and intersex communities. Three of our team identify as trans/non-binary.

“The money raised will be to help access needs and requirements of both PoC and disabled trans and non-binary people within the Trans Pride community. Now, more than ever, the trans community are in need of help as they struggle against legislative hurdles and societal prejudice to achieve the equality they deserve.”

In March 2020, Coronation Soap and two other disabled business owners participated in two 12-Hour Charity Craftathon Challenges: one raised £425 for Martlets Hospice and the second one raised £130 for Brighton & Sussex University Hospitals Charity.

For more info, visit:
- @12Craftathon
- www.coronationsoap.uk
- www.makingmxtakes.com/
- /DestaiDesigns
- /MxMarmite
- GoFundMe fundraising page: www.gofundme.com/f/charity-craftathon-for-trans-pride-brighton

BOOHOO PRIDE LAUNCHES FUNDRAISING CLOTHING COLLECTION

Online retailers boohoo & boohooMAN have created an exclusive capsule collection of clothing for Pride called Love Is For Everyone, with a portion of the proceeds divided between the Brighton Rainbow Fund and OutRight Action International. The inspiration behind the collection and messaging derives from unifying as a community and standing together in spirit even when we’re physically unable to. The range sees a neutral, monochrome colour palette and streetwear silhouettes mixed with slogan prints and rainbow accents.

A spokesperson from boohoo & boohooMAN, said: “Each year, Pride is an incredible time for bringing people together. We may not be able to go to concerts, carnivals and parties this year, but the pride of our community will still be out in force. Pride is not just a party, it is a spirit we all feel and a celebration of the LGBTQ+ community.”

Funds will be divided between OutRight Action International, the LGBTQ+ human rights organisation, and the Brighton Rainbow Fund, which gives grants to local LGBTQ+/HIV groups that deliver effective frontline services to LGBTQ+ people in the city.

Chris Gull, chair of the Brighton Rainbow Fund, said: “This is going to be a tough year for the vital local LGBTQ+ and HIV projects that we support, so we are delighted that together with Brighton & Hove Pride boohoo & boohooMAN are donating funds for us to distribute.”

Brighton & Hove Pride is the biggest fundraiser of the Brighton Rainbow Fund, with a minimum of £1 per ticket for the park and £1 per wristband for the Pride Village Party donated to the Fund.

Paul Kemp, managing director of Brighton & Hove Pride, added: “Without the physical event this year to celebrate Brighton & Hove Pride, it’s more important than ever to raise money for the Brighton Rainbow Fund. We’re pleased our partners at boohoo & boohooMAN are donating much needed funds through their Pride range this year and helping Pride with our community fundraising effort.”

The collection, available in sizes XS – 4XL, ranges from £5 to £45 and can be viewed here: www.boohooman.com/mens/collections/pride-collection

For more info on the Brighton Rainbow Fund, visit: www.rainbow-fund.org
For more info on OutRight Action International, visit: www.outrightinternational.org
For more info on Brighton & Hove Pride, visit: www.brighton-pride.org

Breaking up can be difficult...

For a free consultation to discuss your options, please contact Adam Douglas in our Family Law department on 01273 204411 ext 253. Or send him an email at adam@engleharts.co.uk.

For any information on our other services, please contact us at Engleharts Solicitors, Vallance Hall, Hove Street, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 2DE or email angela@engleharts.co.uk.
WHY SCRAPPING PLANNED REFORMS OF THE GENDER RECOGNITION ACT IS A THREAT TO TRANS RIGHTS

A leaked paper revealed last month that Boris Johnson’s government plans to scrap planned reforms of the Gender Recognition Act (GRA), which would have enabled trans people to change their birth certificate without a medical diagnosis. Dr Sam Hall, chair of The Clare Project in Brighton & Hove, and guest editor of this issue of Gscene, explains current concerns around proposed changes to the legal rights of trans people in the UK.

A lot has changed since then, including increasing acceptance and support for trans lives. Other countries have caught up and gone beyond. Over the past decade in the UK the voices of non-binary people began to rise, and with them a desire to see reform of the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) permitted new birth certificates for trans people, a legal advance that was ahead of its time and which put the UK at the forefront of trans rights worldwide. This process is arduous, with years’ worth of evidence of living in the opposite gender role required, a medical diagnosis (but not necessarily treatment), and letters from clinicians to support the application. It is also expensive, intrusive, and slow.

The Equality Act in 2010 gave some protection, but the reform of the GRA was aspirational: to see an end to the policing of trans lives by a panel of doctors and lawyers who had the last ‘say’ on whether you were a woman or a man. No other citizens have to do this. Furthermore, the proposals for reform would ideally have included the option of non-binary gender identity, the so-called ‘X’ marker on a passport. This is not groundbreaking anymore. The UK now lags far behind – India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Australia, Denmark, Germany, Ireland and Malta are just a few countries where such rights to self-identity are enshrined in law.

When the Conservative government under Theresa May agreed to look at reform of the GRA, it quickly became obvious that we were absolutely not going to see non-binary recognition as a result of this exercise. The government is not obliged to consult publicly on changes to existing laws, and certainly not when the impact would be very narrow, affecting only trans and non-binary people. Evidence for this: the being the case (little or no impact beyond the minority affected) is in plain sight in the many countries listed above. And yet it chose to consult, widely, even extending the deadline to allow for more responses. 100,000 in total. It took us by surprise.

THE COUNTER OFFENSIVE

There was a gradual but sustained build-up during 2018 of transphobic rhetoric in mainstream media, people emboldened by a rash of new and well-funded websites, vicious Twitter battles, and our precious consultation was hijacked. In the name of feminism, people who do not believe that trans identities are real, began to talk about how dangerous it would be to ‘let men in dresses’ into female-only spaces. This is a familiar trope. The conflation of trans identities with sexual abuse and paedophilia is reminiscent of the same accusations levelled at gay men 40 years ago. There is no connection between being trans and being a sexual abuser. On the contrary, many trans people are victims of sexual abuse all over the world today, and this is especially true of trans women of colour. They are at the epicentre of hate.

It was bad enough to have to endure a public consultation, with the clamour of cis people’s opinions and imposition of their wishes and concerns over a matter which does not affect them, but it was with horror that we watched new feminist groups spring up, screaming all the more loudly about their rights being eroded by the GRA reform. The advertising was wide, vicious and incendiary. Meetings were held in secret venues and closely guarded while women spoke about the threat to safety imposed by trans women. The reform of the GRA, they said, would result in women and girls being terrified to use single-sex spaces for fear of a predator with a penis using this ‘loophole’ in the law to acquire access to such spaces by pretending to be a woman.

In fact, access to female-only spaces by trans women (or indeed a would-be predator in disguise) does not depend on the GRA, but on the Equalities Act 2010. The anti-trans arguments being put forward do not stand up to scrutiny. If trans women are to be banned from safe female spaces (toilets, changing rooms, refuges), where exactly are they to go? In men’s toilets? Where we know they are at very high risk of abuse and assault?

If we postulate that all must use a bathroom consistent with their birth sex, what of trans men? They really will be men in women’s spaces. How do we police this? A toilet passport? A genital check on entry? And if we insist on surgical genital reassignment as the line in the sand, what then are we saying about ‘true women’ or ‘real men’? That only a vagina makes a woman and a penis makes a man? When did biology rule so fiercely that we are prepared to hang intersex people out to dry?

Trans people already have the right to legally change their gender without having any form of medical or surgical intervention, and rightly so. It would be nothing short of fascist to suggest that people remove organs or relinquish their fertility (as has previously been the law in some European countries), in what amounts to forcibly sterilising individuals.

It is reported that 70% of the responses to the consultation were in favour of a move to self-identification, removing the necessity for a medical diagnosis. This reflects the recent alteration in the 11th edition of the International Classification of Diseases published by the World Health Organisation in 2018, in which gender dysphoria was declassified as a mental illness, much in the same way homosexuality was in the 1970s. Trans and non-binary people are not mad, we are not paedophiles, we are just people with a different lived experience of gender. We do not need a medical diagnosis to tell us who we are. We just need equal rights. The right to live in peace, the right to exist in the eyes of the law, and the right to be heard.

It’s really not asking that much.

“Trans and non-binary people are not mad, we are not paedophiles, we are just people with a different lived experience of gender. We do not need a medical diagnosis to tell us who we are. We just need equal rights”

The Clare Project, which offers TNBI support and provides a weekly drop-in for people from the trans community, and close friends and partners at QTIPoC Narratives Collective released a joint statement in light of the report:

After months of an increasingly difficult lockdown, the media being flooded with scenes of violent racism, transphobic attacks from hugely influential figures – and now leaked reports of the GRA reform being scrapped – we are exhausted.

On Sunday, June 14, 2020, a national newspaper reported that reform of the GRA would not be taking place under this government, backpedalling on years of
With over 70% of participants of the GRA consultation supporting self-identification (as countries such as Malta and Ireland have done) we have to ask the question — why conduct a public consultation if you are then going to reject the results?

Over 100,000 responses, the vast majority of whom favour the changes proposed, and you just ignore it? After decades of hardship, oppression, violence and attacks, here we are in 2020, still being pushed aside. This is a human rights issue. Simple bureaucratic changes to an outdated law which would affect no one other than trans and non-binary people has been turned into a campaign to erase the very rights it sought to improve. Is that why the consultation was held so widely and for so long? To get to this point?

Menacingly, and nothing to do with GRA reform, other intentions may include a ‘toilet bill’, looking to restrict who can use certain public restroom spaces and ‘safeguarding’ of female-only spaces, as well as tightening up restrictions on treatment for trans teens. These ideas appear to be piggybacking on the well-funded and well-respected voices of those claiming that trans rights impinge on the rights of women, and that the ‘trans lobby’ is causing children to change gender.

The rhetoric around bathrooms and genitals is especially galling, since trans people have been peacefully using the facilities that feel safest to them for a long time. Reform of the GRA was never going to change what happens in everyday life, which is that trans people are often very afraid to use public toilets for fear of hate speech or worse. Using the threat of perpetuations of sexual crimes as a reason for excluding trans women from female spaces is blatantly discriminatory and contravenes the Equalities Act 2010. The rights that the anti-trans activists seek to erode are not the GRA, this was a clever disguise, a platform to stir up hate. They seek to erode the rights that the anti-trans activists are targeting, not the rights that the trans people have already been granted — the rights that the GRA seeks to improve. Is that why the consultation was held so widely and for so long? To get to this point?

WRITE TO YOUR MP

Right now, we need the strength of our allies more than ever. We need you to (safely) take space on our behalf and protect us where asked; write to your MP on how you feel about these proposals/changes; donate your time, money and resources to TNBI folk/groups where they need support. You can write to your MP here: https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/news/category/write-to-your-mp/

We expect to see this take some momentum over the coming weeks and will post any updates from our news page on our website.

The Clare Project and our close friends and partners at QTIPoC Narratives Collective send our love, solidarity and strength to all of our community members and loved ones at this increasingly challenging time.

MORE INFO

Please do get in touch via email, or social media if we can support you or someone you know in some way. Useful links and details:

Email: info@clareproject.org.uk
www.facebook.com/tcpbrighton/
www.instagram.com/clareprojectbrighton/
www.clareproject.org.uk
QTIPoC Narratives Collective can be emailed at: qtipocnarratives@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/qtipocnarratives/

TRANS RIGHTS VIGIL

If you feel safe to attend, there is a vigil taking place in Brighton on Saturday, July 4.

www.facebook.com/events/s/brighton-trans-rights-vigil/2698865720384257/?ti=icl

baby-step progress with regards to trans and non-binary rights.

Regardless of what symbol is on the door or what the sign says.

In addition, the lack of recognition of non-binary and/or gender variant people continues the erasure of a growing proportion of our community — many of whom identify across the spectrum of gender without fitting into the typical ‘male’ or ‘female’ box. We know that diversity in gender expression has been a feature of many cultures and societies, both past and present, but enforcement of the binary means regular and traumatic decisions that continue to force thousands of people into non-existence, as they can only choose ‘M’ or ‘F’, and not ‘X’.

There are mountainous inaccuracies, loopholes and appropriated considerations that influence these major decisions regarding transgender rights — with every single one being created and manipulated by privileged, white, able-bodied, non-trans (cis) people. By under-representing these intersections, you’re hitting the minority groups within our already struggling community even harder. Anti-blackness, racism, classism, Islamophobia, ableism, and now explicit transphobia.

We have taken part in the GRA reform consultation, we have screamed, shouted and cried, but we still haven’t been heard.

OUTRIGHT ACTION INTERNATIONAL DECRIES ERASURE OF TRANS DISCRIMINATION PROTECTION IN US

OutRight Action International has reacted to a Department of Health & Human Services ruling in the US, which effectively erases protection from discrimination based on gender identity by doctors, hospitals and health insurance companies.

The organisation, which works at a global, regional and national level to eradicate the persecution, inequality and violence LGBTIQ people face around the world, says this is one of numerous efforts by the Trump administration to restrict the definition of gender to one of biological sex, and thus erase multiple protections for trans people put in place under the Obama administration.

A press release issued by the Department of Health & Human Services highlights that the department will be “returning to the government’s interpretation of sex discrimination according to the plain meaning of the word ‘sex’ as male or female and as determined by biology”.

Jessica Stern, executive director of OutRight Action International, said: “This is an absolutely despicable move by the Trump administration. Erasing protection from discrimination in healthcare for trans people during Pride Month, when the spotlight shines on equality for LGBTQ+ people, cannot be a coincidence.

“It is a direct attack on the basic rights of trans people, it marks a step backwards for gender justice, and stands in stark contrast to international human rights standards. Countries as diverse as Pakistan, Uruguay and Portugal have taken strides in recognising trans identities and codifying protections against discrimination in law in recent years.

“OutRight unequivocally condemns this callous move. Trans rights are human rights. There can be no debate about it.”

To see the full release, visit: www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/06/12/hhs-finalizes-rule-section-1557-protecting-civil-rights-healthcare.html?utm_source=GermanyCTban

For more info on OutRight Action International, visit: www.outrightinternational.org
**Bedford Tavern raises £900 for the Brighton Rainbow Fund**

The Bedford Tavern raised an amazing £900 for the Brighton Rainbow Fund at a Piano Bingo extravaganza to celebrate bar owner Adam Brooks’ annual 26th (ahem) birthday over May Bank Holiday Weekend. The virtual event, which included a raffle, was ‘utter carnage’, with birthday boy Adam and his husband, Tony Ford, raiding the fancy dress box and getting carried away with the Skittle Bombs, and videos of entertainers and staff old and new performing a range of ditties, including: Spice, Jason Thorpe, Sophie Causbrook, Snow White Trash, Cherry Bomb and resident pianist, JB.

Adam says: “I did pre-warn you that it would get messy. However, I didn’t anticipate it would reach Mrs Moore level. Despite the utter carnage I hope you managed to enjoy the rather long Piano Bingo session. Huge thanks to all the amazing special guests who put in some memorable performances and special thanks to Tony Ford for his unique contribution. Jason Thorpe thank you for everything, especially for keeping things going when I disappeared into the haze of Skittle Bombs.”

The Brighton Rainbow Fund gives grants to local LGBTQ+/HIV organisations who deliver effective frontline services to LGBTQ+ people in the city.

For more madcap events during lockdown follow @BedfordTavernBrighton
For more info, visit: www.rainbow-fund.org

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**Affinity Bar to reopen on 4 July**

Affinity Bar is set to return on Saturday, July 4. In a statement to its followers on Facebook, it said: “We are coming back! We are delighted to be reopening Affinity Bar on 4 July and can’t wait to welcome you back. We are currently working through the government’s guidance to ensure that we will be operating safely for all our customers and staff. There will be some changes in the bar, but you can still expect the same great atmosphere, fabulous attentive staff and delightful cocktails plus all your favourite drinks.”

Affinity Bar, 129 St James’s St, Brighton BN2 1TH. Follow @AffinityGayBar

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**Subline looks forward to seeing you**

Steven Lee, owner of Subline, says: “Hello Brighton! It’s been the strangest few months, we’ve missed all your smiling faces – particularly over Brighton Bear Weekend - they held some brilliant events on Zoom, but it sure ain’t the same. However, we’re beavering away at Subline so we can come back stronger than ever. The old girl’s getting more than a lick of paint, and - while there’s no predicting when it’ll be - we’re really excited about the rebirth ahead.

“During lockdown, we’ve been lucky enough to be enrolled on the SavePubLife scheme, run by Budweiser/Anheuser Busch. They’re selling vouchers for which you can spend at the bar once we’re back in action. If you can afford to ‘buy forward’ for a few drinks, it helps us keep the wolves from the door (and keep us in paint) while we find our way through this. Looking forward to serving you again.”

For more info about Save Pub Life and to buy a gift card for Subline, visit https://savepublife.com/products/subline-bn2-1th?_pos=1&_sid=59fa2a7f57&_ss=r

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**Legends Sun Terrace to reopen**

Legends Brighton’s sun terrace is to reopen on Saturday, July 4 and they’ve had a makeover! There is limited space available so call 01273 624462, email hello@legendsbrighton.com, or message them on Facebook @LegendsBrighton.

Legends is also taking (risk free) bookings for the hotel. Check out their new website for more info www.legendsbrighton.com

**Portsmouth Digital Pride**

Portsmouth Pride is set to return in 2021. For more information, visit: www.portsmouthpride.co.uk or follow @portsmouthprideuk or @pompey_pride
DINE WITH THE STARS RAISES £850 FOR RAINBOW FUND

Organised by the Brighton & Hove Community Safety Forum and hosted by Davina Sparkle, the glittering online event featured the scene’s brightest stars, including: Miss Jason, Kara Van Park, Jason Lee, Gabriella Parrish, Dave Lynn, Stephanie Von Clitz. Susspiciously Elvis, Mrs Moore, Alfie Ordinary, Jamie Heward, Jennie Castell and Sandra.

Chris Gull, chair of the Brighton Rainbow Fund, said: “Wow! What an epic evening with outstanding sessions from our talented local performers who must be having a tough time at the moment with closed venues, cancelled gigs, and no certainty of when things will be getting back to ‘normal’ for them. Despite that, as always, they all agreed without hesitation to be involved in this fundraiser, raising vital funds for the local LGBT+ and HIV projects which the Brighton Rainbow Fund support through our grant programmes. Thank you to them, and to the audience who donated so generously”

For more info, visit: www.rainbow-fund.org


CAMELFORD FULL OF HOPE

The Camelford Arms, which has been closed since March due to the coronavirus pandemic, posted a message to its Facebook followers last month, which was full of hope for the future.

The Camelford said: “It’s been a long time, but we’re at the end of the beginning/beginning of the end (depending upon your point of view). We’ll be getting things ready and making sure we’re only ready to open when we’re ready to open. We’ll keep you posted on social media. Looking forward to getting back to all the normality that this town can offer. See you soon. X”

The Camelford Arms, 30-31 Camelford St, Brighton BN2 1TQ. Follow @TheCamelfordArms

BRIGHTON BEAR WEEKEND

The magnificent Brighton Bear Weekend (BBW) team have made it clear – you can’t keep a good bear down

Known for putting on a great party, and for proudly supporting the Brighton Rainbow Fund, the BBW guys have pushed aside lockdown frustrations and defied the odds by holding a series of popular Sunday Tea Dances, the legendary BBW Quiz, and organising the Mr Brighton Bear 2020 competition. All of this, of course, done in the virtual world.

The BBW Quiz, which usually takes place at the Camelford Arms, the traditional kick-off event for BBW, was considered to be a great success. Hosted by the one and only Lola Lasagne, from an undisclosed location somewhere in Brighton, it was held on Zoom and via BBW’s YouTube channel. Lots of people got into the swing of things, with the top four brain boxes: Brian Latham with 50 points, Paul Johnson with 41 points, Scott Davidson with 39 points and Ian Sinclair with 37 points.

Graham Munday, chair of BBW, said: “What a great night in. Lola Lasagne was the perfect quiz host with a fabulous mixture of questions from bears to queens and Wentworth all featuring. The BBW team whole-heartedly thank Lola for her support. Congratulations to Brian Latham for winning, in spite of his late arrival.”

Lola Lasagne added: “I had so much fun hosting the BBW Quiz. Nice to see and hear familiar faces and voices. Well done everyone who played and thanks for asking me to host it.”

MR BRIGHTON BEAR 2020 WINNER

Great fun was had by all in the Mr Brighton Bear 2020 Live Final on Saturday, June 20. The evening came to a resounding climax, with the announcement that Shoreham-based publican Gavin Bennett-Mason snatched the sash, £100 cash and a self-portrait courtesy of Fraser Dickson from Little Big Men Drawings. Rhykar Bauer, a charming BBW fan from Maryland, USA, was declared runner up.

A packed online presentation featured dazzling performances by Candi Rell, Drag With No Name and Dave The Bear. We also heard from the winner of the 2019 inaugural crown Taylor Leigh, who was delighted that he retains his title in perpetuity.

Special appearances were made by Chris Gull, chair of the Brighton Rainbow Fund, which benefits from funds raised by BBW activities, in addition to Tom Bald, who once again designed and produced the classic Mr Brighton Bear crown and sash.

Graham Munday, said “Congratulations to Gavin for winning, Rhykar for being runner-up, and also to the other two finalists, Gavin (S) and Jon. Everyone was a worthy contestant. Huge thanks to our entertainers Candi Rell, Drag With No Name and Dave The Bear for supporting the evening. Last but not least, the BBW team is incredibly grateful to everyone who voted and supported the competition.”

Rounding off the weekend with a bang was the BBW Greatest Hits Sunday Tea Dance and BeefMince, which featured the best DJs from BBW past and present: Rob C, Cactushead, Bozzy Bear, Josh Sharp, Alex Ryan and Chris Todd.

Chris Gull, chair of the Brighton Rainbow Fund, said: “Thank you to everybody involved in this year’s BBW digital edition! This weekend always gives a big boost to the Brighton Rainbow Fund, and we’re in awe of the innovative and fun ways that you have found to be able to fundraise. It’s much appreciated”

BBW say donations are still being received, benefiting the Brighton Rainbow Fund, see the donate link on www.brightonbearweekend.com or visit www.gofundme.com/t/brighton-bear-weekend-2020

One more thing – the BBW guys say hang on to your face masks. There’ll be some Halloween and Christmas fun on the way and they’ll be back in 2021 with a massive list of events to make up for lost time.

For more info, contact Graham Munday: graham@brightonbearweekend.com

For more info on BBW, visit: www.brightonbearweekend.com

For more info on Brighton Rainbow Fund, visit: www.rainbow-fund.org
REPORT INTO EVIDENCE ON GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN AND BLOOD DONATION STILL DUE IN 2020

The FAIR (For the Assessment of Individualised Risk) steering group, set up at the beginning of 2019 at the request of the Department of Health & Social Care to explore whether some gay and bisexual men might be able to donate blood without a deferral, is still hoping to report its findings before the end of 2020, in spite of the coronavirus pandemic. The steering group includes representatives from NHS Blood & Transplant (NHSBT), Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service, the Welsh Blood Service, the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service, Public Health England, the University of Nottingham, National AIDS Trust, Stonewall, Freedom to Donate, Terrence Higgins Trust (THT), patient and donor representatives, and experts in epidemiology, virology and psychology.

Currently a man who has had sex with a man is deferred from donating blood for three months – the FAIR work is exploring whether there is sufficient evidence to change the current blood donor selection policy. Blood donation guidelines are set by the Department of Health & Social Care based on recommendations from the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues & Organs (SaBTO). The current three-month deferral uses ‘population based risk’ and the FAIR work could lead to the use of a more individualised assessment of risk, whilst still maintaining the safety of the blood supply. The change might enable some men who have sex with men but who are deferred under the current policy, to give blood.

Debbie Laycock, head of policy at THT, said: “As a member of the FAIR steering group, we are pleased that the important work of this group is progressing and that its recommendations will be released this year. We have long campaigned for a blood donation system that better reflects the realities of sexually transmitted infections. That’s why we welcomed the reduction in the deferral period to three months for those who are gay and bisexual men, and we will continue to support this work around exploring an individual risk assessment.”

FAIR is taking a collaborative, evidence-led approach. This has included conducting focus groups with gay and bisexual men. Existing public health data and research is being examined to scope how best to identify individuals at high and low risk of infections. Thousands of current and potential new blood donors are being surveyed to examine how people would respond to possible new and more detailed questions about their sexual behaviours. Workshops, focus groups and interviews are being held with groups such as blood donation session staff, current blood donors and potential new donors.

Currently all blood donors are asked a series of questions on travel, health, tattoos, sexual behaviour and more, to help assess how safe it is for them to donate, and how safe it is for someone to receive their blood. A central part of FAIR’s work is considering which new questions could successfully be added to identify donors, including men who have sex with men, at lower risk of acquiring certain infections that can be transmitted through blood.

A Stonewall spokesperson added: “We’re very pleased to be working with NHSBT and other partners on this vital project exploring ways to stop the blanket restriction against gay and bi men looking to donate blood. Working towards introducing a system of individualised risk assessment is a crucial part of allowing people who want to save lives to safely donate blood.”

FAIR aims to submit a report to the Advisory Committee on the SaBTO by the end of 2020.

NHSBT’s LGBT+ Network has a page outlining the guidance on blood, organ, stem cell and tissue donation if you are LGBTQ+:

www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/lgbtdonation

For more info on THT, visit: www.tht.org.uk
For more info on Stonewall, visit: www.stonewall.org.uk
For more info on National AIDS Trust, visit: www.nat.org.uk

SUSSEX BEACON CALLS FOR PPE

The Sussex Beacon, the charity specialising in care and support for people living with HIV, is in need of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

- Surgical masks and gloves
- Disposable plastic aprons
- Face masks

If you can help, message the Sussex Beacon on @thesussexbeacon or email fundraising@sussexbeacon.org.uk

SUSSEX BEACON CHARITY SHOPS REOPEN

The Sussex Beacon charity shops in St James’ Street and London Road reopened on Monday, June 15. Both shops will be open Monday-Saturday, 9.30am-4.30pm.

The shop at 130 St James’ St, Brighton BN2 1TH, specialises in books, DVDs and clothing. The Home Store at 72-73 London Rd, Brighton BN1 4JE, has a great selection of books and DVDs and also sells furniture, electrical items and homewares too.

Wayne Stone, trading manager, said: “It’s great to finally have our shops open again and trading to the public. We’ve brought in many new safety measures set out by the government and have hand-sanitising stations and one-way systems in both our stores to ensure the safety of our customers and staff. More now than ever we need the support of the community through donation and visiting our shops to see what we have on sale.”

Donations to the Sussex Beacon charity shops are always welcome, but as they are not currently running pick-ups, donations can be dropped off at the London Road shop. If you want to speak to them in advance, call 01273 680264.

They are also on the look-out for new volunteers. Many of their volunteers are still self-shielding so can’t be in the stores at present. Wayne told us that they are all being missed and “as soon as it’s safe to do so we will have them back on the team”.

For more info: www.sussexbeacon.org.uk/shops/
LUNCH POSITIVE CELEBRATES NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS’ WEEK

The first week of June was National Volunteers’ Week, and local HIV charity Lunch Positive celebrated with its volunteers to say thank you. Gathering as part of the recently formed Covid-19 response volunteer team, volunteers ended their working shift with a celebration of the year’s volunteering.

Lunch Positive was formed by volunteers in 2009, building upon more than 25 years of HIV support given through the previously active charity Open Door. Since that time, Lunch Positive has regularly provided the weekly HIV Lunch Club, over 50s’ supper groups, food and friendship gatherings, social support and outreach, crisis and emergency food provision, advice and information with specialist support, and more recently an immediate voluntary response to the Covid-19 crisis. Every week since the start of ‘lockdown’, volunteers have prepared and delivered cooked food and groceries to people with HIV, and have provided a highly successful new telephone befriending service. Over 6,000 meals have been prepared and delivered in the past three months.

Over the past year, through the contributions of volunteers and in excess of 5,500 hours given, Lunch Positive supported more than 160 people through frontline service provision. The charity proudly presented its work at the prestigious King’s Fund Conference on the theme of Community As The Best Medicine. Adding to this achievement, the essential contributions of volunteers were reflected in a written submission to Public Health England where Lunch Positive’s services have been added to the Directory of Good Practice.

Gary Pargeter, service manager, said: “Lunch Positive is entirely rooted in volunteering, community, and peer-support. This year we celebrated our 11th anniversary and in total over 60,000 hours given by volunteers. It’s truly a wonderful and inspiring thing to see the motivation, commitment, and quality of our volunteers bring to everything they do, people wanting to support and play a greater part in the community. The recent response to the Covid-19 crisis has been the perfect example. Immediately, and without hesitation, volunteers have given even more of their time and energy, working in new ways and entirely focusing on the needs and positive impact for our community. We’ve adapted our work, started essential new services, and volunteers have been creative, supportive and enthusiastic throughout a time of great change. They are brilliant! We’re now looking forward to recruiting more to join this fantastic team.”

Lunch Positive is now recruiting for more volunteers to support the future reopening of services. For more info, email: volunteer@lunchpositive.org or call 07846 464684

For more info on Lunch Positive, visit: www.lunchpositive.org

JAKUB & DAVID FIRST GAY COUPLE TO APPEAR IN A POLISH TV AD

Jakub and David, the Polish gay couple who handed out rainbow face masks in some of Poland’s LGBTQ+ ‘free zones’, have made history by becoming the first gay couple to appear in a Polish TV ad. The ad, part of a new Durex campaign called Loud in Bed, airs on all major TV channels in Poland, and in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Lithuania.

For info about different volunteering roles email volunteer@lunchpositive.org or call 07846 464384

For more info, to sign-up for updates, and to access support visit www.lunchpositive.org
2021 BRIGHTON HALF MARATHON ANNOUNCED

Brighton-based charity the Sussex Beacon has announced next year’s Brighton Half Marathon, its main annual fundraising event, will take place on Sunday, February 28, 2021. As event host and the organising charity behind the Brighton Half Marathon, the Sussex Beacon is looking for runners to join #TeamBeacon and raise vital funds for the charity. Over the past four years, #TeamBeacon has rapidly grown and more than 750 runners have fundraised £105,000. Thanks to their dedicated support and generosity, the Sussex Beacon has been able to give specialist care and support to many people living with HIV. Every penny raised by each runner is fundamental to the continuation of its services for people living with HIV, which cost more than £2 million a year.

The benefits of joining #TeamBeacon are numerous, with free technical running vests; exclusive guest marquee for runners; private toilet and wash facilities; pre-event training and support; food and drink served through the day; and music and an electric atmosphere on race day.

For more info on the marathon, visit: www.sussexbeacon.org.uk/team-beacon/
or visit: www.brightonhalfmarathon.com

DRAG QUEEN STORY HOUR UK RAISES MONEY FOR MERMAIDS

Sab Samuel from Drag Queen Story Hour UK has pledged to chop off his lovely locks to raise at least £1,000 of vital funds for Mermaids, the British charity and advocacy organisation that supports gender variant and transgender youth. Sab, who has raised £260 at the time of writing, says: “Hi there, I’m Sab Samuel and I run Drag Queen Story Hour UK. I’m pledging to shave off my lovely locks to raise at least £1,000 in two months. Please help this cause.”

To make a donation, visit: www.gofundme.com/t/storytimes-for-mermaids (until Tuesday, August 25)
For more info on Mermaids, visit: www.mermaidsuk.org.uk
For more info on Drag Queen Story Hour UK, visit: www.dragqueensstoryhour.co.uk

THT 2020 CHALLENGE

With exercise having such a positive impact on mental health, Terrence Higgins Trust (THT), the HIV & sexual health charity, is asking people to take on the 2020 Challenge – a 20-day active challenge – to help it continue to provide crucial services. According to THT, depression is twice as common in people living with HIV as a result of the stigma and prejudice they experience, and it needs people to take on the 2020 Challenge. You could run a certain distance in the 20 days or challenge yourself to a number of reps of an exercise a day, it’s totally up to you.

When you register via the THT website you will be sent an email with everything you need to get started. Set up your personalised online fundraising page using JustGiving and set your target for £100 (or more if you’re feeling ambitious). Tell your friends, family and colleagues what you’re doing and share photos and videos of you taking on your challenge and tag @THTorguk

THT is needed more than ever as many people across the UK who use its services are facing particularly challenging times due to the coronavirus pandemic. For people living with HIV and in acute financial crisis, the situation is even more devastating. This is guaranteed to have a huge impact on their mental health. THT’s Hardship Fund gives out small grants to people living with HIV in financial difficulty and can be a vital lifeline for those most vulnerable. These grants normally total £2,000 a month, but during the pandemic, THT will increase this to £20,000 each month. Your fundraising can help THT maintain this increase, and support those who need it most.

To register, visit: www.tht.org.uk/take-action/fundraising/raise-money/2020-challenge
For more info, email: fundraising@tbt.org.uk or visit: www.tbt.org.uk

GIVING BACK TO THE SUSSEX BEACON

Scott Ford, a patient and service user with the Sussex Beacon, cut his stylish hair short last month to raise vital funds for the charity. The amount raised stands at £380 at the time of writing. Scott, who has been the recipient of help and support from the Beacon since his HIV diagnosis 22 years ago at the age of just 25, set up a GoFundMe page to help raise money to keep Sussex Beacon’s activities going during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond.

Scott said: “We need a place like the Sussex Beacon. There’s nothing else like it. It helps so many people living with HIV. Without their support over the years, especially after I was diagnosed, things would have been a lot harder. I wouldn’t be the person I am today.”

“I want to thank everyone who donated. Every morning people like me have to take medication and it’s a constant reminder of being HIV positive. Many people who live on their own don’t have support and to have a place like the Beacon to come to which opens its arms with love, is vital.”

To donate £5, visit Scott’s page: www.gofundme.com/t/se5web/donate
To make a donation, visit: www.gofundme.com/t/se5web/donate
To make a donation, visit: www.gofundme.com/t/se5web/donate
For more info on the Beacon, visit: www.sussexbeacon.org.uk
For more info on the Beacon, visit: www.sussexbeacon.org.uk
**DEATH OF ACTIVIST LARRY KRAMER**

Larry Kramer, writer and activist, who led, fought and won a campaign to fundamentally change American health care policy has died at the age of 84.

His death, of pneumonia, was announced by his husband David Webster. As an author and playwright, he is best remembered for his autobiographical play *The Normal Heart*, as an activist for founding Gay Men’s Health Crisis, effectively the world’s first organisation providing care and advocacy for HIV positive people. His fellow directors forced him out for being too aggressive, and so he then went on to found the far more militant organisation, ACT UP.

ACT UP expressed its anger against the Reagan administration, city administrations, the Catholic church and Wall Street with direct action and street demonstrations, demanding, not asking, for a speed-up in finding effective medication. Its shock tactics were recognised even by some of the people he called murderers, including Dr Anthony Fauci (currently leading the US response to the Covid-19 pandemic) who ended up a friend, understanding the necessity of the changes that Kramer insisted on. Kramer never saw the need for schmoozing, and polite requests: “If you write a calm letter and fax it to nobody, it sinks like a brick in the Hudson.”

Quoted in the *New York Times*, Dr Fauci said: “Once you got past the rhetoric you found that Larry Kramer made a lot of sense, and that he had a heart of gold.”

Larry Kramer’s reputation wasn’t just based on his role of provocateur general, he had a solid body of work both as a screenwriter (he adapted DH Lawrence’s novel *Women In Love*), and a novelist (his first novel *Faggots* caused a sensation because of its depiction of gay lifestyles and suggestion that gay men and women could achieve more were they not only defining themselves by their sexuality). Of *Faggots*, and who also knew him, released this statement: “Larry Kramer was an inspiring playwright, author and pioneering campaigner on LGBTQ+ and HIV issues. He helped galvanise the formation of the AIDS activist group ACT UP, which successfully challenged US government inaction and forced pharmaceutical companies to speed up their efforts to research and trial treatments. He also helped establish the Gay Men’s Health Crisis, which did so much to support people living with HIV/AIDS.

“ACT UP’s efforts helped save the lives of millions of people worldwide and Larry was part of that achievement. His often-angry tirades against President Reagan, the *New York Times*, drug corporations and the medical establishment were scathing and effective. I counted him as a friend and comrade. He will be missed and remembered for decades to come.”

**Peter Tatchell Foundation**

Peter Tatchell, director of the [Peter Tatchell Foundation](https://petertatchellfoundation.org), whose life of LGBTQ+ activism and direct action mirrored that of Kramer’s, and who also knew him, released this statement: “Larry Kramer was an inspiring playwright, author and pioneering campaigner on LGBTQ+ and HIV issues. He helped galvanise the formation of the AIDS activist group ACT UP, which successfully challenged US government inaction and forced pharmaceutical companies to speed up their efforts to research and trial treatments. He also helped establish the Gay Men’s Health Crisis, which did so much to support people living with HIV/AIDS.

“ACT UP’s efforts helped save the lives of millions of people worldwide and Larry was part of that achievement. His often-angry tirades against President Reagan, the *New York Times*, drug corporations and the medical establishment were scathing and effective. I counted him as a friend and comrade. He will be missed and remembered for decades to come.”

**For more** on Act Up, visit: [https://actupny.com](https://actupny.com)

**For more** on Peter Tatchell Foundation, visit: [www.petertatchellfoundation.org](http://www.petertatchellfoundation.org)
HIV Scotland was last month successful in forcing Police Scotland to halt its practice of recording HIV status on the Scottish Intelligence Database (SID) within a ‘contagious’ indicator, believing it to be a fundamental breach of human rights, data protection legislation and contrary to modern medical science. The charity, which ensures people living with and those affected by HIV have their say on the issues that matter, was alerted by a whistle-blower, who informed it of the way intelligence is gathered, coded and registered against people living with HIV. Nathan Sparling, chief executive of HIV Scotland, wrote to Police Scotland chief constable Iain Livingstone in March to ask if Police Scotland holds information regarding an individual’s HIV status on the SID. Furthermore, the letter asked if this information was stored under an ‘infectious’ marker.

In a response dated March 20, 2020, assistant chief constable Alan Spears wrote to confirm that an indicator for ‘contagious’ was applied to nominals who are classed as contagious through “any intelligence received”, which includes HIV status. The letter confirmed that this indicator was currently being added to nominals who have HIV. The assistant chief constable went on to say: “Having identified this practice, and in line with current policy on the Criminal History System (CHS) and the Police National Computer (PNC) where HIV is not recorded, I have instructed that this is immediately reviewed.”

In a new letter received by HIV Scotland on June 10, 2020, Police Scotland confirmed that a review had taken place, which has resulted in Police Scotland amending its practice and policy and now “no longer records HIV status on SID within the contagious indicator field.”

While HIV Scotland welcomes this news, it believes many questions remain:

- Will Police Scotland proactively remove information about someone’s HIV status from the intelligence database?
- Will Police Scotland review activity that has led to people living with HIV being targeted or discriminated against because of their HIV status?
- What training has been provided to officers from constable to higher ranks to ensure that any knowledge intelligence – information that is known to officers but not stored in SID – is not used to discriminate against people?
- Can Police Scotland clarify why the information was retained in the first place, and if not, will it refer itself to the Information Commissioner’s Office?

Nathan Sparling said: “We happened upon this practice by chance. We have uncovered a systematic issue that could have impacted the lives of people living with HIV. It beggs the question – what other information is stored about us on the SID and what relevance does it have to the police?

“People could have had intelligence stored on SID regardless of their HIV status, but simply because they were perceived to have HIV. We hope that Police Scotland won’t stop at simply reviewing and changing current practice but look at what the impact could have been on individuals and ensure officers have access to up-to-date information about the modern-day realities of HIV. Because that reality is that many people living with HIV who are on treatment cannot pass it on to their sexual partners, and the risk of transmission through other routes is significantly reduced. This is due to treatment being so effective that it reduces levels of the virus to a level that is undetectable in the blood.

“People living with HIV should no longer be the victim of decades-old stigma. Systemic issues must be rooted out, and we are glad that in this case we have uncovered an issue, and that it has been acted on. These questions need answers, and we will continue to campaign to ensure systems change for the better.”

HIV Scotland is asking anyone who may feel like they have been inappropriately targeted or discriminated against by the police because of their HIV status to email info@hiv.scot or 01315563713.

Following the announcement from Police Scotland, National AIDS Trust (NAT) has highlighted that markers are still being used in England and other parts of the UK and they are pushing for this to change.

Kat Smithson, director of policy at NAT, said: “Markers do nothing to protect police officers, but feed misconceptions about HIV and the idea that people living with HIV are ‘contagious’. We welcome Police Scotland’s decision to no longer hold information about a person’s HIV status. This is significant, but long overdue. We urge forces in other parts of the UK to also come to the same view that these markers breach data protection law and take steps to ensure that information about a person’s HIV status is removed across the force’s systems.

“We are aware in England that there are markers on the police national computer and the systems used by individual forces to label HIV and other blood borne viruses, often without proof of a person’s medical condition. Forces have the power to record if a person refers to HIV as part of a threat of harm, regardless of their status or whether there was actual risk of transmission, which there is not in the vast majority of cases. This is not justified, and we know from our discussions with police officers that HIV status is often recorded in other unnecessary circumstances.”

For more info on HIV Scotland, visit: www.hiv.scot
For more information on NAT, visit: www.nat.org.uk

THT FREE ONLINE HIV AWARENESS TRAINING

HIV and sexual health charity Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) is running another of its popular online HIV Awareness Training Course in July. The training is free, takes places over two three-hour modules, and is delivered interactively via Zoom.

Module 1 (Introduction to HIV)
Thursday, July 2, 11am–1pm, on Zoom
- Current Snapshot of HIV in the UK and Worldwide
- Definitions of HIV & Terminology
- HIV Transmission

Module 2 (HIV Treatment & Prevention)
Thursday, July 9, 11am–1pm, on Zoom
- HIV Prevention Methods
- HIV Treatment Overview

Module 3a (HIV Stigma & Discrimination)
Thursday, July 16, 11am–1pm, on Zoom
- Impact of HIV Stigma and Discrimination
- Personal experiences from someone living with HIV
- Case Studies

Module 3b (HIV & Ageing)
Thursday, July 23, 11am–1pm, on Zoom
- Considerations around Ageing and HIV (including Stigma)
- Personal experiences of living with HIV from someone over 50
- Ageing Specific Case Studies

For further details and to book or for bespoke online training for your staff team, contact Alice Booth at Alice.Booth@tht.org.uk

For more info on THT, visit: www.tht.org.uk

POLICE SCOTLAND FORCED TO STOP LABELLING PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV ‘CONTAGIOUS’

In general.

Alice Booth, HIV training coordinator, said: “Having run these sessions in May and June, I can report that it works remarkably well and I’ve received very good feedback from the attendees. So please do give it a go if HIV is something you would like to learn more about. The training is suitable for anyone who may be working with people living with HIV, supporting colleagues who may be living with HIV, or just if you want to update your knowledge in general.”

For more details and to book or for bespoke online training for your staff team, contact Alice Booth at Alice.Booth@tht.org.uk

For more info on THT, visit: www.tht.org.uk
MORE TO ME THAN HIV WORLD AIDS DAY 2020

To help break down the stigma that many people living with an HIV+ diagnoses experience, a local project is planning an online public gallery and exhibition of photographs at Jubilee library for World AIDS Day 2020.

By Glenn Stevens

For last year’s World AIDS Day I put together a public project of work joining other people living with an HIV+ diagnosis at Jubilee Library. For the project I spoke openly about my journey, having being diagnosed HIV+ 32 years’ previous. Back then there was no treatment and a lot of fear and misinformation concerning how HIV was transmitted. As such, stigma was rife, which caused me to not be vocal about my status outside of the safety of those HIV+ forums and groups.

I felt empowered by talking about my own HIV+ status at my place of work and was moved by those who spoke so eloquently and openly about living with an HIV+ diagnosis. Straight after the project had finished, I knew I wanted to build on what we had collectively presented.

From here the same team came on board and collectively we have shaped this year’s visual presentation for World AIDS Day 2020. The photo project is called More To Me Than HIV and its main purpose is to help break down the stigma that many people living with an HIV+ diagnosis experience. The project will culminate in an online public gallery as well as a physical exhibition of photographs at Jubilee Library and a selection of branch libraries across Brighton & Hove which are supporting the project by allowing us to use their space free of charge.

GET INVOLVED

We’re inviting people from all communities, gay, straight, BAME and transgender, who are living with HIV, to submit three photos: one self portrait (format: vertical), and two other photos (cropped, squared to fit beside your portrait photo). These two images must convey other aspects of what makes you, you; from a hobby to your career or passion.

Please send three empowering words to accompany the images. We will format and add these to the partite image.

ANY QUESTIONS?

The team behind the project understand there will be a lot of questions participants want to ask, which we will strive to answer via the website. Here are a few that may come to mind.

Can I be assured of confidentiality?
Yes, we live with or are affected by HIV ourselves and recognise the importance of confidentiality. For example, when you subscribe to our email list, you don’t have to give your name, we only use it to politely address you.

How do I submit photos, which format should I use and size?
Send your photos by email to the webpage address. There will also be easy to follow details of what format and size we would like you to use.

How do you approve images?
We reserve the right not to use images that break any UK law, contain any hateful or obscene content, or are too small to represent on our platform without distorting the image.

What if I don’t want to be identified?
We will not attach any name to the portraits for the project. You may choose not to show your whole face in the portraits, however, we would like to encourage you to combat stigma by being visible.

I’d like to take part, but I’m uneasy as I’m not out about my HIV status.
We recognise that choosing when and who to disclose your HIV+ status to can be difficult, as we have been there ourselves. You may want to choose this project as part of your disclosure strategy to show others how diverse we are. Being pictured with others may be of comfort to you, as you are not alone.

If you would like to speak to an HIV+ peer support volunteer, the Sussex Beacon offers a one-to-one bespoke service to help you on your journey.

Our website will be updated throughout the project as more questions come in so please do check the website. We look forward to seeing your images as we all stand together and say there is so much more to me than HIV.

For more information about the More To Me Than HIV project and how to get involved please visit: www.moretomethanhiv.live, or email info@moretomethanhiv.life.

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organism to annihilate itself by killing off its host. So over time this virus will mutate and learn to accommodate us, just as we will have to learn to accommodate it. Become friends with it. Learn to live alongside it as we do with sharks, scorpions, wasps, snakes and jellyfish. Made of the very same substance as us, the entire universe is reflected in the diversity of our planet, and our DNA has the same basic building blocks as all of life. We are connected.

The lens of lockdown is a curious one. Looking at the sociodemographic impacts of the virus, we see it is affecting people of colour more in Western countries than would be expected. This is highlighted further when you look at the unfolding picture of much lower death rates in Africa and Asia, including countries where GDP and healthcare systems are considered ‘poor’. We make excuses like vitamin D deficiency, or pre-disposing health factors, denser housing etc; anything we can grasp a hold of to avoid the obvious.

It is structural racism, endemic in our country, which creates these inequalities in the first place, creating a perfect storm when the virus hit. It is systemic and institutional racism that hits the BAME frontline workers in healthcare delivery. Their deaths are disproportionate.

The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis has sparked protest all over the world, and rightly so. Here we are, in the middle of a pandemic, watching a black man suffocate to death before our very eyes. He can’t breathe. The extent of both subtle and overt racist actions surrounding this death are to be seen for what they are. Gaslighting us with a misleading autopsy report, the use of oppressive weapons, tools and threats, further police brutality, even religious posturing from the White House as Trump attempts to corral his base in a barely concealed call to arms.

This on a background of rising unemployment, disproportionate numbers of deaths among people with darker skin, and pressure to put those very same people back to work, knowing they are at greater risk, in order to save the economy; these are the reasons protests have to happen now.

Now is the right time. If we doubt, we must ask ourselves why? Why is this happening now? People do not willingly put themselves in harm’s way unless they feel very, very strongly about something. The clue is in the powerful message, ‘Black Lives Matter’. This movement is zeitgeist.

George Floyd, like many before him, couldn’t breathe. Covid-19 stops people from being able to breathe. BAME people cannot breathe in a racist society built on the spoils of their labour and their bodies. We, none of us, can breathe. Not until we are free of racism, capitalism, and misogyny. None of us can breathe until all of us can breathe. It’s important to protest, even if you do that from the safety of your home. This is the beginning of social change. The virus is here to teach us how to do this safely, respectfully, with compassion and kindness.

If you look closely through this lens you will see much, much more. We know also that the elderly have been disproportionately affected. We knew this would be the case, long before the virus hit these shores. Yet we totally failed to consider how ‘shielding’ them could really look. And this failure was systemic. Because we shut our elderly and infirm family members away behind closed doors, in secret places with lino floors and no freedom.

We live in a totally different world to the one we knew just a few months ago. I know that is stating the obvious, but sometimes I don’t think any of us realise how truly different it is. What monumental changes, what seismic shifts, have happened since the start of this year.

We have been overtaken by a virus. Perhaps a more intelligent and self-preservation life-form than a human being; its replicative capacity ripping around the planet at lightening speed, like a wild and uncontrollable highlighter pen showing up inequalities and human rights abuses as nothing ever before.

In the first wave of a new pathogen, after it has jumped species, it is at its most deadly. But thereafter it is not in the interests of any organism to annihilate itself by killing off its host. So over time this virus will mutate and learn to accommodate us, just as we will have to learn to accommodate it. Become friends with it. Learn to live alongside it as we do with sharks, scorpions, wasps, snakes and jellyfish. Made of the very same substance as us, the entire universe is reflected in the diversity of our planet, and our DNA has the same basic building blocks as all of life. We are connected.

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regulated, open to abuses of all kinds, from financial fraud to physical manhandling of patients. And the rampages of a virus let loose amongs humanity.

This is happening widely, because we haven’t cared enough about our older people for decades now. Mahatma Gandhi springs to mind: “The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members”. We have failed, as a society, to protect our most vulnerable members. As I write there have been as estimated 10,000 Covid deaths in UK nursing and care homes.

You will also see the widening gap in ‘class’, for want of a better word. Actually it is just about money. But money is easier to come by if you have a privileged background. This is what privilege is. You got a better education, you are healthier, you are white, elitist. You really believe that you got where you got because you worked so hard and you are a clever puppy. Along comes a nasty killer bug, and you protect yourself and your loved ones, and look on in horror as those less fortunate succumb.

People with higher-earning jobs that are desk-based can easily work from home, not so those at the bottom of the ladder, or those in public service whose roles necessitate face-to-face contact with others. Sometimes many others in one day. The same wealthy people can afford to have urgent medical interventions privately so as not to end up on the heap of ‘indirect’ Covid deaths, a catastrophe yet to unfold, which will doubtless affect lower earners (or do we mean ‘key workers’?) disproportionately. We have seen rising numbers of unemployment, mental ill health, homelessness (hidden thousands) and probably suicides. If broken down to inspect the details of these lives, I have no doubt that people lower down the socio-economic ladder will again be disproportionately affected.

I know there are more lessons to be learned by watching this pandemic unfold; political, social, economic, health & social care related, educational and in many other aspects of infrastructure we rely on. And I am optimistic that we can learn, and can push for change as a result, but it will be a long and hard road, because our habits, our way of life, our comforts, these are all hard things to let go of. The combined effects of Covid-19, a blind leadership, and Brexit, will all serve to make life harder still in the coming years. I believe there will be food and fuel crises in the near future, perhaps water too, teaching us harsh lessons about the things we have hitherto taken for granted.

I believe the economy, so clearly the priority when it comes to ‘saving’ us from the virus, will reveal itself to be the false god that it is. We will see that the pursuit of community, relationships that nurture us, and happiness is perhaps far more important. By which I mean contentment, rather than hedonistic abandon which many of us seek just to escape the reality in which we find ourselves. Perhaps we will all learn to travel less, feed ourselves from the soil around us, consume fewer goods, and get healthier in our minds and our bodies.

But we may also be trapped by an emerging oligopoly, with rich businesses getting richer, and small independent and creative outlets being stifled. With taxes and austerity starving many more of us over the years to come as we repay our public debt to the fiscally obsessed masquerading as democratic government. Even as we learn our lessons on the ground, and reach out to one another with kindness and compassion, we may yet see the gap widen until we no longer recognise one society, but live under the radar screens of those in power and control, knowing that the fight is yet to be won.

I have used the word disproportionately deliberately and often. It’s important to understand what this means. It means that some people have suffered, do suffer, more than others, some communities more than others, some families more than others. And when you look closely, you will see that it is people who are already marginalised in some way who are taking a beating. Whether it be financial ruin, death, relationship breakdown, violence, sickness or abuse, this virus does observe socio-economic boundaries and affect marginalised people more. Of course it does, we are its host. We are not all in this together. Unfortunately some are more ‘in’ it than others. It magnifies and shines a light on what we do to each other as humankind. It cannot live without us. It is a part of us. We can chose whether or not to weaponise it, to declare war on it. Or we can learn to live in peace with it. Collectively we can be a harmonious host.

The July issue of Gscene has had a trans focus for some years now, thanks to the late James Ledward. The theme changed from ‘trans’ to ‘gender’ a year or so back, so as to widen the discussion. Having been through transition, I often catch myself saying that I don’t see gender any more. It’s as though I’ve been cured of something really toxic. I know a lot of trans people feel the same way, and I sometimes imagine myself making the final leap into claiming a non-binary identity. To me, this is the pinnacle of transcendence of the gender binary. To live outside of it. There are tons of us, but we still live in the shadows in many parts of the world. And the need to keep our heads down and count on our allies is escalating, because under Covid cover bigotry is on the rise.

In Hungary, Orban has successfully withdrawn recognition of trans identities. Others will surely follow. Fascist policies in the Home Office are slithering under the radar screen, and there is some very sinister anti-trans activism going on at the heart of our establishment. This government’s Minister for Women & Equalities is clearly of gender critical persuasion, and with support from a life peer in the House of Lords, appears to be set on rolling back trans rights.

There have been assaults on local councils and on big corporations, challenges to trans inclusivity in the name of feminism. Gender, like race, is an oppressive societal construct designed to keep us all from becoming the best we can be. Misogyny is its primary assault weapon, and along with toxic masculinity and misandry, it’s close cousins, is being weaponised in attempts to eradicate those of us who do not, will not, conform.

It has been a pleasure to collate the voices of the less heard in this issue, and to showcase the resilience and creativity of a marginalised and intersectional community. I am honoured to be counted among them. Together we rise.

“BAME people cannot breathe in a racist society built on the spoils of their labour and their bodies. We, none of us, can breathe. Not until we are free of racism, capitalism, and misogyny. None of us can breathe until all of us can breathe”
“Race is a concept created by cis white men as a tool for oppression, and the gender binary achieves the same thing”

Sam Hall had a lockdown Zoom chat with Ellis Johnson, psychotherapeutic counsellor, trainer, community organiser, trans man and new dog-parent.

So, Ellis, about the new dog...
“Willow is a rescue from Romania. She is a small and dainty two-year-old Collie who just arrived yesterday. I think she’s very traumatised so she’s hiding in the kitchen.”

Tell us a bit about you...
“I was born in Bradford and grew up in Leeds. I’m a person of mixed heritage; Jamaican, Pakistani and white British Yorkshire, to be precise. After a faltering start with a GP referral that never happened, my transition began in earnest when I was 30 and moved to Brighton. My childhood was very family oriented, I played a lot of sports and was obsessed with football. I was a huge Manchester United fan, and played for local teams. My family have been amazing about my transition. It was all totally new to them, but they’ve been very accepting. Seeing that this was the right thing for me.”

What about racism?
“During my early years at school in Bradford, there were lots of brown kids so I didn’t feel impacted by racism, but moving to Leeds and a majority white school when I was eight was when things got worse. I was often called the ‘P’ word. I was also shouted at for being a ‘dyke’. On the whole, though, I don’t think I’ve really felt male privilege. I’ve entered that space. That I’ve spent my life having to navigate racist microaggressions, alongside judgement about my gender. It wasn’t really a topic for discussion in my childhood home, but I’m more and more aware of the impact of intergenerational trauma. I know my family has suffering in its past, I’m invested in being a good ancestor for those who come after me.”

Does that mean kids?
“I’d really like to have kids, in the context of a committed relationship. In some queer circles there’s an idea that having a family unit isn’t radical, but I think a lot about ancestors and I really care about connecting with my past history. I believe it’s patriarchy that has disconnected us from our roots; the magic of community and raising a family. Why should trans people give that up? What matters to me is the creation of family, be that children, partners or queer family/friends. I don’t really mind how they come about, but to have children and love them alongside another person… I’d really like to have a family unit.”

So how are things right now?
“I’m settled in Brighton and working three days a week as a psychotherapeutic counsellor, often with TNBI clients. I also train in trans awareness and anti-racism, as well as inclusion and equalities. I’ve been busy with a mutual aid support group for QTIPOC community organisers because I worry about burnout, for myself and others. I keep myself grounded with meditation. The more I practise staying in touch with the universe and my intuition, the more I feel guided and certain about my life choices. There are hints that confirm that my choices and understandings are taking me in the right direction, and I watch for those little signs of everyday magic.”
As most of the globe is cautiously emerging from lockdown measures brought on by the Covid-19 crisis, in parts of the world the LGBTQ+ community is engaged in a bitter battle for fundamental rights and recognition. Some far right, populist leaders have used the reduced international scrutiny of their countries to fast-track legislation that target the most marginalised. One such country is where I, Lili Hornyai, am from, Hungary.

Twenty years ago, things looked markedly different for this small post-Communist nation as it was en route to becoming a modern cultural hub, just like its neighbours Slovenia and the Czech Republic. I had the privilege to grow up in a brief period in Hungarian history during the 1990s when Western pop culture, and with it, more liberal societal attitudes, slowly started to seep into mainstream consciousness. By the mid-2000s it seemed that things might be progressing in the right direction. With queer identities largely exiled to the margins of society, the day-to-day experience of queer people wasn’t getting significantly better though. I was fired from my hospitality job when the management found out I was dating my same-sex partner and, with both our parents uneasy about our relationship, we left the country in 2008 and moved to Brighton.

With the sweeping victory of Viktor Orban’s national-conservative party, Fidesz, in 2010, Hungary started to shift away from global and cosmopolitan ambitions and towards nationalism and populism. Living in safety in the gay capital of Britain, we would recoil in horror every time our native country made international headlines for restricting the freedom of the press, for meddling with judicial and electoral laws, or for leading racist smear campaigns against refugees and migrants. Our hearts would grow even heavier when the news was about the queer community – Pride parades attacked by far right protesters, gender studies banned from universities, withdrawal from Eurovision as it was deemed to be “too gay”. A more recent scandal involved the nationwide boycott of Coca-Cola (egged on by politicians) over a billboard that featured a hugging gay couple.

While my native country was throwing a hissy fit over fizzy drinks, at the age of 33 I realised that I’m non-binary. This self-discovery compelled me to learn more about trans identities and lives and I’ve found a community that is as strong, diverse, and welcoming as it is marginalised, discriminated against and endlessly stereotyped. While the fight for trans rights is an ongoing battle globally, the situation in Hungary is particularly fraught right now.

Hungarian trans people have been struggling to get identification documents that would correspond with their gender identity since 2016, when all legal gender recognition requests have been put on hold due to alleged GDPR concerns. IDs are crucial for everyday life in Hungary, and so trans people without updated documents are forced to out themselves every time they pick up a parcel from the post office, take any exams, sign any contracts, hire any equipment and so on.

“We constantly have to explain ourselves and come out to people we don’t want to come out to.”

And amid the Covid-19 crisis, the Hungarian trans community was thrown a new curveball. Hungary’s government currently (and controversially) rules by decree and, as part of a bundle of legislation, has introduced a bill that defines gender as “biological sex based on primary sex characteristics and chromosomes as observed at birth”, making it impossible for people to legally change their gender. The law has devastating ramifications for Hungarian trans people.

“I don’t want to leave Budapest, but I feel I’ve no other option left.”

Ivett paints a gloomy picture for the future of trans rights in Hungary: “Once article 33 becomes law, my request to change my legal gender, that’s been in limbo for over a year, will be rejected, condemning me to live as a woman with a male ID for the foreseeable future.”

Activists like Ivett do their best to give voice to a group that has extremely vulnerable members, often too scared to speak out. Last November she gave a speech in front of a small but determined crowd of roughly 100 people at Hungary’s very first Trans Pride. A second day of workshops, protest and solidarity was scheduled for the end of March this year, now postponed indefinitely due to the pandemic. I’ve no doubt though, that this small, resilient community will be back on the streets louder, brighter and bolder than before. In the words of Terry Reintke, a German MEP, Viktor Orban “will not break this community. Trans people will not cease to exist just because [he] want[s] them to”.

The strength of the Hungarian trans community in the face of such adversity inspired me to start volunteering with Trans Pride Brighton – perhaps I can’t join their battle over there, but I can raise my voice and fight for trans rights here.”

**More INFO**

Lili Hornyai is an author and content creator with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Media Studies from the University of Brighton. They have been working in the adult industry with adult toys and essentials for more than four years and have accumulated experience in customer service, providing sex advice, communication, sexual health and sex and body-positivity. They had the opportunity to work on features with major mainstream media outlets such as* Cosmopolitan* UK and US and* Good Housekeeping Magazine.*

Lili is passionate about LGBTQ+ rights and making sure that every blog, guide and article they release is written with inclusivity in mind. They’re also a die-hard* Buffy* fan, non-binary, sci-fi geek, lover of cats and birds.
ACCESS NO AREAS

This virus has affected millions of people. Across the world, people are isolated and scared, but what’s it like to be a disabled trans person during the Covid-19 crisis? A look at the pandemic from the perspective of Rebecca Claridge-Bowler

Let’s be honest, life was hard enough before this for people with disabilities, but the Covid-19 crisis adds a whole new level of stress and complications. I’m a totally blind trans woman. This whole situation has made my daily life more difficult – I’m no longer able to do the weekly shop and have had to rely on my neighbours to be kind enough to do so. I can’t follow social distancing guidelines as I’m unable to see whether a person is too close to me and my guide dog certainly can’t do it for me. And that’s just my side of the story. I know there are thousands of disabled people, both trans and cis, who this lockdown has affected, but somehow I feel that the situation is worse for trans disabled people for a whole lot of other reasons.

“On a positive note, the GIC has switched to online video and phone appointments to replace face-to-face appointments, something disabled people have been asking for for years”

Like me and thousands of other trans people who are still waiting for our first appointment with the Gender Identity Clinic (GIC), many of us, if not all, have had our appointments cancelled or rescheduled. The virus has put a stop to accessing what can be vital treatment, or slowed it down even further. This causes a lot of underlying stress and worry, layering on top of anxiety already present due to the difficulties of transitioning in today’s climate. Others who have been waiting years for gender reassignment surgery have had all their appointment dates cancelled, with no way of finding out when they may be rescheduled, or whether services will make them start all over again and get a new referral, something which again takes years.

Then there are people who are on hormones (HRT) and other medication which are proving extremely difficult to get hold of. Access to GP surgeries and pharmacies may be more restricted, and that’s just for the fully able-bodied. I’ve found that trying to get a prescription refill of any medication has been extremely complicated as a disabled person during this time. Many trans people are being left with either a limited amount of HRT or none, increasing the numbers forced to resort to alternative measures, such as purchasing online. This is also the case in normal times, but it’s now worse, becoming almost impossible for some and extremely difficult for others. And that’s for the people who can leave the house for necessary supplies. There are a number of people who have no choice but to stay indoors because they’re severely immunocompromised or shielding. Some people may have to be in total lockdown measures even after restrictions have been relaxed and could be stuck indoors until the middle of next year.

On a positive note, the GIC has switched to online video and phone appointments to replace face-to-face appointments, something disabled people have been asking for for years. Many have found it difficult and stressful to travel in person to the clinic, so this development is a useful one which means people can still have their appointments without the extra cost and stress of travel in the first place.

A lot of disabled people are having their medications and food supplies delivered by courier. In my experience, there have been no end of problems with the systems set up to help. Even though I’m totally blind, I’m not classed as a vulnerable person and getting a priority delivery is almost impossible. That’s why I’ve had to rely on my neighbours to help me get food. This goes for hundreds of blind and partially sighted people.

Then there is the mental health side of this crisis. We’re about to see a huge demand on the already underfunded and understaffed mental health services of the NHS. This pandemic is causing a lot of mental health crises, having forced people who needed to be able to leave the house for their mental health to stay home, or leaving people trapped indoors with their abusers. Domestic abuse reports have risen hugely since the lockdown. LGBTQ+ people who lived with families who aren’t supportive are being subjected to even more stress and anxiety about the situation, which is detrimental to their mental health. There are many people who are reaching a breaking point, not being able to go out, or to see friends and loved ones, or even just going for a walk down the street.

And then there are the carers, who are undervalued and put at risk because of the lack of PPE. What we need right now is a total redesign of the current system; funding the NHS properly and then pouring a whole load more money into it. That’s really about all I can say for now, because there’s just too much to fit in one article. But whoever reads this; I want you to know that you’re not alone. There are groups and online support, and we’ll make it through this together if we help each other and support one another.

MORE INFO

Rebecca Claridge-Bowler is a 22-year-old totally blind trans woman with a guide dog named Vince. She describes herself as a lover of reading, all things nerdy, and is the accessibility officer for Trans Pride Brighton & Hove, adding: “I truly love everything I do.”
Camp was deep in the bushes next to a bridge near Overcliff Drive in Bournemouth. It was a four-man walk-in green tent. My cats, Alister and Sophie, were a brother and sister I’d bought six months earlier. We lived in one of two pods, a mattress, gas fire, all my clothes had been stolen in the days before while I was moved on by the council. My mountain bike locked to a tree.

That day I had a meeting with Shelter, which after six hours and three appointments, said it couldn’t help me without a local connection. I walked to the Salvation Army project for a shower and breakfast, keeping to myself among the church people, local drug users and homeless people. They were lovely, but no one said much as I worked on the computer by the front window. Then a glimmer of hope. My job agency in Brighton had work for me. With no way to get there I got on to Job Club and told it my situation; laid off, bad landlord, homeless with a job opportunity. Yes! It could get me a National Express ticket home…

It was around 4pm when I thanked the staff for helping me and for the showers that are a godsend when all you have are the clothes you’re wearing.

It took me ages to get back to the tent in the dark and my ticket was for 10pm that night. I walked to the Salvation Army project for a shower and breakfast, keeping to myself among the church people, local drug users and homeless people. They were lovely, but no one said much as I worked on the computer by the front window. Then a glimmer of hope. My job agency in Brighton had work for me. With no way to get there I got on to Job Club and told it my situation; laid off, bad landlord, homeless with a job opportunity. Yes! It could get me a National Express ticket home…

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It took me ages to get back to the tent in the dark and my ticket was for 10pm that night. Choices had to be made, I would leave everything except what I needed and could carry. I fed and basketed the cats first, then scrambled about in the dark finding ID, pulling down a tent too big for the area it was in.

It was a nightmare. I remember my box set of Friends splashing across the mud, gas bottle hanging near the fire, papers splurged everywhere, looking like a murder scene. I couldn’t fold the tent so I grabbed a wheely bag full of essentials, the cats and my bike, and struggled out of the bushes onto the grass near the road. I was soaked with sweat and rolling up the tent in the pitch black when a guy in a car asked if I needed help. I didn’t even look up.

Leaning and lurching on the bike, with the cat basket on one handle bar and my broken bag stuffed full of tent and sleeping bags on the other, it all proved too heavy as I cycled down the hill to the bus station. The pedals felt funny and then the crank went. I missed my bus. Hopeful, I waited, but the next bus wouldn’t have me or my cats. The ticket was void, National Express has a policy - no animals. I cried and cried. The woman driving

that second bus just laughed at me. I slipped into the train station and sank to the ground, scared and cold, pulling the cats closer in their basket, and wrapping us all in the two sleeping bags.

Next morning I realised I had lost my keys in the night’s terror; I imagine my bike is still locked up at that bus station today. At opening time the National Express staff let me use their phone to call Job Club which agreed to buy me a train ticket. Another glimmer of hope, my cats were coming with me to Brighton. I perked up a bit after that, letting the cats out to wee, walking them down to the end of the bus station on a couple of bits of string. They hadn’t made a murmur despite 18 hours in their basket.

I thanked the ladies at National Express as they had let me use the phone and sit out of the cold all day. It was dark again now as we boarded the train. Thank God I was finally going home.

It was late, maybe 9pm, when we got to Brighton station. Stooping like an old lady because of the broken wheels, I struggled out into the cold Brighton air, basket of cats in one hand, bag in the other. Fear killed my tiredness and I had a place in mind. A three-mile walk later I arrived at the bottom of Wilson Avenue where there is a nature reserve, golf course and campsite. It was so cold and I’d been awake for 48 hours, I knew I needed to get warm.

Walking a further 20 minutes into East Brighton Park, I found a bushy, icy, crunchy hill that felt safe. I let the cats out and fed them so they knew they were home, then putting half the tent on the ground, and pulling the sleeping bags and the rest of the tent over me, I slept.

That first day I woke only long enough to call each of the cats in for a cuddle before I went back to sleep, waking finally to whiteness. I wandered around wrapped in a sleeping bag looking for a proper camp, stopping only to say hello to a guy who called out “morning!”.

The cats were fine, from here on in they really were fine.

I was homeless on and off for six months, in and out of hostels until I was given temporary accommodation with my babies. These 48 hours were the life or death part of my journey. I just had to keep going until I got us semi-safe, until I could get them a home. I never did give them up, and although Alister got run over two years later, he knew his mum loved him. I’m crying as I write that I’ve lost him, but Sophie and three other cats now live with me in my own flat, in our own home. In Brighton.
THE PIN-DROP MOMENT
Gray Hutchins, the Clare Project’s engagement & development manager, identifies as non-binary and queer. They talk to Jaq Bayles about their life.

They had to undergo genetic screening. A positive test means early onset breast cancer is likely and a double mastectomy is recommended. Had that been the case, Gray could have had the surgery quickly on the NHS, but, in their typically upbeat manner, they still saw the outcome as “quite a good turnaround”.

“I tested negative for the gene against all the odds,” which made it “quite difficult for me and my family” when they elected to undergo the surgery anyway. “Having a double mastectomy as a preventive measure is one thing…” All this was happening as Gray was being culturally exposed to the reality of non-binary and exploring their gender, while at the same time realising they had dysphoria around their chest.

“I was lucky to have surgery [at the London Transgender Clinic] within 18 months to two years of realising that I was non-binary. I fundraised about £1,500-2,000 towards it and have a very supportive partner – it was certainly the most significant amount of money I’ve ever spent. Now it’s great. It’s changed everything, from relationships to being able to take part in sport. I’m better mentally and physically.”

Gray’s ‘pin-drop moment’ had come while they were working at an arts charity. “I nudged the idea of wanting people to call me by different pronouns and doing training [around trans awareness], but I was getting pushed back and told I was being political. I wanted to work somewhere I’d feel safe and not have a manager who thought top surgery was cosmetic.”

In November 2018 they got a part-time job with the Clare Project, working with the community on trans engagement. “It was one of the most scary things I’ve done. I had been earning really good money then I was going to the opposite end at 10 hours a week. “By April 2019 I was full-time as the project had got more funding from the Brighton Rainbow Fund and in April this year we managed to secure three-year funding from the National Lottery. It’s gone in leaps and bounds; I’m now the engagement services development manager. I really needed that frontline experience and now I’m mentoring other people. It’s been quite an amazing journey.”

Gray lives in Seaford with their partner Daniella and dog Charlie. The couple met and became friends volunteering for Trans Pride, and have been together for two years.

*Where do you see yourself in five years?*
I’d like to see myself in a similar space – I’m so happy and content at the moment. I’d like to lead an organisation with a heavier campaigning momentum, whether that’s the Clare Project or another. I’m really passionate about community work and trans health. It’s important to have role models and I’d like to be seen as someone who is speaking up for a community no one listens to, especially with regard to health.

*Who do you love?*
I love my community. Without that I wouldn’t be the person I am.

*What are your hobbies?*
I’m a keen runner, I started last year. Since I had the surgery it’s taken off. Fitness has generally been a great form of escapism. I run up to 50k a week and I’m thinking about doing a marathon next year. I cook loads and eat loads. I love any cuisine that’s not British and bog standard.

*Any guilty pleasures?*
I’ve recently developed an obsession with Marmite Peanut Butter.

*What are you most proud of?*
Taking the leap in that career change – it took a lot of courage.

*Who is the wisest person you know?*
My mum was the wisest, most influential person, so kind. She taught me to respect people. She’s the person I look up to and who keeps me going trying to make her proud. And my mum’s mum, who’s still around. Mum was only 45 when she died and was sick for four years. It was a bit of make or break with family life, a bit of a crossroads and I took a sort of an in-between route, with ten years not really knowing who I was and drinking quite a bit. I am now able to help other people in similar situations.
**MAKING DO IN LOCKDOWN**

Alix Coe, trans fitness coach, looks at how people have adapted – and adopted – exercise regimes

The past few months have been a weird time for the fitness world. Gyms closed, outdoor exercise became a divisive issue, and our selection of workout buddies became limited to the people we live with. As an online personal trainer, I've seen first-hand how the lockdown has encouraged people to switch up their exercise routines. And, if there is a silver lining to any of this, it's that more and more people are embracing home fitness.

Often when my clients approach me for the first time, they've never had a structured workout plan before, or much exercise experience at all. This is usually because they have been reluctant to set foot in a gym – an environment that has historically not been welcoming of trans people. The majority of my fitness coaching clients are transgender or gender non-conforming people – a deliberate decision on my part after struggling to get into fitness during the early years of my own transition.

The combination of gendered changing rooms, often toxic attitudes and perpetuated stereotypes of gym bodies, can result in a lot of people, trans and cis alike, feeling excluded. Often the assumption is that if you can't go to the gym to get fit, then your options are limited. And this puts a lot of people off when it comes to getting active.

Talking to a new client about how they can take control of their health and fitness without going to the gym is always an exciting time for me. It's also a concept that I'm always exploring further myself. I believe your own body is one of the most powerful pieces of fitness equipment you can find. Through bodyweight exercises at home, people can develop their fitness, and also start to build up the confidence to enter other exercise spaces if this is something they want to do.

Building strength and stamina are two things the majority of us can do without any equipment at all – and this is something that people around the world are now embracing amid the pandemic.

In the first few weeks of the lockdown, all the new clients I took on were unable to buy exercise equipment online because of high demand across the country. Although this seemed like a hindrance to some, the lack of alternatives was actually great for encouraging people to embrace bodyweight workouts.

We are all different when it comes to mobility, ability, and capacity. And, in a fitness context, these differences force us to be creative in order to stay challenged. The truth that we are all now discovering is that we don't need expensive exercise machines or endless pieces of equipment. All we need is the space to move our bodies, the knowledge to reach our goals, and the motivation to keep at it.

**MORE INFO**

- Alix is a trans-masculine personal trainer and plant-based nutrition coach working in the trans/queer community. They offer their services on a sliding scale in order to help make fitness more accessible.
- You can find Alix on Insta @alix_coe

**A LETTER TO WOULD-BE VEGANS**

Vince (he/him) is an autistic trans guy living in the south of England. He has had an affinity with animals since his childhood, and finally committed to veganism in 2016

To my beloved fellow vegans, ‘self-righteous’, ‘preachy’, ‘judgemental’. Vegans hear these words a lot. “How do you spot a vegan at a dinner party? Don’t worry, they’ll tell you.” (More often than not, as we all know, the only reason we’ve said it is because someone insisted on knowing why we declined that piece of cheesecake or whatever.) “I hate vegans” isn’t considered actual hate speech or even particularly controversial, and you know what? I don’t care and neither should you, because this way of life was never about us or our comfort.

We’re a minority of the population for sure, but we aren’t a marginalised or oppressed group – the animals we advocate for are. We are merely allies – spokespeople for sentient beings who, while not voiceless, can’t use words to express their pain and heartache. Beings who are still considered lesser because they were born into non-human bodies.

We understandably get frustrated with hearing the same old excuses and the hackneyed ‘debates’ about iron and desert islands and personal choice tho’, and it’s perfectly valid to express those frustrations, to vent about it to one another, and to do self-care things when it’s all getting too much. But we mustn’t make the mistake of imagining ourselves as persecuted for our beliefs in the same way as, for example, Muslims are. We, as privileged homo sapiens, must keep the non-human animals (for want of a better name) front and centre of this movement, just as cis-het LGBTQIA allies should use their relative privilege to draw attention to the issues faced by the people they ally themselves with.

You may be thinking: “But this doesn’t need to be said. Every vegan I know thinks this and lives it too.” You’re probably right, for the moment. But as the Covid-19 pandemic, the resulting measures taken by governments and the reactions to those measures by certain individuals have shown us, there is literally no injustice or calamity in this world that can’t be appropriated in the name of imaginary oppression.

Veganism is not above being made about ‘vegan rights’ instead of animal rights. So I’m putting this out there, hoping that in some small way it might help prevent that detrimental shift in focus from ever occurring.

As a trans person, I’ve been there where cis ‘allies’ have talked over us, pandered to transphobic views while claiming to be on our side, and taken our righteous pain and anger and made it into a joke or a personal affront against themselves. As a vegan in particular, I hold myself to a higher standard of allyship and I know that I am not alone in this.

To wrap this up, I want to thank you all. Thank you for doing what you do for our animal friends. And if you aren’t a vegan yet but read through to the end of this anyway, please join us. Most of us are nice enough, and we even have cake.

Peace, Vince
Being counted matters. Across all nations of the UK, the next Censuses in 2021 will ask two new questions specifically about LGBTQ+ people. One will ask about a person’s sexual orientation, and the other will ask whether a person is trans. This will give us information such as how old our communities are, helping us make the case for things like improved awareness in care homes so older people with same-sex partners don’t face discrimination. We’ll know whether we’re more likely to have long-term health conditions, so we can make sure our LGBTQ+ services do more to include disabled members of our communities.

It will also demonstrate changing social attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people. When the last Censuses happened in 2011 there were discussions about including a question on sexual orientation. The question was considered too unacceptable to the general public – too many would refuse to answer the question, or stop answering the Census at all, if people were asked if they were straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or described their sexual orientation in another way. So the question was ruled out. A trans question was not even considered. It’s good that we’ve moved on and that, for the very first time, LGBTQ+ people will be counted.

These new questions will be voluntary. This is the right thing to do – some people may feel their sexual orientation or trans status is private and they don’t want to share it. But everyone will have that choice – and if we choose to answer, we could find out things about our communities we’ve never known before.

Another question the Census will ask everyone, as it has since the first UK Census in 1801, is whether they are male or female. Most people will barely register being asked – it’s a question you see every day. Yet for some people, having just these two boxes will put them in a difficult position. I’m non-binary, which means I’m a trans person who doesn’t identify as a man or as a woman. For me and other people like me, having to tick either box will mean we aren’t counted as who we really are.

I know what some people will be thinking. It’s just a box. Why not skip it if it bothers you so much? Well, unlike the new questions on sexual orientation and trans status, the question about sex won’t be voluntary. And with most people being encouraged to complete the Census online next time, for those who do, it will be impossible to skip the question.

For 99% (probably more) of the population who are not trans, when they answer the sex question you can make some useful assumptions about the types of body they have. For trans people, whether you ask a sex at birth question, or one that allows us to answer in a way that better reflects us, it gets a bit more complicated. Many trans people take cross-sex hormones, or have gender reassignment surgeries. This means it is hard to make good guesses about what our bodies are like, however we answer this question.

And asking the new question about whether a person is trans, while letting trans men or trans women at least respond to the sex question in the way that’s right for them, gives us the information we need about how much of the male and female population it’s harder to make these guesses about.

The Census aims to take a snapshot of each person living in the UK. It is exciting that for so many LGBTQ+ people, who are and how we live our lives will be recorded for the very first time. But we need to keep making the case that all of us deserve to be counted – and hopefully by the time the next Census comes around, ten years from now, that will mean people like me will be too.

*Scottish Trans Alliance*
“I realised that my transition wasn’t a decision to change but more an acceptance to evolve.”

TAINTED BEAUTY

Yvy DeLuca is a proud Indian transgender woman and author of Tainted Beauty - The Memoir of an Authentic Creation, a memoir about her journey through life and transition. By Jules Guaitamacchi

How would you describe Tainted Beauty?
“An open and honest account of my experiences as an Indian trans woman that leaves the reader with more answers than questions. I cover a lot of issues that are rarely spoken about, including sex, relationships, life post-surgery and growing up in a Muslim community as a queer person of colour.”

What would you say were the most significant moments in your book?
“Opening up about sex both before and after my gender surgery, all of which can be really difficult subjects to talk about. After my surgery it was as if the problem was no longer on the outside and it became more internalised. I realised that we can all have those moments and no matter how far down that road we go, we can save ourselves and get on the right track.”

What are some of the key messages you want to communicate?
“I think a lot of trans people and society as a whole just assume that when you transition everything will be okay. However, it’s hard to prepare for what life is going to be like after that. I realised that my transition wasn’t a decision to change but more an acceptance to evolve.”

What advice would you give people who are navigating their identities?
“When it comes to living your authentic creation don’t worry about looking outward, about how to act or think, start with who you are and everything else will follow.”

What propelled you to write a book?
“I wanted to write something I would have loved to have read during my transition. It’s reflective of my experience of transition and a lot of the content I could have in no way written at the time. I needed to live and work through those moments first.”

Do you have any other projects coming up?
“I’m currently writing my second book where I delve deeper into my story. I’m really excited to take people further into my journey and learn so much more about my life. Trust me, you’re going to love it.”

Any advice for aspiring trans authors?
“I think it’s great for people to put their experiences out there, but sometimes you just need to live it first. When the time comes to tell your story, you’ll know.”

MORE INFO

Yvy uses her social media to spread awareness and support for the LGBTQ+ community, including her YouTube series Let’s Talk About Trans. She also performs as The BollyWitch and in digital drag shows and Pride events online.

For more details, visit www.yvyworld.com
Follow Yvy on 
www.youtube.com /channel/UCIJN0N3RMI5086baV07I4A
For sure I’m not as young as I used to be, but, to tell the truth, I rather like being the age I am, 71, in many ways. It has pros and cons, like any age, like any other of the range of identities I’ve had the privilege to live. Boy, woman, Liverpudlian, teenager, garden designer, writer, meditator, father, trans, Tokyo gaijin, grandmother; on it goes, all of them me and none of them me. I know this well as they all come and go while I stay watching.

But I’m not elderly - a word which brings up an image of a stooped and fading old dear, shuffling towards the grave. I’m fit in body and mind, present and alert. And, interestingly, people have been using the word ‘elder’, rather than elderly, in reference to me in the past couple of years, which has a completely different image feeling, one of wisdom and centredness rather than degeneration. What a difference ‘ly’ makes, elder or elderly, chalk or cheese. So what does it mean to be elder and trans, at the same time? Well, both of these identities are completely different image feeling, one of wisdom and kindness that I never had before, with profound implications for my state of being. The texture of life is different, but it’s not poorer; it’s richer, simpler, with that pleasure in small things saving me a lot of hassle, and money. The future always was uncertain, and still is, so I take every day as it comes. Right now I’m living with a challenge which could come at any time in life, but more likely at this time. So the fear of the dark possibilities of even older age do rise in me, but these days they don’t last long – hell, they’re just another way of fearing a future that may never come. Have another cup of tea, Persia, and watch the clivia silently bloom. Autumn is long and beautiful, the fruiting time of life.

And I’ve come to accept that I’ve become an elder. I have a degree of wisdom and kindness that I never had before, with profound implications for my state of being. The texture of life is different, but it’s not poorer; it’s richer, simpler, with that pleasure in small things saving me a lot of hassle, and money. The future always was uncertain, and still is, so I take every day as it comes. Right now I’m living with a challenge which could come at any time in life, but more likely at this time. So the fear of the dark possibilities of even older age do rise in me, but these days they don’t last long – hell, they’re just another way of fearing a future that may never come. Have another cup of tea, Persia, and watch the clivia silently bloom. Autumn is long and beautiful, the fruiting time of life.

MORE INFO

Persia was born and dragged up in Liverpool, fled as a kid from the ‘normal’, hard to live suburban life and began to live in places far away: Spain, Japan (for nine years), California, India, Canada and more, living a life full of identities. Boy, woman, teacher, actor in TV ads, bartender, garden designer, meditator, writer, activist, speaker, grandmother; on it went and goes. Now she lives in an eyrie above Preston Park, watching the sun and moon rise and fall, trains go by, life slide by, in a good state - usually - of meditative reflection, as the next changes shift her life once more. Far from done but softer now, in the sweet place that has come with getting elder.

“I’ve come to accept that I’ve become an elder. I have a degree of wisdom and kindness that I never had before”
Maria Rosamojo recounts a relationship between two people who have been transcending boundaries for most of their lives.

“A VERY QUEER COUPLE”

I first met my partner Carl more than 15 years ago at Transfabulous, a queer night in Bethnal Green. He had cheeky, sparkling blue eyes, a sunshine smile and was unintentionally hilarious. Carl is trans but I see him first as the kind, funny person who happens to be the man I fell in love with.

Like Carl, I grew up in the 1970s and 1980s, him in Swansea and me in Harlesden. We have many similarities despite our different backgrounds. We both share horrors of having to go to school. Carl missed a lot of school because of anorexia, anxiety and his refusal to wear skirts. I was also anorexic and missed a lot of school because of meningitis, asthma, and being bullied for being mixed-race.

I knew there was something queer about me when I was little. I painted my Airfix plane models with glitter stars, wore my mother’s bra after stuffing water balloons inside the cups, and fixated on the beauty of John Hurt and being a bad woman! To be a badass woman and prostate was a bad woman, and the F word must be… the beautiful temptation of a prostitute was a bad woman, and the F word calculating in my childlike head that if a ‘lesbian’ must be worse than prostitute and killing herself in a banquet of my own anger and rage.

As my teens beckoned, I discovered Siouxsie & the Banshees. Our love of goth and alternative cultures existed in parallel worlds. Back in Swansea, Carl had discovered them too, and was gloriously being thrown out of their tour van with his best friend Terry.

Meanwhile, in Wales, Carl was a shy boy in a girl’s body. He would spend his truant days at his nan’s entertaining her by ‘draggling up’ as her lady friends and mimicking them while parading around in assorted hats, handbags and scarfs.

I was also painfully shy, so much so my parents signed me up for ballet classes in the hope they would give me confidence. But by the time I was 10 I gave up. I was already suffering racism for not being properly white or properly black. I didn’t need more attention. My fears at the time would have been understandable if I’d been a boy. But I wasn’t. I was a cis girl. Looking back, I was a mixed-race cis queer girl who was weirdly worried about looking too camp. It was also odd that, as a girl, I was being called the ‘P’ word by other girls for doing ballet.

Clearly, my difference was visible to them as mixed-race, but now they also seemed to subconsciously suspect differences between mine and their gender formations and burgeoning sexualities. The truth is, I actually did feel like a sensitive boy who liked girly things instead of it being a natural by-product of being a cis girl. It wasn’t my fault I had an over-protective Spanish mother who made me wear American tan tights to school under my white knee-high socks, or that my psychiatric social worker father had a brief identity crisis after coming over from Barbados during Windrush, and insisted we were middle-class even though we lived in a run-down flat in one of the roughest and most notorious crime hotspots in London.

Around the time my queerness revealed itself, I was obsessed with imitating my beautiful, black, gay neighbour Earl’s wiggle, strut and bent wrist. He would defiantly strut down Harlesden High Street in tight red leather jeans and kitten heels, earrings in both ears, with his head shaven. This was particularly rare in 1970s Harlesden when every other black man had an afro.

Then my belly flipped at the sight of an older tomboy who lived on my street. Despite my intense shyness, she managed to initiate a close friendship with me. My mother became increasingly concerned, especially after I asked her what a lesbian was. I could tell by my mother’s reddened face that the word ‘lesbian’ must be worse than prostitute and almost as bad as the F word. I remember calculating in my childlike head that if a prostitute was a bad woman, and the F word was an unutterable obscenity, then lesbian must be… the beautiful temptation of a badass woman! To be a badass woman and walk like Earl was my new goal in life. But in Harlesden, I wasn’t as brave as Earl so had to do it all the inside.

“I was a mixed-race cis queer girl who was weirdly worried about looking too camp. It was also odd that, as a girl, I was being called the ‘P’ word by other girls for doing ballet.”

As we both share horrors of having to go to school because of meningitis, asthma, and being bullied for being mixed-race.

Meanwhile I had a very short-lived, booze-filled affair aged 17 with a drag queen trans woman called Annie Rexia. We got married at Heaven then ‘divorced’ the next day. After that I dated pretty, long-haired guys on the rock and goth scene who were make-up before I came out as gay in my mid-20s.

While Carl was dating women on the gay, tran scene, I identified as queer femme and mostly dated butch women, and some andro, femmes and transmen. When Carl had been transitioning, I was a blossoming queer burlesque storyteller and performer as Dyke Marilyn, the bastard child of Monroe and Hendrix. It was during one of these performances where our worlds spectacularly collided.

“I was obsessed with imitating my beautiful, black, gay neighbour Earl’s wiggle, strut and bent wrist. He would defiantly strut down Harlesden High Street in tight red leather jeans and kitten heels”

Today we feel especially lucky to have found each other. It’s a rare blessing to recognise one another’s queerness as an innate entity. I identify as a queer woman and Carl is a queer, camp man. Relationships have always been difficult for me as I have mental health and chronic physical disabilities. Carl also suffers from anxiety, but our relationship works because we have similar boundary requirements. We recognise our individual needs around personal space and recuperation, while still managing to support each other. It also helps that we don’t live together, although we have been cohabiting in lockdown. Twelve weeks and counting.

“Maria Rosamojo is a multimedia artist, writer and musician currently studying an MA by Project in Art & Design at The Cass, London Metropolitan University, where she is completing a hauntology of her own queer mixed-race identity and mental health through film, memoir and performance.”

“Carl Mogg works as a drop-in facilitator at The Clare Project, a trans support centre in Brighton. They both share a naughty terrier called Hendrix.”
Ever since I first started coming to terms with my own transgender identity just over ten years ago, I have either heard or asked the question: ‘Does T belong with LGB?’ LGB is about who you want to go to bed with, but T is about who you want to go to bed as. Leaving aside haters who campaign to remove trans rights and eradicate trans identities, there is a serious question to be answered here. What is the crossover? Why do we fit together?

There is so much that is different about being trans to being LGB; the first and most obvious is appearance. For many of us this is something that shows all the time, at work, shopping, and in our social lives. Trans people lose their own identity to that which the world identifies us, that means changing our appearance. For many of us this is something that we’ve had to deal with this and to talk to other people about ‘my problem’. I think I needed the affirmation of others of my gender presentation. To go out and be ‘seen’. Thanks to the wonders of the 21st century I could simply Google my local trans support group online and rock up to one of its meetings. I remember feeling as nervous about going into a gay pub as I did about wearing a skirt and heels – this was very much stepping (or maybe more like teetering) outside my comfort zone.

The trans women I met showed me a lot of support, and have since helped me on my journey to becoming who I am today, but the gay men in the pub just sort of… tolerated us. At that time the support group was exclusively female, and included cross-dressers as well as those who were in transition or had transitioned. As I became more comfortable with my forays into this world I felt I needed to go further and started to have little trips out.

Being self-employed means you set your own terms with being trans, then coming out, and dealing with the fallout from that. All through my childhood, adolescence and most of my adult life I was far removed from queer society. I lived a very cis-heteronormative life. I played sport and music with people who mostly never had to question their own sexuality or gender identity. My social circle excluded pretty much anyone who didn’t fit with the norms that such society expects, any gay people I would have come across were very much in the ‘straight passing’ category. In short, fem boys or butch lesbians wouldn’t have been made to feel at home in my world and I wasn’t comfortable in theirs.

It was on my 50th birthday that I realised hiding had become less and less tolerable. I needed to deal with this and to talk to other people about ‘my problem’. I think I needed the affirmation of others of my gender presentation. To go out and be ‘seen’. Thanks to the wonders of the 21st century I could simply Google my local trans support group online and rock up to one of its meetings. I remember feeling as nervous about going into a gay pub as I did about wearing a skirt and heels – this was very much stepping (or maybe more like teetering) outside my comfort zone.

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Being self-employed means you set your own terms, so I would schedule in trips to galleries, lunch with friends and outings to gardens – all these I made as my female self, getting changed before returning to the marital home. As many before and after me have found, this wasn’t enough. Each time I took Paula off, it was like a bereavement. I knew I couldn’t go on like that but I couldn’t see how I could progress. I knew I had to find out if I was happy because I was doing things I enjoyed, or whether it was more about me and how I was doing them. How was I to find that experience without actually transitioning? Since my life revolves around music, I sought out an orchestra I hadn’t played with before that needed a tuba player. I found the London Gay Symphony Orchestra (LGSO) (it didn’t need a tuba, but did need a bass trombone), made up of mostly amateur and gay musicians from all across London. When I started it was predominantly male and white. There were a few musicians that I’d played with before in other orchestras, but as they are string players they didn’t recognise me sitting at the back.

It was my experience of total acceptance at the LGSO that allowed me to progress. It was the support and shared experience of these LGB musicians that enabled me to take my next steps. It was my gay friends who helped me through coming out as they shared their experiences, it was their friendship and commitment that helped me through the breakup of my marriage. Most of all, it was playing with this fine orchestra that taught me that I am who I am, and helped me to grow both as a musician and as a person.

The friendships I’ve made through the orchestra have also taught me about how much we share, how much we risk in becoming ourselves. I’ve started to understand that being gay is also a fundamental part of who you are, your identity, and how you relate to the world. I’ve learned that although our expression of identity is different, our risks are similar – we share the risk of rejection by family, from employment, from sports clubs and political parties, from society. We share the risk of violence, and we share the risks to our mental health.

When Jesus said ‘Love your neighbour’, he was asked ‘But who is my neighbour?’. The friends I made through the LGSO were my neighbours, they tended to my wounds and they looked after me when I was beaten – so yes, I belong within the LGBTQ+ community. I may be straight but that doesn’t mean I’m not part of the rainbow.

“Although our expression of identity is different, our risks are similar – we share the risk of rejection by family, from employment, from sports clubs and political parties, from society. We share the risk of violence, and we share the risks to our mental health”

**MORE INFO**

- Paula Goodwin is the world’s leading bass trombone and tuba-playing Christian transgender gardener. As well as being the principle tuba player with the LGSO and the Croydon Symphonic Band she is also the musical director of the Allegra Concert Band and the Croydon Brass Band.
- Paula runs her own gardening business and is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Waste Management.
- As a member of the board of TransPALS and the chair of the trustees of Croydon Pride, Paula has become active in campaigning for equality and inclusion.
"Dungeons & Dragons especially has helped people not only to improve on their writing and maths skills but also to ‘play out’ issues they may be experiencing... or switch off and play a kick-ass character in order to forget about their issues for a few hours.”

dice were created and distributed to blind members, books and fact sheets started being created with audio description, dyslexia-friendly fonts and images, and one of the largest websites for resource material personally backed the project and provided online guides for those who want to play but are too chronically ill to leave the house.

"While we normally use 5th edition Dungeons & Dragons, we also play other table-top games, and all the board game masters or dungeon masters are disabled or have chronic conditions. That’s been 100% intentional. A rotation of players and tables has developed as the months have progressed. Many members are now more confident, not only with socialising, but also with developing tools to help themselves.

"During this lockdown time we’ve worked around difficulties using technology and people power, so that games are still being played, disabled folk have been getting social interaction in judgement-free zones and Brighton can claim the notable title of being home to the only disabled table-top games group run for disabled people in the UK. Now if that isn’t something to be proud of, I don’t know what is.”

 MORE INFO
   www.dicesaloon.com

Dungeons, Dragons and Disabilities
Gaming got gay and inclusive under our very noses by Mx Tyler Moore-Austen

In July 2019, there was a small booking in Dice Saloon for LGBTQ+ people who have disabilities and wanted to celebrate Trans Pride but were unable to find an accessible venue that was sober and accommodating. That booking sparked the creation of the UK’s only table-top games event for disabled people.

The very first meeting was so oversubscribed the venue ran out of food. It became a monthly meet up where disability was at the forefront of design and the co-owners, Kai and Tyler Moore-Austen (spouses, not brothers – a question that often pops up with them), who had tasked themselves to see a pipe dream come true, actually saw it become a hit overnight.

Tyler explains: “The first thing we did was make sure that not only was the space we had accessible but that it was sober. One important factor was that a lot of our members would be on medication, meaning they couldn’t drink, and most of the LGBTQ+ social circle is around drink. This was a challenge quickly resolved in our very own gaming paradise known to very few.

“Dice Saloon provided a wonderful space, with LGBTQ+ inclusivity and disability awareness at the forefront. The hardest part was to provide gaming resources, which practically didn’t exist, so we had to start making them ourselves. And that’s what happened. As well as working alongside disability groups, braille
Many countries have taken large steps to grant people the ability to use X on the passports to define outside of the gender binary. Guess what? The UK still hasn’t done so.

Since Sam asked me to write this I’ve struggled with how I’m going to approach the content. Some of you may remember, back in the ancient days, that I used to write a trans column on a regular basis. This came to an end for several reasons, including my feeling that I was having to justify some of my writings outside of the magazine.

Anyone who knew me then and probably still knows me, won’t be surprised that I will call out people who fail to support minorities, be they sexuality, gender, ethnicity, disability etc. I’ve made my share of mistakes and have tried to listen and learn from them. It enables me to hopefully become a better person.

Anyway, I’ve decided that I feel now is a good time to contrast what was happening to communities I was involved in then and what is happening now. Primarily those are the trans communities, Trans/Non-Binary/Intersex/Gender Non Conforming (TNBI+).

I was originally writing about just trans and then became aware of more people, including myself, identifying as non-binary. In the years since my last column, TNBI+ identities have become more commonly used, unless you want to use them to describe yourself in a passport. Many countries have taken large steps to grant people the ability to use X on the passports to define outside of the gender binary. Guess what? The UK still hasn’t done so.

An area that hasn’t changed, for the good anyway, is hate speech/crime. In fact, it’s gotten really bad, especially in the media, including social media. Originally it felt like TNBI+ were going from being objects of derision to becoming accepted and welcome members of society. Now, several times a month, the newspapers will run lies about TNBI+, especially young people and trans women. I’m not going to repeat some of the vile outpourings of groups who run these stories using pet reporters and out and out damn lies.

Funding for some of these groups seems to be coming from right wing, anti-gay organisations, especially from the US. Driving a wedge between TNBI+ people and women’s/lesbian rights is the tactic adopted. That trans women are a threat to women everywhere, but especially in women-only spaces including toilets, rape centres, refuges etc, is their main mantra. Despite there being very little actual evidence of this, they claim men will self-define themselves as females to ‘invade’ these safe spaces.

The LGB Alliance is set to oppose the inclusion of TNBI+ people in society, their numbers are small, mainly straight people, but they have clout and are trying to convince LGBT people not to be linked with TNBI+ people. Baroness Nicholson tells Marks & Spencer that the Equality Act 2010 does not apply to accessing women’s changing places and thus trans women should not be able to access them.

Having looked through the relevant section of the act I think she’s wrong but given her letter was published after the following from Liz Truss, the Equalities Minister, who said that she would “be able to say more” about “protecting single-sex spaces for women and girls” when she publishes the government’s plan for reforming the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) this summer.

TNBI+ people aren’t getting the support they deserve. In fact, when I talked to Caroline Lucas, MP for Brighton Pavilion, she said that TNBI+ people should talk with these hate groups and sort it out ourselves. As someone who has researched this approach I can say that unless you agree with them you’ll be subject to abuse, misgendering, doxxing, accusations of sexual abuse and other outright lies. Many TNBI+ people are not only angry but are scared that our rights are going to be taken from us, with good reason.

On a more positive note, as one of the original founders of Trans Pride Brighton I’m extremely happy that, prior to Covid-19, Trans Pride in Brighton & Hove has happened seven times and grown in scope and size. I burned out after five years of this so I’m glad that it’s continued to be a part of so many TNBI+ people’s diaries. When we first set it up we wanted to inspire other areas to have their own Trans Pride and to see this happen fills my heart. So many TNBI+ people and their families get to experience what it’s like to know you’re not alone and that there’s help and support out there.

Baroness Ruth Hunt, former head of Stonewall and key to introducing support for TNBI+ within the charity, used her maiden speech in the House of Lords to point out that married TNBI+ people are still suffering “legal quirks” that made their marriage and lives difficult. A debate in the House of Commons about TNBI+ people was sadly very poorly attended, but those who were there were very positive about trans rights and how legalisation needed to change for the better. Some of the speeches were extremely heartfelt and, although there’s never been an out TNBI+ person elected to Parliament, we do have some very eloquent supporters.

Last, but by no means least, seeing groups standing with TNBI+ people, LwiththeT, BwiththeT and GwiththeT being just a few. While some TNBI+ people might still experience transphobia within LGBTQ+ venues, it’s still great seeing a growing awareness of trans rights. There’s still more work to do and we must do it together, allies are vital to TNBI+ people. After all, if they remove us who do they challenge next?
Dirk, who began physical transition in his mid-30s, sees a wide gap between the way society views trans women and trans men. “Trans women are depicted as highly sexualised, whereas trans men are seen as sterile. The LGBTQ+ community in general does tend towards placating people. There’s underrepresentation of groups I don’t belong to, especially people of colour.”

Age is another issue that affects visible representations of trans people. “People raise stuff about very old trans people in quite a sentimental way, but there’s not much about middle-aged people that isn’t safe and normal.”

If anyone is looking to include representations of trans people in popular culture, such as videos, adverts and films, Dirk would like them to take a good look at what representation really is, and ask themselves whether they are simply feeding a stereotype. He also wants to see more funding for people who are trans to undertake their own projects, along with awareness raising in schools. His personal story is important too, “even for people who don’t have kids and aren’t married, just to know that it isn’t necessarily a disaster”.

While acknowledging that any change is going to have some kind of effect on those who feature in a person’s life, his journey is of the type that’s rarely related.

“My kids knew a lot of trans people already and were both fine. Most of the people at the school were alright and my kids are very hot on pronouns and correcting people – they’ve always been critical of people judging.

“With my husband it was an ongoing thing and overall it was positive for us and we’re happier than ever. I think we saw something in each other and that’s what drew us together. I know it doesn’t always go so well.”
Some ‘feminists’ are killing feminism and sending women back to the kitchen. By Emma Rylands

Women around the world, it is now time for you to stand up and speak just like our fellow Suffragettes did more than a hundred years ago. There is a tiny minority amongst us who are calling themselves ‘fundamentalist’ or ‘gender critical feminists’, and they are hurting us. They are destroying everything that women have fought for over the years. They are slowly taking back our hard earned rights. They are disrespecting us, our mothers who raised us whilst working really hard to prove that a woman can be a mother and hold a job. Most of all they are disrespecting our grandmothers and great grandmothers who worked hard, raised children, lived through war and fought for our rights.

There’s no point in listing all these ‘feminists’ who are trying to deceive us on a daily basis. A simple Google search will bring up all these fundamentalist and gender critical feminists and everything they keep trying to sell us. Their stories are filled with hate for minorities and through their stories they will have you believe that some women are the danger while what they are actually doing is promoting a patriarchal lobbying group that would rather see us in the kitchen and raising children instead of being equal to them.

Here is a small example of deceit that has the press talking. Everyone knows of the former British swimmer, Sharron Davies, and her views on how transgender women athletes should NOT compete in female competitions in order to protect women’s sport. Some will hear her talk and others will read her comments on social media. But how many of us will actually do some research and try to find out how many transgender athletes are currently Olympians? Yes, you’ve rightly guessed that there are NO transgender athletes that are Olympians, despite the fact that transgender people have always been here.

Instead of researching transgender athletes, and actually discovering that based on medical researches around the world proving that the effects of hormone replacement therapy is having on their bodies and their performance is getting lower and lower, I would advise you to spend some time and effort in researching an organisation called Alliance Defending Freedom. What does an organisation in the United States of America have to do with our British Goldlocks sweetheart, ex-swimmer Sharron, you ask me?

Alliance Defending Freedom is an American conservative Christian non-profit organisation and one that Southern Poverty Law Center designated as an anti-LGBTQ+ hate group. Alliance Defending Freedom also has a legal academy which trains Christian attorneys in constitutional law so they can provide pro bono/dedicated service to the Body Of Christ. It claims to have 3,400+ allied attorneys, 300+ allied organisations and in 2017 it had a revenue of more than $55 million. It is seen as the most organised and influential Christian legal interest group in America.

ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM

Let’s have a look at this organisation a bit more in depth.

- President CEO: Michael Farris, a white Republican aged 68, married to Vickie Farris since 1971 and has ten children and 22 grandchildren.
- Founder No 1: Alan Sears, a white middle-aged man who was raised in the Baptist church but converted to Roman Catholicism in order to get married to his wife, Paula.
- Founder No 2: James Dobson, a white Republican evangelical Christian aged 83, married to Shirley Deere since 1960 and has two children.

- Founder No 3: Larry Burkett, a white evangelical Christian, who left a very successful career in electronics and a space programme after he began an intense study of biblical teaching and became an evangelical Christian, married to Judy. Mr Burkett passed away in 2003, aged 64.
- Founder No 4: Dennis James Kennedy, a white conservative evangelical minister and pastor, married to Anne Craig Lewis, father of one. Mr Kennedy passed away in 2007, aged 76.
- Founder No 5: Bill Bright, a white evangelist, who had quit his successful business to pursue biblical studies, married to Vonette Zachary Bright, father of two. Mr Bright passed away in 2003, aged 81.

If this very brief description of the president and founders hasn’t made any sense to you, let me summarise them. White, middle-aged, evangelical Christian men. You have rightly noticed that there is no diversity whatsoever and there are no women involved in the running of this organisation. I can see that you’re still reading this and asking how is feminism, women’s hard-earned rights, our Goldlocks Sharron, transgender athletes and an American organisation related? Surely this doesn’t make any sense. Well, let me explain.

Alliance Defending Freedom supported three high-school students in Connecticut to file a federal discrimination complaint challenging the state’s policy of letting trans students compete on sports teams according to their gender identity. They obviously refer to trans girls as ‘biological males’ and claim that they have an unfair advantage, just the same narrative that Sharron Davies is using here in the UK. Since the federal discrimination complaint was filled, one of the three students has beaten one of her trans opponents in a race and said “this is just track, you know, it’s just running”.

There is a tiny minority amongst us who are calling themselves ‘fundamentalist’ or ‘gender critical feminists’ and they are hurting us. They are destroying everything that women have fought for over the years.”
people and they have sided with another organisation in Belize to criminalise gay sex.

I would never go as far as saying that Sharron Davies, a mother of three and three times divorcee, has anything to do with this organisation, but she does use the same narrative when it comes to transgender athletes (besides, I don’t think it would ever accept Sharron in its organisation as she is a woman and she goes against their beliefs with regards to marriage). I would prefer to think that Sharron has been very naive and unfortunately influenced by the stories she reads. After all, I would expect a ‘biological female’, as she says in order to distinguish herself from transgender women, that stands at 5ft 11, not to be talking about unfair advantage when the average height of a woman in the UK in 2019, is 5ft 3.

But hasn’t this debate in the athletic world already been resolved? Oh, no, hold on, that was another debate. Back then it was the historical debate over black athletic superiority. It was the theory that black people possess certain traits that are acquired through genetic and/or environmental factors that allow them to excel over other races in athletic competition. Black athletes were eliminated from white organised sport and segregated to compete among themselves on their own teams. Maybe Nicola Adams and Kelly Holmes, who share the same opinions as Sharron Davies and the middle-aged white men from the evangelical Christian organisation, are too young to remember.

Another powerful woman, Linda Bellos, who is a veteran black British lesbian activist, and identifies as a gender critical feminist, recently travelled to America to speak outside the US Supreme Court, along with Alliance Defending freedom, backing the Trump administration’s efforts to make it legal to fire LGBTQ+ people. Some would think that a woman who has fought for her rights, has fought for black people’s rights, has fought for lesbian rights and has achieved so many remarkable things in her career, would not be side by side with the white middle-aged men from the evangelical Christian organisation who deny her very existence.

So, powerful women, like Sharron and Linda, are constantly in the public eye and they have massive social media platforms where they can express their views for others to read. In addition to Sharron and Linda, there are a few other fundamentalist and gender critical feminists that have a public voice and use it daily to sell us the narrative that was sold to them by the middle-aged white men from the evangelical church. This narrative is forever evolving and becoming bigger and scarier. It starts with portraying trans women as dangerous. If it carries on, and it does carry on because we allow it, it will evolve and slowly progress to adopt the rest of the values of this church. All their values and beliefs have already been listed above so do have a think and visualise how one issue will expand and before you know it we are living in our very own dystopian Handmaid’s Tale.

It starts with transgender rights and slowly moves into the remaining LGBTQ+ community. And after all their rights are taken away it will slowly progress into other minorities. And last but not least, women. These middle-aged white men from the evangelical Christian organisation want to ‘help us’ by telling us what we can and can’t do with our bodies. Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio and Utah are all states that have introduced anti-abortion regulations in the past year.

These middle-aged white men from the evangelical Christian organisation want to ‘help us’ by telling us who we can and cannot love. Their fight against transgender people is obviously not just restricted to them and it covers the entire LGBTQ+ community. It merely starts with trans rights and slowly creeps up and before you know it, same-sex couples.

Let’s take it on a world scale instead of just the USA. Seven United Nations members impose the death penalty on consensual same-sex sexual acts, and a further five United Nations members have the death penalty as a possible punishment. Seventy United Nations members still criminalise same-sex relations between two consenting adults. But surely that doesn’t affect feminism, does it? Well, 45 of the above criminalise private consensual sexual activity between women. For some reason we all tend to hear of same-sex couples’ relationships and sexual acts, and very wrongly we only think of men.

These middle-aged white men from the evangelical Christian organisation also want to tell us who we can and cannot raise our children with. As they believe that a child should only be raised by a married man and woman, you can forget single parenting. Did you hear that Sharron? They also strictly forbid same-sex couple adoption. Did you hear that Linda?

In 2016 there were 114,000 same-sex couples raising children in the United States of America alone.

Just in case you’ve read all this and still can’t see how it is relevant to you, yes you, a white middle-aged straight cisgender woman living in a bungalow in Bournemouth with your husband and two kids, let me make it even clearer.

A. You are a mother, you don’t know if your kids will grow up and identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or non-binary, and you don’t know who they are going to love, and as a mother you have to fight for the rights of your children to live in a world that will accept them and give them equal opportunities just like everyone else.

B. You are a woman, you have earned your rights, whether you fought for them or just got them by birth, to choose what you do with your body. Even if you don’t believe that a 15-year-old girl in Alabama who was raped by her uncle has the legal right to an abortion, you should still respect and honour all other women that fought for this right.

C. You are a human, you should ideally have some compassion, sympathy and empathy for other humans, whether they are white like you or not, whether they are straight like you or not, whether they are cisgender like you or not, whether they are privileged like you or not, because as we have already mentioned above, these might be your children or grandchildren.

This article started off by being addressed to women when in fact it is addressed to everyone. You don’t have to be a woman to be a feminist. You don’t have to be a woman to fight for equality and human rights. You don’t have to be black to fight against racism. You don’t have to be disabled to fight for accessibility in this world. You just need to be a kind human that would rather live in a world where everyone is equal. If not for you, do it for the future generations. Stand up and say no to discrimination. No to segregation of minorities. Yes to equality.

“In addition to Sharron and Linda, there are a few other fundamentalist and gender critical feminists that have a public voice and use it daily to sell us the narrative that was sold to them by the middle-aged white men from the evangelical church”
Samo runs a tattoo studio and gallery, Play Dead, in Portsmouth, which recently closed its doors in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Samo had been recovering from back surgery after ongoing sciatica, finding himself immobilised even before the lockdown. There he began to create his latest project, a series of work that showcases and celebrates the beauty of trans bodies. To support his mission and legacy, he has launched a Crowdfunding campaign to commission the project and to help create a wider, even global, reach.

Tell us about your upcoming project
“This project is about changing the narrative when it comes the way we look at the human body. It’s time we not only ‘normalise’, but admire the beauty of trans bodies as we have nude bodies throughout the history of art. There’s such a lack of trans visibility or representation in the world of art, therefore I wanted to take up space, use my platform as an artist for trans inclusivity with my work.”

What inspired you to create this work?
“It can feel so empowering to celebrate a body that you’ve struggled with for your entire life. The turning point for me was after top surgery, feeling comfortable in my own skin for the very first time. Growing into feeling comfortable in my own skin has been an ongoing battle, especially getting to a place where I’m able to enjoy my body. However, this work isn’t about hormones, surgery or the medical side of transition, this is about embracing our bodies in all forms, so we can feel confident about ourselves outside the hetero/cis-normative beauty standards ingrained in our society.”

What’s the purpose of the project and what do you hope to achieve?
“I consider art a form of communication. There’s so much negativity in the media and I want to continue to influence positivity and drown out the voice of discrimination and hate imposed on us by negative opinions of trans people. Trans people have had to face so much adversity in our lives and as a result are some of the strongest people. Rather than being shamed and silenced it’s time for us to stand up and be proud of who we are.”

What message do you hope to communicate through your work?
“I want to be a positive voice and role model, especially for youth so they might grow up in a world with a culture that is different to ours and feel confident enough to express themselves.
Beyond, a grassroots community-led group initially set up as a regular, trans-fronted event, was due to relaunch in March 2020. However, as the pandemic hit, the organisers were forced to temporarily pull the plug on event organising and took to the internet to create an online platform for trans, non-binary, intersex and gender-variant (TNBI+) folk to find a sense of community connection during the lockdown.

On March 23, Beyond launched a regular Instagram Live stream series, inviting TNBI+ people and allies to be interviewed on the live stream to talk about how they’re doing in isolation/lockdown, projects they’re focusing on, giving them the opportunity to offer words of love and solidarity to the community at this time as well as engaging with audiences and with a live Q&A.

“We believe that it is so vitally important, especially during these challenging and isolating times, for our community to stay connected and have some much-needed distraction and fun. What started as a Brighton-based initiative soon became popular all over the world. Speaking to some of our viewers, we were told of some of their difficult living conditions, some in lockdown with unaccepting family, others completely isolated and alone and there were some in between homes. The effects of Covid-19 have certainly affected some of the most vulnerable among us and the project has benefited us as much as we hoped it would benefit others. It was a way to channel our passion to support our community, a way to create personal structure, to have informative discussions with people across the TNBI+ spectrum and to raise awareness and visibility of their experiences.”

The series is ongoing and since launching they have interviewed actors, models, artists, performers, comedians, authors, professionals and members of the community.

Guests have included Leo Sheng, Rain Dove, Asifa Lahore, Theo Germaine, Juno Dawson, Ryan Cassata, Chris Mosier, Jordan Gray, Peppermint, River Gallo, Seven Graham, Courtney Act, Carmen Carrera, Amrou Al-Kadhi, Joseph Harwood, Yvy DeLuca, and so many more wonderful and inspiring guests.

Phoenix Ivy Roots, from Ontario, Canada, says; “Beyondbrightonuk live streams have helped me feel less alone during the pandemic as someone who lives solo. The time, effort, connections, meaningful conversations, advocacy and heart put into it keeps us connected and has changed my life forever. I never thought I’d get to meet people across the world who validate me as a non-binary person, and who I feel so close to. We are chosen family, which means the world to me.”

MORE INFO

Follow Samo on Instagram: @ mister.samo
To support the project, visit Samo’s crowdfunding page: www.crowdfunder.co.uk/seed-funding-art-project-celebrating-trans-bodies?fbclid=IwAR2LYuPHIDKM7B55Csa9bnwB2QGzldZFH6UbkZsUh4hdylesY_1BWP2-q10
RENEE RICHARDS
- GAME, SET AND MATCH

Winning the right to compete as a trans woman is nothing new. By Steve Ashfield

In 1977 Virginia Wade won the Women’s Singles at Wimbledon. Months later, she made her way to New York aiming to win the US Open too. When it came to her first-round match though, all the attention was on her opponent, a woman in her 40s called Renée Richards – and the world was watching her every move. Why? Well, Renée had previously taken part in the tournament playing in the Men’s Singles when known as Richard Raskind.

The current day sees regular controversies over trans competitors in sport, questioning whether there is an unfair advantage. As you’ll read, this is nothing new, so let’s go back in time to examine the Renée Richards story.

In August 1934, Richard Raskind was born in the Forest Hills area, not too far from where the US Open tennis tournament used to be held. His parents were both in the medical profession and Richard was destined to follow in their footsteps.

He was always a big hit when it came to sport, excelling in baseball, American Football and tennis. It was the latter that most enjoyed. Success came on the tennis court and at one time he was one of the top ranked players in the over-35s category. Between 1953 and 1960, he played in the US Open five times, reached the second round on two occasions. Little did he guess what lay in store a couple of decades later.

Renée has published two autobiographies. Please note that she prefers the word ‘transsexual’ to ‘transgendered’ and ‘sex change’ to ‘gender change’. In her second book, No Way Renée – The Second Half Of My Notorious Life (written with John Ames), Renée looks back at the controversy that hit the tennis world and explains just why she had to take on the tennis authorities. “I had undergone a male-to-female sex change operation and then had the temerity to play in an amateur women’s tennis tournament.”

1975 saw her become Renée, the name means ‘reborn’ in French and she believes it to be very appropriate. It changed her life dramatically because the way people dealt with this situation wasn’t good.

By now, Renée was a top ophthalmologist and a professor working in New York, but she gave all of that up. Renée Richards moved to Newport Beach in California, leaving behind her young son from a marriage that had ended in divorce.

Now in her 40s, Renée still wanted to play tennis but not at a competitive level. After being asked one too many times, she relented and started playing amateur tennis. “I wanted Renée to have everything Dick used to have. Why should she have to deny herself?”, she writes in her book.

Then a big mistake was made that was to change her life. Renée was persuaded to play in a tournament believing it to be another small amateur event. It wasn’t and there were big crowds watching and nightly television coverage. As she says that tournament proved to be “the beginning of a slippery slope.”

A woman saw her play and worked out just who Renée Richards was. Word was spread and those watching her in the tournament seemed more interested in her frame than how she was playing. Despite nearly pulling out of the match though, all the attention was on her way to New York aiming to win the US Open. Months later, she made her way to New York and reached the second round on two occasions. Little did he guess what lay in store a couple of decades later.

Renée and asking her about her past. The name Richard Raskind was mentioned as he got nearer the truth. Eventually, he asked Renée if she had once been Richard Raskind and Renée told him that she had.

Renée was fearful of what would happen if the reporter published his story, especially how it would affect her son. Rightfully, Renée told him that she had “done nothing illegal or immoral.” His view was that by playing in the recent tournament, Renée had lost her right to privacy.

That’s when her life totally changed. Soon after, her story was on the television news and all over the tabloids. That journalist must have felt so proud of himself. Indeed, when a press conference was held and he attended, Renée told him “Mr Carlson, we couldn’t have had it without you.”

The truth about her past was out and next she faced a battle with the United States Tennis Association (USTA) and the Women’s Tennis Association (WTA). Their bigoted view was that Renée was not a woman and couldn’t play in their tournaments. Saying a trans woman is a real woman never applied more.

Renée even had a document from the New York City Health Department that declared she was a woman. That wasn’t good enough for the USTA and WTA though and they continued to say she was barred from their events, not that Renée had been considering playing in any.

With other groups supporting her, Renée decided that the only way ahead was to take legal action to overturn their ban. It wasn’t to be an easy road though with some players unhappy at her playing in tournaments.

A friend, Gene Scott, invited her to take part in the Tennis Week tournament he was holding in New Jersey and 25 players pulled out because of her participation. Renée was outraged and declared “I do not feel that I have an unfair advantage over other women in athletic competition.” She added: “It’s a human rights issue. I want to show that someone who has a different lifestyle or medical condition, has a right to stand up for what they are.”

It wasn’t easy playing as the media continued to make her life difficult. Even her opponents

“A woman saw her play and worked out just who Renée Richards was. Word was spread and those watching her in the tournament seemed more interested in her frame than how she was playing.”
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were struggling to keep their focus on the match. It wasn’t as if Renée was winning all her matches with ease, still the authorities wouldn’t let her enter their tournaments. They wanted her to take a chromosome test (one that had been introduced but not used in ten years), but even when she passed they asked her to take more.

Then there was the match against Australian player Kerry Reid. Richards went 4-1 up in the first set and on the advice of her husband Raz, Reid just walked off the court. The newspaper headlines continued to be cruel. One declared: “Women’s Winner Was a Man.” Another even claimed she was a man masquerading as a woman.

There were a few female players who felt uneasy about sharing a locker room with Renée but a certain tennis legend gave her valuable support. Billie Jean King was hearing how some of the players were feeling about Renée being on the circuit. Some were saying ‘she can’t play, she’s a guy.’ King arranged a meeting with Renée and was highly impressed with her. Next, she went to see a doctor and asked if Renée was a woman. He said ‘yes’, and Billie Jean just said, ‘that’s all I need to know’ and went to tell the other female players.

Eventually, a judge ruled that Renée was being discriminated against and the ban had to be overturned. Still there were going to be problems playing on the circuit with other players still upset. Young players who lost to Renée said it only happened because of her past. British tennis player Glynis Coles was a major critic, believing that Renée was too overpowering to play against women. When they met in a doubles match, Coles didn’t shake her hand at the end of the match.

With the ban lifted and her ranking improving, Renée played in the 1977 US Open. Her unkind draw saw her lose in the first set and on the advice of her husband Raz, Reid just walked off the court. The newspaper headlines continued to be cruel. One declared: “Women’s Winner Was a Man.” Another even claimed she was a man masquerading as a woman.

Her view is that “the notion that one can take hormones and be considered a woman without sex reassignment surgery is nuts.” She adds: “a big part of a person’s sexual identity is their sexual parts.”

Much better results were achieved in the doubles tournaments. In 1977 she teamed up with Betty Ann Stuart and made it all the way to the final, losing to Martina Navratilova and Betty Stove. Two years later, Renée and Ilie Nastase lost in the semi-finals of the mixed doubles.

Her final appearance at the US Open was in 1981. Renée enjoyed further success off the court, coaching Martina Navratilova to two Wimbledon titles. Now she spends her time playing golf and still works helping save people’s eye sight.

Renée can’t stop being controversial though and her views on trans competitors in sport is an interesting one. As far as Renée is concerned, “if someone had surgery when they were 20, then you wouldn’t have a level playing field” because in her opinion, they would be “much too strong and advantaged against women.”

Looking back at her own problems in the 1970s, she stresses the ruling made in her case. The judge only referred to her situation and not make a blanket statement. Her view is that “the notion that one can take hormones and be considered a woman without sex reassignment surgery is nuts.” She adds: “a big part of a person’s sexual identity is their sexual parts.”

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Her final appearance at the US Open was in 1981. Renée enjoyed further success off the court, coaching Martina Navratilova to two Wimbledon titles. Now she spends her time playing golf and still works helping save people’s eye sight.

Renée can’t stop being controversial though and her views on trans competitors in sport is an interesting one. As far as Renée is concerned, “if someone had surgery when they were 20, then you wouldn’t have a level playing field” because in her opinion, they would be “much too strong and advantaged against women.”

Looking back at her own problems in the 1970s, she stresses the ruling made in her case. The judge only referred to her situation and not make a blanket statement. Her view is that “the notion that one can take hormones and be considered a woman without sex reassignment surgery is nuts.” She adds: “a big part of a person’s sexual identity is their sexual parts.”

Looking at her own career, Renée says that “I would have been mortified if I won Grand Slams as a woman.” If she had, then that would have been the end of her career believing she would have had an “unfair advantage”. The fact is though that in singles, Renée didn’t do any better than when competing as a man.

She still believes though that if she had transitioned when in her 20s, it would have been a very different story and she’d have “beaten the women to a pulp.” Perhaps, when she took on Virginia Wade at the US Open, if she’d been in her 20s, then it might have been her who had just won Wimbledon.

Renée says that she is “very much binary” and “likes the difference between men and women.” With that in mind, she says “If someone isn’t a true transgender transsexual and doesn’t live their life as a woman then it is unfair for them to compete... I don’t think your identity is quite bona fide or certified unless you have had the surgery.”

Controversial opinions indeed, just imagine if she was at a lecture event and the other speaker was Margaret Court. With her views on the LGBTQ+ community, that’d be a night that wouldn’t be forgotten in a while.

Renée is entitled to her opinions though and her book is a fascinating read. The 1970s saw her standing up for her rights and winning. The views held by those who tried to stop her competing weren’t right of course, but similar opinions are still present in the current day and the arguments are likely to continue for a little while yet.

MORE INFO
• The Renée Richards Story – Second Serve (Stein & Day, 1983)
• No Way Renée – The Second Half of my Notorious Life (Simon & Schuster, 2007)
“It started a few years before my diagnosis, after the break-up of a long-term relationship. Losing the companionship and much of my social circle had a major effect on me. I struggled to re-establish a social circle, due to social anxiety.

“My life consisted of going to the cinema on my own a couple of times a month, and I started to suffer from depression, even having thoughts of suicide in my darkest moments.

“Thankfully I was able to find help from several sources, and a few years later, thanks to some of the therapy I was undergoing, I realised I was transgender.”

One of the therapy courses Ruby undertook was online creative writing and during this she found herself wanting to dress like one of her female characters. After carrying out some research and realising she was trans female, Ruby started tentatively going out in public dressed as a woman. “I’d book tickets to Rocky Horror as small way I could dress as female in public.”

She continues: “This was a huge change for me, even with spending time presenting as female in private being a big change in my general mood and mindset. Another major change was that I now had the confidence to tackle my social anxiety, and started going out to bars and pubs for the first time in several years.

“I slowly started to present more as female in public. To start with I’d change in the toilets only presenting as female at the venues, but as I spent more time as female I became more confident, spending more time as female. That has led me to today where I present as the gender that I identify as full time.”

When it comes to the importance of promoting the visibility of the transgender community and the LGBTQ+ community in general, Ruby says it’s a major passion.

“I didn’t realise I was transgender until my mid-30s, and consequently spent a large proportion of my life feeling outcast and struggling to fit in.

“In hindsight there were plenty of signs from an early age, but when I was growing up there was very little transgender visibility. The only time it would really be mentioned was as a punchline to a joke, positive portrayals of the transgender community in the media were incredibly rare.

“It’s left me wondering what my life would be like if I’d known, and been able to act much sooner. Obviously I want more transgender visibility so young transgender individuals can find their place and true selves at a much younger age, not have to live feeling outcast like I did, and find acceptance from their friends, family and society as a whole.”

Around three and a half years ago, Ruby came out to her colleagues in a Brighton food retailer, which she says has increased her visibility. “I hope that goes a small way to normalising outwardly visible transgender individuals in everyday scenarios.

“As a performer I strive to provide transgender visibility on the cabaret circuit of myself and other performers. One of my prouder moments is when I’ve had other transgender individuals say seeing me perform encourages them to give performing a go.

“’I’m also hoping to see an increase in transgender visibility at Pride. I still feel we’re under-represented on the main cabaret stages, and would love the opportunity to help a little towards rectifying that.”

MORE INFO
Follow Tran-Tula on @TranTula1980
What have you been up to in lockdown?
“During lockdown I’ve been mostly isolating, however the weather has been wonderful, so I’ve been enjoying walks in the sunshine with my partner Nat and spending time outside on our patio that we’ve been doing up. We’ve also taken the opportunity to decorate the home, which is exciting. I haven’t sung live online but I’ve enjoyed watching some of the artists that have been, and I’ve been putting videos of me singing on Facebook for people to enjoy, I hope ha ha.”

Has lockdown affected your creative output?
“The biggest impact to my creative output has been realising just how complicated modern technology is!”

Have you watched much online?
“I’ve managed to catch a few of the singers and drag artists who are performing online, it’s been so uplifting to see them doing what they love doing.”

What does the future hold for you?
“Once we can start getting back to some sort of normality, I’m so looking forward to seeing family and friends and going for a break somewhere with Nat. That will be amazing! I’ve missed our holidays and adventures.

“Once bars and pubs are open again I can’t wait to start arranging some more charity gigs. I love being able to use my singing to help raise money for some great causes.”

Top tips to keep us busy during lockdown?
“Do all those jobs you kept putting off - gardening, decorating, sorting out cupboards and paperwork etc. Take up a new hobby that maybe you didn’t have time for before.”

Words of wisdom?
“This is an incredibly difficult and lonely time for so many. Look out for and check in on one another. Keep connected especially if you know someone who lives alone or is vulnerable or struggling. Above all, please be kind and stay safe.”

FOLLOW KRISsie...
@ krissie.ducann
“I’m a singer/songwriter and a performer. I’m gay and live in the North Laine above The Brighton Tavern.”

How have you been spending lockdown?

“Aside from music, I also work as a support worker with the homeless so as a front-line worker I’ve been lucky in that I’m still able to go to work and earn. Musically speaking I’ve done a few gigs online and some fundraising events for the Save Our Venues campaign and to raise funds to save The Brunswick and other grassroots music venues that are struggling due to the pandemic. I’ve been writing a little. I’ve been reading a lot. I have a new album that just came out, so I’ve been quite busy promoting that online as well.”

How has it affected your creative output?

“My Brighton Fringe show The Way Old Friends Do - A Musical Celebration of ABBA has been postponed and me and the band had been working on this show and the album released alongside it for a year, so to have it put on hold has been a blow, but we will be putting it on for the rescheduled Festival whenever that may be. The response to the album has been amazing and we can’t wait to take it to the stage as part of the Fringe as soon as we can.”

What do you miss the most?

“I miss connecting with an audience, I miss being able to look into the eyes of the people I’m singing to. You can’t do that online. I miss playing piano in the basement of The Brunswick. I miss pubs, I spend a lot of time in pubs, in fact I live in one. The Brunswick, The Albert, Latest Music Bar, The Amsterdam Hotel, Legends, The Bedford Tavern, The Brighton Tavern, of course, I miss all the wonderful venues we have in Brighton. We can’t afford to let them go under.”

Have you been watching much online?

“I have a lot of friends who are drag queens, comedians and cabaret performers so I’ve been watching a lot of their stuff. Love to Ruffles The Clown, Snow White Trash, Spice, Paul Diello, Spit the Ink, Piper Murray and Katrina Quinn.”

Does lockdown disproportionally affect the LGBTQ+ community?

“I think lockdown has been incredibly tough especially the most isolated and vulnerable. As a single gay man, I feel it too. There are concerns about how LGBTQ+ venues that were already struggling will survive financially and how that will impact our community. I feel for the older generation of LGBTQ+ people who are now more isolated because they aren’t able to meet with friends in venues, so I think it’s really important that we come together as a community and look after each other, especially the most isolated and vulnerable.”

“On a positive note one of the things I love about Brighton is the sense of community, I see real acts of kindness every day and we have always been good at coming together when the chips are down, and it makes me really proud to live here.”

Any plans for when this is all over?

“My Brighton Fringe show The Way Old Friends Do - A Musical Celebration of ABBA. It’s a musical cabaret featuring me and a five-piece acoustic band reworking ABBA classics and deep cuts. It will go on in either October 2020 or May 2021 depending on when the festival is rescheduled, and the album of the same name is out now.

“I’m also writing original material for my next project but that’s a fair way off. I was due to play Pride this year but will now be playing Pride ’21 instead too. Other than that, I expect there will be lots of drunken hugging.”

Any words of wisdom to see us through?

“Go easy on yourself, if you’ve put on a little weight or are drinking too much don’t beat yourself up. Do a little yoga. Call your friends and tell them how much you love them, tell them often, and always make sure the wine is good.”

Alan’s new album The Way Old Friends Do, which is his take on ABBA songs, is out on all platforms worldwide, including Spotify. To see the video for the first single, The Day Before You Came, visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=IlvypxGu_Kk&feature=youtu.be

FOLLOW ALAN…

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https://alanbonner.bandcamp.com
www.alanbonnermusic.com
LOCKSLEY NIXON

Hi Locksley, tell us a bit about yourself...
“My name is Locksley, I’m 32. I enjoy solitary walks on the beach, white wine and the occasional breakdown.”

How have you been spending your time in lockdown?
“Lockdown changed my life overnight... I used to make drag costumes for a living and overnight all of my work disappeared. I live with my mum and we run a B&B together, all the bookings vanished, so we had to come up with a new plan for survival.”

What’s been the biggest impact to your creative output?
“I started a new business. Drag costing was over (for me) but the new world still needed my skills. So, I started the Little Mask Factory. Me and my mum make and sell medical and social grade masks, we donate masks to hospitals, care homes and other facilities in need. It’s been an enormous challenge for us both, but we love it. Our B&B out in Peacehaven now also runs with zero contact from us. Guests are completely safe, and we have a five-star hygiene rating. It’s been a complete life change; some days have been incredibly hard, but we are grafters and we don’t give in.”

Have you been watching much online?
“Yes, I miss the scene enormously and seeing everyone still performing has been wonderful.”

What do you miss the most?

How is lockdown affecting the LGBTQ+ community?
“Everyone is in a different boat, but we’re all in the same storm. I came out as trans during lockdown. I think it’s made us all realise what’s truly important and how lucky we were and will be.”

Any plans for the future?
“I’ve been on a weight loss and fitness journey during lockdown, inspired by my transition. I plan to embrace the new world as a new person. I’m working very hard to make sure I turn heads when I do.”

Words of wisdom to get us through?
“Embrace the change. We are all going to remember this for the rest of our lives, make sure when you look back on it you can say you did your absolute best.”

FOLLOW LOCKSLEY...
- Instagram: @thelittlemaskfactory
- Facebook: Locksley Nixon
- Search Safehaven for their B&B on www.booking.com

KATHRINE SMITH

Kathrine Smith is a writer working mainly in TV. She got her first break on The Bill and most recently wrote for another crime series, London Kills. Kathrine has also written for the stage, including queer history play All I See Is You, which won awards at last year’s International Gay Theatre Festival in Dublin and was on at Brighton Fringe where it won the International Touring Award taking the show to Sydney and Melbourne fringe festivals.

How have you been spending your time?
“I’m very lucky in that I already work from home. Some work was delayed as filming dates were postponed but thankfully most projects seem to be adapting and getting back on track now. I’ve also baked way too many cakes and cookies and got nerdily into Zoom pub quizzes.”

Have these crazy days impacted your creative output?
“The virus has had such a horrifying impact on so many people and communities it’s definitely made me stop and take stock. The lockdown has got me questioning my work and focusing on what I really want to write about, which includes a lot more queer stories. I keep telling myself - if not now then when?”

Managed to catch much online?
“Loads. I’m a sucker for a series binge. It’s also fantastic to see so many plays being streamed online not only from the big theatres but new lockdown-inspired work filmed in isolation. A recording of All I See Is You is currently on YouTube and had over 600 views in a month.”

Has lockdown disproportionately affected the LGBTQ+ community?
“It’s really tough having social hubs and support groups close down particularly for those who already felt alone and isolated. When it’s safe I hope we can all come together and support our queer spaces so we don’t lose them for good.”

What are your plans for when this is all over?
“I really miss being with friends and family and going out to the theatre and cinema. I can’t wait to do all that again.”

Any tips to keep us busy?
“If you’ve ever thought you wanted to write - just do it. Jot down a memory or fantasy and then see how it might be shaped into a story or a monologue. I find getting started is the hardest part. Once you get something - anything - down, bigger ideas will spark.”

Do you have any news you’d like to share with us?
“I’ve just been commissioned to write my first radio play due to be on BBC Radio 4 in October. It’s the first time I’ve been employed to write a lesbian love story which is very exciting.”

Anything to see us through?
“We must be the change we wish to see in the world” – Audre Lorde, a self-described black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet.”

FOLLOW KATHRINE...
- Twitter: @Woodcote249 / @AISIYTour
- Insta: woodcote249
- Watch All I See Is You youtu.be/ _U_kJClLpxM
What's the impact on your creative output?  
“I’ve felt restricted while rehearsing at home too as I live in a first floor flat and have neighbours above and below who would usually be out at work all day, so I’ve been very wary of not disturbing them too much with my silly songs.”

Have you managed to watch much online?  
“I’ve logged on to a few live comedy events, including Bent Double from Komedia which was great, and have been involved in some of the Funny Girls and Funny Women online shows. My girlfriend and I have been watching a lot of Netflix too which was not something I probably would have done before lockdown. But we’ve found some real gems, including Parks & Recreation, The Good Place and Crazy Ex-Girlfriend, which I’m now absolutely obsessed with. If you love clever comedy, great characters and absolutely genius musical comedy then you can’t go wrong with that show. It’s absolutely brilliant, and Rachel Bloom is definitely my new songwriting hero.”

What do you miss the most?  
“I really miss performing live. Doing online gigs is fun but I find it quite stressful with the extra worry of technology, sound quality and internet connections letting you down during a show. Also not being able to connect with your audience face to face is really difficult, especially when it comes to comedy because you rely so heavily on the energy in the room to enhance your performance.

“I’m really worried about the future of some of our local venues too. So many of them are putting out crowdfunding requests and are relying on donations to keep operating. It will be so sad to lose them, and I would love to see the government offer some help soon otherwise things may start to look very bleak for the live entertainment industry, not just locally but worldwide.”

Is the pandemic disproportionately affecting the LGBTQ+ community?  
“Obviously, the cancellation of the official Pride celebrations is going to be a huge loss to the city this year. But my hope is that people will still get together in smaller groups (if they are able to do so safely of course) and although the celebrations might be much more low key it will actually give people an opportunity to reflect on what Pride really means, rather than the enormous commercial party it has become in recent years.”

What are your plans for when it’s all over?  
“To get back out there performing as soon as I safely can. I think it’s likely to be next year before my tour gets going again but, in the meantime, I’m hoping to write and record a new album of songs which might form the basis of a new Fringe show next year - I’m not sure yet. Watch this space.”

FOLLOW HANNAH…
- www.brackers.co.uk
- @hannahbrackenburycomedy
- @hbrighton
- _hannahbrackenbury_

Brighton Fringe show from 2019, All Things Brighton Beautiful, and sold virtual tickets to guests who logged on via Zoom. I was also asked to help somebody propose to their partner by writing a personalised song which I performed live online. That was a really wonderful experience. I’m now taking a bit of time out from online shows to concentrate on writing and recording some new material.

What’s the impact on your creative output?  
“Obviously not being able to perform live has been the biggest impact. I’ve felt restricted with rehearsing at home too as I live in a first floor flat and have neighbours above and below who would usually be out at work all day, so I’ve been very wary of not disturbing them too much with my silly songs.”

Tell us a bit about yourself…
“I’m a musical comedy performer based in Brighton. I was due to be touring the UK this year with my Victoria Wood tribute show, Victorious, but everything is currently on hold due to Covid-19, with most tour dates likely to be moved to 2021 instead.”

What have you been up to?
“The first few weeks were really stressful, worrying about how I was going to get by financially with all my gigs and other paid work being cancelled. But I sat down and looked at the other skills I have, began to put ideas out on social media and plan online gigs. I did a couple of Buskathons where I performed live on Facebook, people sent in song requests and we were incredibly generous with donations during the shows. We played silly games, gave away prizes, and were able to give a percentage of what we made to MindOut and the Martlets Hospice too which was really lovely. I also brought back my silly games, gave away prizes, and were able to give a percentage of what we made to MindOut and the Martlets Hospice too which was really lovely. I also brought back my silly songs by All Things Beautiful, and sold virtual tickets to them too much with my silly songs.”

FANNY BURNS

One of the UK’s top drag sensations Fanny Burns travels the country’s biggest and best LGBTQ+ venues every weekend armed with witty banter, sparkly dresses and a back catalogue of songs. Here’s why we all need a little Fanny in our lives, even in lockdown…

Tell us a bit about yourself…
“Fanny Burns here, born in the Midlands and been doing drag for just over four years. I’ve always been in entertainment from a young age but professionally since 2000, starting in clubs and pubs as a male vocalist and then on to Haven Holidays, and now the wonderful world of drag.”

Has Fanny popped up online?
“I always make sure to keep the Fanny followers updated by hosting a Lockdown Live every Wednesday at 7.30pm on my Facebook page. Viewers can nominate a song they wish to hear the following week, in the style of Paul O’Grady and the Lockdown Llama provides music for a Share Raffle where five people, who share the feed the week before, win an I Love Fanny Burns badge… Add to that a Disney Song of the Week and it adds up to be a pretty busy show.

How have you been spending lockdown?
“I’ve embarked on a massive life adventure - buying my first home with my partner. So days have been filled with packing and sorting prior to the move and then unpacking and decorating, as you can imagine it’s keeping us busy.”

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“As a queen I’m inspired by Lily Savage, I feel her comedy timing and content was amazing. That harsh style and cutting comments, but always making people laugh with her, not at people. It’s a skilful balance and I admire her talent.”
Drag queens have been busy online...

“Sadly I haven’t managed to catch much online with the house move, but I’ve caught a few drag shows on Drag Diva Lockdown, between packing and sleeping. The thing I like about this page is that any queen that applies gets a slot. No matter whether they’re a seasoned professional or popping on a dress for the first time.”

What do you miss the most?

“With as much people, I’m totally ready to get back to live performing. As much as the live feed (Wednesday at 7.30pm) is a much-needed creative outlet, there’s nothing like a live audience where you can interact and have banter. One of my favourite places to perform is Weston-Super-Mare, I’ve been their hostess for Pride for three years and lockdown has put a halt to a fundraiser that I was very much looking forward to. We had planned to raise funds for Weston-Super-Mare Pride by getting people to sponsor me to jump out of a plane. Sadly this plan has been postponed but I’m sure we will revisit it in 2021.”

Has lockdown disproportionately affected the LGBTQ+ community?

“I feel everyone has been hit hard by this pandemic and it will certainly change things going forward. The LGBTQ+ community is strong and as soon as those venues and services are open, I am sure people will be there to support the scene again. Who doesn’t need a drink in a bar after all this?”

Words of wisdom to see us through?

“All I would say is be kind to each other and be supportive, be an ear for someone and just drop someone a call, even if you haven’t spoken to them in a while, you don’t know what others are going through and that call might just pick them up and help them get though. I hope everyone is staying safe and finding plenty to do during this lockdown and I can’t wait to be performing live again on a stage near you. Much Love, Fanny.”

FOLLOW FANNY...

- www.fannyburnsdrag.com
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**LAZY QUEEN**

Oslo-based LGBTQ+ alt-rock outfit Lazy Queen produce feral pop-punk anthems with infectious hooks and abrasive punk demeanour. Guitarist and singer Henrik Garcia Seberg explains how they’ve been spending lockdown and what the future holds...

Hey Henrik, how has lockdown been for you?

“Oh you know, it’s been a pendulum swinging between productivity and climbing up the walls. I’m generally not very good at sitting still or being stuck inside, but we’ve all got to pull our weight. I’m fortunate to live in a country with good healthcare and to be young and healthy, so the least I can do is stay home. “It’s weird though, we finished some new recordings just as the country started locking down, so while it felt like the whole world came to a standstill, we started ramping up. We signed with our label and management and started preparing for releasing new music, so it’s been pretty busy. Idk, it’s all kind of upside down, good with the bad and bad with the good. Mostly I’ve been hanging out with my partner and my cat, working on demos, oh and I got a PS4 <3”

Have you adjusted to working from home?

“The working’ part of my everyday routine hasn’t changed that much, I’ve always worked a lot from home, but not being able to balance that out with going out, and by extension being able break the day up a bit has definitely shifted things. It’s been an adjustment, but I think I’m starting to settle in.”

What’s the impact on your creative output?

“Being constantly at home has definitely resulted in a lot of demos and new material, but at the same time, most of what I write lyric-wise is spur of the moment things inspired by being just an individual as a part of the world. So being somewhat cut off from the world has made that process more difficult. I don’t think we want to or are going to write a Corona song anytime soon heh.”

Have you been watching much online?

“Oh man, yeah, way too much probably. I always have the TV on in the background. I don’t like silence too much. As we speak I’m finally watching The Last Dance on Netflix, and it’s so good. I’ve also made a good dent in the ever growing list of movies I wanted to see, but haven’t get around to until now.”

Is lockdown disproportionately affecting LGBTQ+ communities?

“I think it must be very tough on anyone who doesn’t have a stable home environment right now, with quarantines and limited possibilities of seeing people outside of your living situation. Since, unfortunately, a lot of LGBTQ+ people face difficult relationships with family I’m sure there’s many in our community who are stuck in difficult situations, and cut off from their normal supportive network outside of their home. Same goes for people in abusive living situations. It’s really important that we all check in on our people and try to stay connected the best we can given the current situation.”

Plans for the future?

“Some things are hard to plan, since we don’t know when things will be back to normal, like live and whatnot... With that being said, I don’t know how much I’m allowed to divulge, but we certainly have more music to release. Expect more new and more expansive Lazy Queen material in the rest of 2020.”

Any tips to keep busy?

“If you’ve stuff you’ve been wanting to do, but been putting off because of the daily hustle; go get it. Read up on subjects you’ve been wanting to get into, have Zoom coffees with people you’ve been wanting to catch up with. But also it’s really important to remember that it’s totally fine to do nothing; to feel the weight of what’s happening in the world, and not really feel like you have the energy to crush that overall meaningless ‘to do’-list. That’s totally fine as well. It’s uncharted territory for most of us this state what we find ourselves in, so just do whatever feels right for you. Also, the Spider-Man game on PS4 is pretty cool.”

Do you have any work you’d like to share?

“Well, you should certainly check out our new single, Throwaway, and we might have some more stuff just around the corner.”

Words of wisdom to see us through?

“Stay strong, take care of yourself and the people around you. You’re not a failure for eating grilled cheese five days in a row. F**k Trump.”

FOLLOW LAZY QUEEN...

- Listen to Lazy Queen’s new single, Throwaway, at: https://ingroov.es/throwaway
- More music on their Soundcloud
- lazyqueenband/
- www.lazyqueenband.com
ALICE DENNY

Sussex poet Alice Denny is a charismatic performer, described as having devastating candour which redefines and reinvigorates. The heart-driven wordsmith has just moved back to Brighton...

How have you been spending lockdown?
“I have just moved back to Brighton after four years of living in exile in Hastings. Most of my time since arriving has been taken up with the practicalities of settling into a new home among new neighbours which has been more taxing than expected mainly due to the strictures of lockdown.”

Has it impacted on your creative output?
“Socially and emotionally the impact of the virus has been huge. In terms of work, sadly I haven’t spent the enforced time at home very productively although I have several interesting ‘starts’ as well as a little new material complete. There are reasons. I’m not coping well with lockdown.”

Lockdown has been a tough time for many...
“I’d felt very isolated in Hastings and was very much looking forward to re-establishing friendships, getting back into a more active social and creative life. Brighton is usually a particularly stimulating and encouraging environment. Sadly, all that stopped in March and in many ways I found myself more isolated than ever and the sense of loss seems intensified.”

Have you seen or done much online?
“It doesn’t really do it for me although I’ve been in a couple of things and one in particular was especially rewarding. However, my incompetence and anxieties with the IT stuff absorbs so much time and energy I’m generally exhausted at the end. Performing without an audience feels really weird too.

“I haven’t watched much online either, it can be quite frustrating, especially on a small phone screen. It’s hard for performers to make an impact if not filmed skilfully. I think, I did one thing on Zoom recently with my phone propped against a can of mushy peas, teetering on top of a pile of books.”

Do you think our LGBTQ+ communities will bounce back stronger than ever?
“Brighton has a wonderful ethos and the LGBTQ+ communities here are astounding. I have no doubt it continues to thrive ‘underground’ to offer practical and emotional support to others more vulnerable or in need. And I think many of us have realised just what we have been missing. People, I hope, will treasure one another and our communities all the more. I’ve no doubt the community will bounce back with new vigour and more joy and determination than ever.”

Follow Alice...
@ CantbBad

AIDEN BEX

Aiden Bex is the sassy writer, poet and spoken word artist who organises fundraising events for the Martin Fisher Foundation, the local HIV charity which works to increase testing and tackle stigma, and is part of the El Geebee Tea Queue set.

Hey, tell us a bit about yourself...
“My performer bio reads ‘both angel and devil rolled into one heavily-tattooed package’, which sums me up rather well. I started writing in 2017 while experiencing acute depression. My psychotherapist used to teach creative writing and she helped me realise how creativity benefits mental health. By 2018, I took things further and began performing. These days I can’t get enough of anything creative. My current focus is drag which I started this year. It’s the most challenging thing I’ve ever done and I can’t wait to get better at it. On the flip side, I work full-time for the NHS in HIV/GUM clinical research. My background before that was in HIV health promotion, which I’m still passionate about. However, as much as I enjoy my work, I’d love to phase out nursing and replace it with something more creative.”

How have you been spending lockdown?
“To be honest, things haven’t really changed for me as I’ve been working as normal. I had to give up my personal trainer, pole class, and singing lessons, however, that’s allowed more time to be creative in other ways. I’m now learning to use Photoshop and just bought my first DSLR camera.”

Has it impacted on your creative output?
“So far, this year has been my most creative yet and I’ve never been happier. However, I feel that relates more to regained confidence and improved mental wellbeing than anything else. I just wish there were more hours in the day for me to get everything done.”
Have you been watching much online? “Mostly cabaret when I’ve had time or if a friend is performing in a particular show. There have been some fantastic performances and I’d love to see online shows continue even after the restrictions are lifted. The House of Grand Parade’s Lockdown show has been the absolute highlight so far. I performed my drag debut during lockdown as a pre-recorded set in the El Gee Bee Tea Queue online special. It’s the first time I’ve been able to fully enjoy performing without feeling sick with nerves and the whole thing being a blur! The video is available on my YouTube channel for those who missed it.”

What do you miss the most? “Ever since I moved to Brighton in 2010 I’ve been a huge fan of the Sunday afternoon cabaret circuit. Summer definitely won’t be the same without a cold pint on the terrace at Legends watching Dave Lynn causing chaos with the passing traffic.”

Has lockdown disproportionately affected the LGBTQ+ community? “Obviously, it’s been hard on different people for different reasons and this will have been exacerbated by their community dynamics and cultural norms. Though this may seem like a terrible generalisation, I do feel the LGBTQ+ community may have found lockdown much more isolating than some other communities as we tend to create our own families and rely on one another for support and acceptance. Being cut off physically seems to have left a lot of people struggling with loneliness and a desperate need for connection.”

Will the LGBT+ scene bounce back? “Definitely. Things will be hard initially, especially given the amount of vital fundraising opportunities missed as a result of Covid-19. I can’t even begin to imagine how awful it’s been for those with uncertainties over their income. However, if we stick together the LGBTQ+ community will find a way to bounce back stronger. We’re far too fabulous to stay down for long.”

What are your plans for when it’s all over? “I’m writing a one-hour show to present at next year’s Brighton Fringe and I’m planning to create content for my YouTube channel to help us through the restrictions are lifted. The House of Grand Parade’s Lockdown show has been the absolute highlight so far. I performed my drag debut during lockdown as a pre-recorded set in the El Gee Bee Tea Queue online special. It’s the first time I’ve been able to fully enjoy performing without feeling sick with nerves and the whole thing being a blur! The video is available on my YouTube channel for those who missed it.”

How have you been spending lockdown? Sera: “Our first reaction was to live stream every day for the first month or so, partly because we wanted to be there for people who needed connection, and because we needed to be connecting with others. It was pretty intense and took up almost all our time, so we took a break and focused on recording new music and trying not to go too stir crazy.

“We’ve also been through a tough time because we lost all our income and, due to various logistical things, we haven’t been able to get any financial help from the government. We had to move out of our home in LA and are very lucky to be staying with a friend in the Southern California desert, so we’ve a little time to figure out our next move.”

How has it impacted on your creative output? S: “It’s weird because generally day-to-day life is the same - we’ve been at home recording music for the past few years, but it’s definitely harder to create right now. The world has changed so much, so writing lyrics is difficult - do I write about my experience of all this? Or would it be better to write about something else? How will life look after all this is over? How will society be different? I feel like everything is changing, so it’s difficult to know what to write about. My lyric writing is evolving because of all those questions.”

Any words of wisdom to see us through? S: “Everything happens for a reason, and I do believe that all this is happening for the greater good. I feel like our societal structures are in the process of breaking down so that we can build a better future for ourselves. We are right inside the middle of the catalyst exploding into a new future, and that can feel scary and unsafe, but if we can all keep in mind what it is we want to create, I believe we can create something beautiful out of this.”

Do you think lockdown affects the LGBTQ+ community disproportionately? F: “It’s sad that we can’t all come together to celebrate Pride this summer, but it’s so important that we all do what we can to celebrate and raise awareness for the LGBTQ+ community as best we can through these times.”

Any plans for when this is all over? S: “We’re working on a new album, which we’re really excited about. It’s early stages yet but we’re just about to start sharing some demos with our Patreon community and are hoping to start recording properly as soon as possible. “Life after lockdown is a little up in the air as to whether we’ll be able to stay in California or head home to the UK, but one thing’s for sure - there’s new music on the way and we aren’t going to let anything get in the way of that.”

What do you miss the most? S: “I really miss gigging and playing with other musicians. It’s strange because we haven’t even been doing as much of that as these past few years compared to what we used to, but as soon as lockdown happened that was what I really missed and craved. There’s a magic that happens when you get a bunch of musicians up on stage together and I can’t wait to be a part of that again.”

Any work you’d like to share with us? F: “This is a fun lockdown video we created to an awesome remix of our song Queen of Tomorrow by a friend of ours, Dom Meakins. Hope you love it.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoEXLEYxMgc

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Have you caught much online? S: “Ever since I moved to Brighton in 2010 I’ve been a huge fan of the Sunday afternoon cabaret circuit. Summer definitely won’t be the same without a cold pint on the terrace at Legends watching Dave Lynn causing chaos with the passing traffic.”

What are your plans for when it’s all over? F: “A holiday to Mexico wouldn’t go amiss...”

Follow Aiden on Instagram: @aidenbex

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UNSGUNG LILLY

Sera and Frankie are wife and wife from the band Unsung Lily who create epic, anthemic pop music made for stadiums - they just need the stadiums. The soulful British duo are now based in Los Angeles and tell us about their music and plans for the future.

How have you been spending lockdown? Sera: “Our first reaction was to live stream every day for the first month or so, partly because we wanted to be there for people who needed connection, and because we needed to be connecting with others. It was pretty intense and took up almost all our time, so we took a break and focused on recording new music and trying not to go too stir crazy.

“We’ve also been through a tough time because we lost all our income and, due to various logistical things, we haven’t been able to get any financial help from the government. We had to move out of our home in LA and are very lucky to be staying with a friend in the Southern California desert, so we’ve a little time to figure out our next move.”

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Follow Unsung Lilly on Instagram: @UnsungLilly

Follow Unsung Lily on www.Unsunglilly.com

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“I'm Nicky Mitchell, uber dyke, blues person, songwriter, guitarist, piano player, activist and all round unapologetic butch type lezzer songwriter, guitarist, piano player, activist and all round unapologetic butch type lezzer songwriter, guitarist, piano player, activist and all round unapologetic butch type lezzer songwriter, guitarist, piano player, activist and all round unapologetic butch type lezzer

You’ll probably know Colin Blanchflower as The Pianoman, playing a variety of tunes at our LGBTQ+ venues. How has Brighton’s very own music man been spending lockdown and what does he think will bring people back together?

Hi Colin, what have you been up to?

“I’ve been working from home since mid-March, which has its own stresses and strains. To be honest it’s been rather nice having space and time outside of work without commitments, though I do miss playing and hanging out with friends/making new friends in the actual world. I’ve been having lots of early nights, less alcohol, hardly any fast food. Plenty of walking without purpose, which has meant the privilege of taking in my surroundings. It’s a great blessing to live in Brighton & Hove, some amazing architecture and also of course green spaces and the sea.”

Managed to fit in any online performances?

“I decided it’s not for me. Though at the time of writing I’ve been invited to take part in the Brighton Bear Weekend virtual event, which is exciting. Recently I’ve noticed comments and social media threads from those who are seasoned performers and have been doing amazing jobs entertaining us all, they’ve said how difficult and, in some cases, draining they have found the experience.”

Seen much online?

“Excellent Bear Weekend Tea Dances on certain Sunday afternoons, including one for my birthday the other week which was a charity event in aid of the Brighton Rainbow Fund, though at the time of writing I haven’t seen how much if any money has been raised. I’ve particularly enjoyed online shows from Lady Imelda, Sandra, Miss Jason, Dave Lynn, Jennie Castell, Drag With No Name.”

What do you miss the most?

“Performing live. No doubt. A brilliant audience is a wonderful thing. I’ve also missed working with other musicians and singers. I had some absolutely epic collaborations going on and that really has been my deepest grief and loss. Particularly Emma Kilbey and the Joni Journals, which was scheduled at the Latest Music Bar.”

Has the pandemic disproportionately affected the LGBTQ+ community?

“I think the isolation is very bad. Lots of us live on our own and experience ‘family’ in a way that’s very different from heteronormative families. I’m lucky in this respect to have a very comfortable shared living environment with dear, dear friends that I call family. Unfortuantely, I don’t live with my partner and the separation has been very difficult to say the least.”

Plans for the future when it’s all over?

“This won’t be all over. This is now a new way of life. I immediately started to do things online, and have started to equip myself for online recording/streaming etc. The quality of most online streams/concerts is absolutely shockingly bad, it’s a steep learning curve we’re all on. I’m determined to get my quality up as high as I can as quickly as I can. I’m planning a big writing project and am in talks with festival coordinators I was working with to find ways and means to raise funds for them and keep people engaged.”

Any words of wisdom to see us through?

“We’re all in extremis. Be kind. Try not to judge anyone, we’re all doing our best... Oh, and for performers who are struggling with live streaming/technical stuff, check Shane Hennessy out on Youtube [link below]. I had to trawl through an insane amount of video tutorials to get to this guy, who pretty much covers all of it…”

FOLLOW NICKY...

https://youtu.be/TSaixBCHE_g
/nickymitchellmusic
/www.soundcloud.com/nickymusic
/www.nickymitchell.com

‘Warm, funny and immensely talented’ - The Guardian. Nicky Mitchell is a guitarist, singer and performer specialising in jazz and slide blues who has performed in America and all over Europe, with top names such as Dana Gillespie, Taka Boom and Eugene ‘Hideaway’ Bridges. Here, she talks lockdown blues, silver linings and moving her work online.

Tell us a bit about yourself...

“I’m Nicky Mitchell, uber dyke, blues person, songwriter, guitarist, piano player, activist and all round unapologetic butch type lezzer and trans ally (sad I have to spell that out really isn’t it?).”

How have you been spending your time?

“First thing I did was cancel all my shows. Second thing I did was talk to venues. Third thing I did was contact all ticket holders and offer refunds or rollovers. No judgement, no argument. Then I signed on for Universal Credit :(. Since then I have done livestreams via Facebook, mostly for charities and I have been writing songs.”

What’s been the biggest impact on your creative output?

“Well actually, I know it’s misery, misery everywhere, but I’ve been grateful to have space to think and feel. It felt like the pressure to be constantly productive was off and I could breathe and think and that’s felt amazing jobs entertaining us all.”

Have you been watching much online?

“Shit loads.”

Do you think the LGBTQ+ scene will bounce back stronger than ever?

“Hopefully if the venues can survive. We’re all desperate to see our chosen families again, so I’m pretty sure we will be okay.”

What do you miss the most?

“Performing live. No doubt. A brilliant audience is a wonderful thing. I’ve also missed working with other musicians and singers. I had some absolutely epic collaborations going on and that really has been my deepest grief and loss. Particularly Emma Kilbey and the Joni Journals, which was scheduled at the Latest Music Bar.”

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FOLLOW NICKY...

https://youtu.be/TSaixBCHE_g
/nickymitchellmusic
/www.soundcloud.com/nickymusic
/www.nickymitchell.com
Have you noticed an impact to your creative output?

“No live venues to play in, lack of natural mingling and socialising, which would often lead to conversation and potential gig opportunities. That said it’s meant I haven’t had an agenda when playing at home – i.e. specific songs or tunes or genres to learn or to arrange – so it’s been quite nice just to simply doodle about. The same goes for listening to music, I’ve been able to listen to different kinds of music not solely the tunes and songs I’m learning for a specific act or event.”

What do you miss the most?
“I miss performing live, especially on a real piano, and I’m looking forward to accompanying singers and other musicians again. I love watching live performance too, so I hope venues will have the scope to be creative once restrictions are lifted. I have many friends who work in or own venues so it would be great for them to get up and running again.”

Have the past few months disproportionately affected the LGBTQ+ community?
“Given my day job I’m aware of the increased isolation and loneliness for people within the LGBTQ+ community and also of increased domestic violence and abuse. It’s a more difficult time for those forced to live in households who may not be aware of or appreciate the issues facing people who identify as LGBTQ+.”

What are your plans for when it’s over?
“To get back to swimming at least three times a week as soon as they reopen and keep up the decent bedtimes and getting up early to enjoy the day. It would be great to get back gigging again as a solo act, with singers and drag, and with a band. Also, I teach basic keyboard and piano so may do more of that. The year started with some embryonic collaborations currently on hold so hopefully I’ll get these moving again, I’m always open to musical offers.”

Will the LGBTQ+ scene bounce back stronger than ever?
“Music and laughter are great healers and stronger than ever?

Any tips to keep us busy?
“Cleaning has weirdly become a favourite activity of mine somehow. I find learning new skills, even if they’re simple or useless, is always rewarding. Some things that I’ve learned to do include juggling, Morse code, and sewing, which is an incredibly useful skill. Cards have suddenly become useful to me. Reading is always good, or listening to audio books. I’d recommend searching for things that you haven’t experienced yet, like music you haven’t heard, or films you haven’t seen. It’s a good time to look for small things that you’ve been meaning to do but just haven’t yet. I’ve definitely got a pile of those.”

Any work you’d like to share?
“I recently released a live-acoustic video of my song Mister and you can find it on my YouTube channel. I’m working towards releasing my second album, Periwinkle, which I’m very excited about. In the meantime, you can find my first album, We All Fall Down, on Bandcamp, SoundCloud, Spotify, and other streaming sites.”

Any words of wisdom to help us through?
“What helps me is counting all the small things that I’ve lucked out on, and remembering that I’ve ever got everything as weird as that might sound. The idea that ‘nobody ever gets everything that they want’, has helped me through the ‘why did this have to happen?’ part of accepting our current reality.”

Any words of wisdom to see us through?
“A friend gave me a picture of words as a birthday gift a few years ago, the sentiment I like: ‘Only ever look back to see how far you have come.’

FOLLOW BLUE…

www.grotoko.com
www.grotoko.bandcamp.com
www.soundcloud.com/grotoko
/grotokomusic
Mr Smith told *The Argus* the court case had “no bearing on 19 Events Ltd or the Pride contract,” and that he will be, “defending himself on the day.”

A spokeswoman for Pride told *The Argus*: “We understand that Tom Smith is being called to Lewes Crown Court in relation to a case dating back to 2007, when he was an employee of another company. It would be inappropriate for Pride to comment further on this matter which does not affect the relationship it has with 19 Events Ltd - a company where Tom Smith is currently a director.

News of the outstanding charges against Mr Smith have raised further concerns about Pride’s tendering process, posing questions as to whether any basic credit references and criminal record checks were taken out by Pride before appointing their new contractors.

James Ledward, *Gscene* editor, told *The Argus*, “I have been uneasy with the tendering processes all along. Pride is an event that gets money to stage the 2010 event and events around Pride. This year (2020), the Golden Handbags were cancelled because of Covid-19 restrictions, as was the planned 30th Anniversary of Brighton & Hove Pride. Pride has of course announced they will be presenting a virtual Pride this year…

Gentle reader, you will recall that last month we revisited the June 2010 issue to remind ourselves of the debacle surrounding Old Old Pride (New Pride = the current organisers, led by Paul Kemp, who have organised the event since 2013, and raised nearly one million pounds for good causes in the process. Old Pride were the organisers in 2012, and Old Old Pride were the organisers, set up as a charity, who ran the event into bankruptcy, owing £200,000 in 2012)... Soooo last month we read, in a powerful editorial by James Ledward from June 2010, how Old Old Pride threw the bar contractor off the park and appointed a newly set up company...

**June 2010**

It has emerged that the one of the directors of the new company appointed to run the bar concessions at Brighton Pride, 19 Events Ltd, is due in court to face fraud and theft charges. Tom Smith, 26, of Marine Parade, Brighton, is due to attend Lewes Crown Court on September 27 to answer alleged offences that took place nearly three years ago when he was working for the Hilton Hotel at Gatwick.
of marriage and I have married more than 30 couples myself. Elaine and I have waited many years to be able to make this kind of commitment to each other and we both see the Civil Partnership Bill as a huge step in the right direction for equality. However, we are only partway there. Until I can have a legal ceremony in the eyes of God I will not feel completely fulfilled. But this opportunity to make history is fantastic and we’ll very much enjoy celebrating the experience with our friends and family.”

The two other couples selected by the Register Office to be the first to wed in a joint ceremony at one second past midnight are: Gino Meriano, a wedding planner, and his partner Mike Ullett; Roger Lewis, a Sussex Police employee and his partner Keith Willmott-Goodall.

July 2015

BEAR-PATROL RECEIVE QUEEN’S AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Brighton-based Bear-Patrol has been recognised for their fundraising with the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service. Bear-Patrol, an LGBTQ+ social group who organise leisure, challenge and fundraising events to reduce isolation and provide a network for the local community, has been honoured with the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK. Bear-Patrol is one of 187 national charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups to receive the prestigious award this year. The Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service is the highest award given to volunteer groups to recognise outstanding work in their communities.

July 2015

On April 22 we were all shocked to hear of the sudden death of Professor Martin Fisher. This appreciation of Martin’s life was written by his colleague Heather Leake. His memory and legacy live on through the work of the Martin Fisher Foundation.

Martin was born in Cyprus, where his Dad was serving with the Royal Air Force, and on returning to England he was educated in Taunton, Somerset, before going on to study Medicine at Guy’s Hospital Medical School.

In May 1995, aged 30, and not quite seven years since graduating from Guy’s, Martin applied for two consultant posts: at Kings College Hospital in London and Brighton Health Care. The rest, as they say, is history. Martin started work in Brighton on October 2, just a few days after the results of the Delta trial were presented at the European AIDS Conference. This was a defining moment in HIV medicine: after the disappointing results of the Concorde study (that showed AZT alone was no better than placebo), Delta demonstrated that a combination of two drugs was superior to mono therapy, resulting in improvements in quality and length of life. He couldn’t have arrived at a better time!

Considering the size of the local HIV population (one of the largest outside London) services were underdeveloped, though not for the want of campaigning by local activists (mainly from the LGBT community) and from within the NHS. Consequently, many local people who wanted to access latest treatments went to London for care. These were the days before viral load and resistance testing were available, when there were only three licenced antiretrovirals, and when fewer than 15% of people attending the Lawson Unit were on treatment. Our six bedded ward was always full, and there were usually six-12 additional patients on other wards, all with HIV-related conditions.

Over a third of people who were diagnosed with HIV already had advanced disease and in Brighton there were about two HIV-related deaths each month (13 per 100 patient years). Now there are over 20 antivirals and more than 90% of Lawson patients are on treatment. People who are on treatment are rarely admitted to hospital for an HIV related problem, and their life expectancy is similar to those without the virus. Many factors have contributed to this seismic shift, and Martin played a part in most of them, locally and globally: from the development of new medicines and supporting people taking them, to reducing the number with undiagnosed HIV, and strengthening partnerships with GPs and other specialties.

His enthusiasm was infectious and his ‘can-do’ attitude empowering. This ethos ensured that, as the team grew, it attracted high calibre professionals who wanted to make Brighton the leading HIV centre. When Hove General closed in 1997, he successfully lobbied the Elton John AIDS Foundation to contribute towards the refurbishment and running costs of the new in patient, day care and research unit at Brighton General. His support was also crucial in enabling the Sussex Eye Hospital Pharmacy to be re-opened and used for dispensing Lawson Unit and Claude Nicol Centre prescriptions, rather than patients having to trek over to the pharmacy in the tower block.

Martin was a brilliant clinician, a prodigious researcher and a naturally gifted and engaging lecturer, so it’s no surprise that he was much in demand to speak at conferences, workshops and training courses worldwide. He was highly influential at a national and international level, and we in Brighton were fortunate to be represented by him. In February 2013 he was appointed to the chair of HIV Medicine at Sussex Medical School, and a few months later he was presented with a Golden Handbags Lifetime Achievement Award for developing Brighton’s services for people with HIV. Characteristically, the award was a complete surprise to him: just one illustration that, despite his high-profile professional role, Martin was very humble.

He was many things to different people: to me he was an inspiration, a mentor, colleague, and friend. The world is just that little bit dimmer without him, but his legacy will live on for generations through the lives he touched.
CLASIC CREATE NOTES
BY NICK BOSTON

REVIEWS

1. ROHAN DE SARAM. Requiebros (First Hand Records FHR97).
Cellist Rohan de Saram is now 81, although this disc was recorded in 2012, when he was a mere 73 years old. Born in Sheffield to Sri Lankan parents, de Saram studied with Gaspar Cassadó (1897-1966), as well as Cassadó’s teacher, Pablo Casals (1876-1973), and this heritage goes right through this recital, with transcriptions from both of them, as well as the disc’s title piece, Requiebros, by Cassadó himself, played here with passion and affection.

2. ELISAVETA BLUMINA. Memories of Home (Dreyer Gaido CD21120). Russian-born pianist Elisaveta Blumina moved to Germany in her teens, and while (as she points out in the notes for her latest double CD release) young pianists in Russia are often schooled in Austrian and German classical repertoire, she feels very much that Russian and Soviet music is ‘in her blood’. So this collection explores that heritage, beginning with Scriabin’s Five Preludes, Op. 16. These beautifully colourful miniatures show the influence of Chopin, but with hints of Scriabin’s stretching use of harmony. Prokofiev’s Visions Fugitives that follow are equally fleeting miniatures, yet Blumina captures the individual moods wonderfully, even though none last for more than two minutes – she treats us to six here out of the complete set of 20. Blumina has championed the revival of the music of Mieczysław Weinberg (1919-1996), a Polish-Jewish composer who fled the Nazis and spent the rest of his life in the Soviet Union. Here we have just two short Fugues, dedicated to Ludmila Berlinskaya, and the story goes that Weinberg wrote them for Ludmila who had forgotten to prepare two fugues for her homework at the Conservatory – she handed them in, but received very bad marks, perhaps because of their quirky yet subtle individuality, combined with some serious ‘rule-breaking’! The remainder of the first disc is given over to Gliorgori Frid’s (1915-2012) Hungarian Album, Op. 54. These are delightful character pieces, and while they are not virtuosic, they require delicacy and intimate touch, as well as that ability once again to distil a mood in just a few moments, all of which Blumina excels at here.

3. CLARE HOWICK & SIMON CALLAGHAN. British Violin Sonatas (Somm SOMMCD0610). Violinist Clare Howick joins pianist Simon Callaghan for a survey of British Violin Sonatas, opening with William Walton’s (1902-1983) Sonata, which consists of two substantial movements, essentially lyrical in style, despite the 12-tone phrase in the second movement’s theme. The variations then give both players extended virtuosic and improvisatory passages on their own and together, and Howick immediately demonstrates a great range, with lyrical lines contrasting forensic precision in the more angular moments in the variation. This is followed by the Sonatina by William Alwyn (1905-1985), delightfully proportioned and melodically inventive, flowing effortlessly from its rippling opening, through the darkly lilting central Adagio, to the energetically bouncy finale. Again, Howick plays with warmth and lyricism, and both players use the full range of dynamics to great effect. Howick & Callaghan give première recordings here of three miniatures by Gordon Jacob (1895-1984), his sinuous Elegy, playfully virtuosic Caprice and delicate Little Dancer – all great programme fillers or encore pieces. Kenneth Leighton’s (1929-1988) Sonata No. 1 launches straight into a rich sound world with thick, swirling textures, particularly in its weighty piano part, played with command by Callaghan here, yet never overwhelming Howick’s rich tones. The slow movement’s beautiful chorale-like piano opening combines with an intensely nostalgic melodic line, and the emphatic finale nevertheless concludes with light hint of the chorale-like material. Alan Rawsthorne (1905-1971) wrote Pierrette: Valse Caprice as a wedding present for his first wife, violinist Jessie Hinchliffe, and it has a light, joyful feel, played here with great tenderness. Lennox Berkeley’s Elegy and Toccata conclude – the Elegy is tender and expressive, whilst the Toccata has an infectious drive from beginning to end. This disc amply demonstrates a huge variety of styles and textures, beyond the expected limits of 40 or so years of British composition, and Howick and Callaghan deserve credit for this well thought out programme, elegantly performed throughout.

MORE INFO
For more reviews, comment and events, visit:
- nicks-classical-notes.blogspot.co.uk
- @nickb86uk
- nbclassical@hotmail.co.uk
REVIEWS

1. JOHN LAW’S CONGREGATION Configuration (Ubuntu Music). In the absence of any live jazz to enjoy (when, oh when, will all the clubs reopen?), although there is plenty of online jazz in its place, I have chosen three easily overlooked new releases you might enjoy. John Law is a British pianist of some 40 or so albums standing, his music varying from classical and free improv to plainchant and electronics. Here he sticks to some strong modern jazz, playing with a young new-generation trio that propels proceedings along at quite a pace. The mix of styles is interesting, with a sample from a Bach organ prelude up against bubbling electronics, traffic noises, and even a Nordic lullaby. Strong melodies, great soloing from all concerned, notably the leader’s prominent piano lines and James Malmwaring’s assertive tenor sax, and some good arrangements make this an interesting and varied listen.

2. BRIAN LANDUS For Now (Blue Land Records). New York woodwind player Brian Landus is a new name to me, but he stands out from the crowd for specialising in the lower-voiced woodwind instruments, here playing a baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, and two mid-range flutes. He is also a fine composer, writing ten of the 13 songs on this set. Almost all of the songs explore heartbeat, romance, and longing, making much of this album an intimate, quiet experience. His supporting trio includes the fine pianist Fred Hersch, often featured in this column, plus Drew Gress on bass and Billy Hart on drums, with an occasional trumpet and string quartet for extra texture. Some of the new compositions sound like standards you are sure you have heard before, while others surprise by their inventiveness. Two Thelonious Monk standards are taken nicely apart and reworked, Round Midnight by the leader alone on bass clarinet, Ruby, My Dear in a romantic duo with Hersch. It’s all very stylish, and well worth taking time to hear.

3. PHOENICIAN BLINDS The Sight, The Seer and The Seen (624453 Records DK). The London-based, internationally constructed Phoenician Blinds are steadily becoming a mainstay of the current jazz scene, their music a winning combination of modern jazz performance, hard-hitting grooves, and exploratory cinematic compositions. Their melodies are all strong and punchy, often featuring unexpected hooks and abrupt endings, led from the front by saxophonist Julian Knapp from Germany forming a strong partnership with pianist Tom Sochas. From France, the keening saxophone well supported by the pianist’s more melodic piano, everything is anchored nicely by Italian drummer Filippo Giangrande, in sync with the only Brit, bassist Oli Cross. At times edgy, elsewhere complex, this is a fascinating glimpse of new British jazz in the making.

VIRTUAL ART DISTRACTIONS

I hope that you’re all coping well with your time indoors and the limitations of what a room can do. To help you escape and experience something new which brightens your spirits, I’m hoping the far away but capturable experiences I’ve found will somehow help. All you need to do is type this in (https://artsandculture.google.com/streetview) and add the venue names, places you have been to and want to eventually visit...

1. There are a few of these, but I’ll begin with the NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MODERN & CONTEMPORARY ART in Seoul, South Korea. The huge collection is available for virtual tours through Google Maps. Some of the exhibits that involve motion or video will unfortunately only be in still images, but to make up for that there is plenty of photographed and painted artworks to more fully experience.

2. The J PAUL GETTY MUSEUM in Los Angeles is also well worth a virtual wander around. Being able to not only view the artwork and sculptures on display, but also enjoy the amazing architecture.

3. The UFFIZI GALLERY in Florence is home to the art collection of the Medici family and features numerous renowned works like Botticelli’s Birth of Venus or Caravaggio’s Medusa. The virtual tour is well worth a slow stroll around.

4. The MUSEU DE ARTE DE SÃO PAULO in Brazil houses some incredible works of art, but the thing that really sets it apart from other art museums is the way the works are displayed. Mounted with concrete blocks and glass, these artworks do appear to be floating in air. A little bit of visual trickery to complement the works throughout the building.

5. The ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO is featured prominently in Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, if that is of any relevance to you. This virtual tour allows you to stumble through a suitably huge collection, which includes works by Monet, Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Cézanne.

6. The TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM in Japan has both art and antiquities on display from Japan’s history, as well as from neighbouring Asian countries. In the virtual tour you can grasp the opportunity to see all kinds of historical artifacts, as well as famous works like The Great Wave off Kanagawa by Hokusai.

7. The MUSEO DOLORES OLMEDO in Mexico City includes archaeological pieces from Mexico’s history and permanent exhibits featuring the work of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. A virtual tour allows you to see these sights in a much more undetached way.

I hope that one or more of these are able to distract you for some time, and allow you to draw yourself into a very different world. If you’re tempted, pull out those barely used paints and see what happens. The viewing of art feeding the need to make something permanent with our own hands. No one is watching and who knows, you could discover something new about yourself.
FUNERAL PARADE OF ROSES (BFI Blu-ray).
An early example of queer cinema, this Japanese experimental drama from 1969 is a look at Tokyo's gay demi-monde. It centres on two trans women who work at a gay nightclub and are both in love with the same drug dealing criminal. The action, which continually loops its timeline, is interspersed with an interview with a gay man about his sexuality, scenes of the director making the film we're watching, weird art happenings in the street, lead-in numbers on film stock placed more or less at random and bits of bloody violence. It's the kind of film you have to watch once in preparation for seeing it. On first viewing it seems an arresting but bewildering mess which owes huge debts to Godard and Warhol. I'm hoping it will click into place next time I see it. Part of the BFI's preparation for seeing it. On first film you have to watch once in bloody violence. It's the kind of or less at random and bits of happenings in the street, lead-in

THE YEAR OF THE SEX OLYMPICS (BFI DVD).
Nigel Kneale's legendary BBC play from 1968 is set in a future in which the populace - at least the 'low drivers' - are subdued by pornography produced by the ruling high-drives.

BUSTER KEATON THREE FILMS: VOLUME 2 (Eureka Blu-ray).
More classic hijinks from Keaton at the height of his powers. The Navigator, which was the star's biggest hit, has a wealthy indolent man drifting in the Pacific Ocean with a woman he's just unsuccessfully proposed marriage to. Seven Chances is a bizarre fever dream with its hundreds of vengeful brides-to-be chasing Keaton who has to marry one of them before 7pm in order to claim his inheritance. The first half is really setting up the concluding spectacular chase which has the famous scene of Keaton running down a hill dodging boulders. Keaton's an unworllytoff again in Battling Butler where his father sends him into the mountains to toughen him up, which seems unlikely seeing he goes with his manservant and his tent comes with a brass bed and a gramophone player. In order to impress a mountain girl Keaton pretends to be a famous boxer, unfortunately for him the famous boxer finds out and the climax sees our hero in the ring battling the Alabama Murderer...

IT COULDN'T HAPPEN HERE (BFI Blu-ray).
Unavailable for 30 years, this film was originally conceived as an hour-long video based on the Pet Shop Boys' 1987 album Actually. The full-scale feature film it became finds Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe on an adventure from the coast to London, encountering a curious array of eccentric characters along the way including Joss Ackland and Barbara Windsor. Director Jack Bond made a number of avant garde features before this and he doesn't stint on surrealism and obscurity. Its main theme is a representation of the England of music halls, saucy postcards, fighter pilots, greasy spoons and boarding houses. But then you also get a very boring monologue from a ventriloquist's dummy about the nature of time or another character banging on about dividing by zero. Though I did find Ackland pulling faces in the back of a car as Tennant sings Always on My Mind very, very funny. And Gareth Hunt gives a great performance here showing that he might have made a better Archie Rice than Olivier. The filmmakers' commentary, instead of giving any rationale for what's happening on screen, unforgivably goes on about the weather, actors they like or don't like, how lovely the photography is (constantly), whether a scene was filmed in Deptford or possibly Uxbridge and how anyone who doesn't like the film is 'bloody insane'. Baffling.
ASHLEY ‘DOTTY’ CHARLES OUTRAGED (Bloomsbury, £14.99). Exploring the insatiable taste for outrage in today’s world, BBC presenter and DJ Ashley ‘Dotty’ Charles calls for a return to civility in this brilliant, punchy book. An expanded version of her viral article ‘As a black, gay woman I have to be selective in my outrage. So should you’, the book goes down the angry online rabbit hole.

In this engaging and empowering book Charles examines the ways in which social media has changed the idea of protest and also the way people feel and act on their outrage. Before social media, protest was provocative and empowering. Outrage used to mean something – now it’s just another hashtag.

Charles looks at what that means for us, and for the outrage which is being manufactured by every spiked pod of our conscience via update, posting and media manipulator. She argues we are exhausted by it, and the folk who provoke and produce hate and misinformation know that. It’s what they want, it’s the medium not the message, we boil in synthetically sweet outrage and become desensitised to the real. They are hate-mongers, pushers of addictive outrage and we are hooked in responding.

Never was a book timelier, I’d urge you to read this.

YVY DELUCA TAINTED BEAUTY (Austin Macauley, £19.99). Yvy DeLuca is known to many for her ravishing performances on stage as lip-synch assassin with sass The BollyWitch, and her eclectic performances are often the highlight of an evening. DeLuca is a queer Indian transgender woman and this book, her biography, is also the story of her performance. From growing up in a role which was unsuited, uncomfortable and wrong, to learning to write her own script, produce herself and then become director of her destiny.

It’s a lovely addition to the growing canon of authentic trans narratives, which gives us insight into the author’s life as they grow up in a world which demands impossible compliance. It’s also an insight into the spectacular diversity of our northern British Asian culture and coming out as queer in a traditional Blackburn community. The book is full of warmth, and has a depth of forgiveness for other people’s failures which is heart-warming, this a narrative of love.

It’s not all sweetness and light, and there’s plenty of graphic and difficult parts of the book, with painful despair held up to the light. There’s a familiar story at the heart of this book, looking at the bullying, rejection and cruelty experienced by many queer people, and the different ways we drown out the pain, but DeLuca always brings us back to the central narrative of this book; that following your essential self, allowing your dreams to grow and finding ways to listen to your own voice in a world which shuns you, gives you power and dignity.

It’s not a story of transition but of evolution. DeLuca also holds up a mirror to British queer culture, calling out a lot of cis white privilege, creating conversations about what real inclusion means, telling us how it is from her perspective.

A good biography makes us fall in love with the person writing, not only learning about them, but understanding them. We understand her, and DeLuca’s delicious book feels like we are eavesdropping over friends talking, the pain of grim times softened by the telling, it’s naughty, honest and touching.

A good story can make us fall in love with the person writing, not only learning about them, but understanding them.

CAT WALKER THE SCOOP (Red Door Press, £8.99). Local author Cat Walker has delivered a corker of a book here, funny, heartfelt, interesting, informative and with a thumping storyline that keeps the pages turning. It’s part road trip, part travel book and part embarking on a soul seeking journey out of the stifling dullness of everyday unsatisfying life, into a new world of travelling the world and seeking adventure, boldly going, well almost.

Rather than seek adventure alone, our main protagonist Casey leaves job, girlfriend and home behind in an ice-cream van called Alice along with an old school mate, Danny, and unexpected tag-along, his troubled teenage son. Walker has written a few books of poetry and her prose echoing this succint ability to capture the sense and flavour of a place by wrapping its essence up with words. She seems unable, or unwilling, to let her sense of humour ever rest so we are presented with some seriously funny storytelling which, like all jokes, reflects and weaves itself into a bigger story. That’s not to say the book dodges any punches with its punchlines, it’s part of the delight of this book that it deals with some rather difficult parts of living, suffering and dying, in an honest and painful way.

Walker has that rare ability to lead us through the Vale of the Shadow of Death, carefully pointing out stuff we might not quite comprehend, giving it some context, both geographical, political and emotional, then, as we’re all compelled to in life, wrapping us in a hug, then determinedly moving on. Here the books does it in a literal way, exploring the world, seeking out the everyday and exposing the extraordinary that often sits quietly alongside it.

I was expecting a Ms Whippy from The Scoop but instead Casey and her band of intrepid explorers served up a serious heritage concoction of rich, thick, creamed delight, in the freshest bumpy waffle, with mouthfuls of curious texture, covered in spice, a shocking kick of chilly hidden in the sweetest parts and handed over with a smile. The book ends on the roof of the world, and this travel book gives insight into what makes our relationships worth the effort and pain, leaving us satisfied.

A lovely read and one for quarantine if you’re missing the exotic but also reappreciating the ordinary excuses for happiness.

The Scoop
A NEW CHAPTER FOR BRIGHTON’S QUEER CULTURAL INNOVATORS

Marlborough Productions, the company behind the Marlborough Pub & Theatre’s renowned cultural programme, has announced it has ceased management of the historic LGBTQ+ Brighton venue.

Marlborough Productions will now present its internationally recognised performances, parties and community gatherings at venues and spaces in Brighton & Hove. Many events will be held within the atmospheric surroundings of The Spire, Kemptown’s Grade II listed, deconsecrated church venue, while Marlborough Productions continues to develop both local and touring projects. Details will be announced of “bold, new LGBTQ+ work” that will be produced in the months ahead.

While Marlborough Productions’ 2020 live programme is on hold as the world struggles with the Covid-19 crisis, the company is delivering cultural and community projects online including Radical Rhizomes: Brighton & Hove’s social network for queer trans and intersex people of colour; monthly talks exploring the city’s hidden queer heritage; a new digital commission from award-winning performance artist Harry Clayton-Wright, plus a series of internationally focused, digital events exploring queer creativity and resilience through the pandemic. Seed commissioning opportunities for LGBTQ+ artists plus a digital version of Brownton Abbey are also to be announced soon.

Tarik Elmoutawakil and David Sheppeard became co-artistic directors of Marlborough Productions in 2008. Their creative vision and inclusive, nurturing approach has enhanced the careers of hundreds of LGBTQ+ artists. Many, such as Travis Alabanza, Emma Frankland, Lucy McCormick, Harry Clayton-Wright and Rachael Young, have become high profile within UK queer culture. Marlborough Productions has also hosted international and established performers including Justin Vivian Bond, Big Freedia, Mykki Blanco, Bette Bourne, David Hoyle, Le Gateau Chocolat, Scottee, KUCHENGA, Lorraine Bowen and Kate Bornstein among others, working with key local partners including the Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts and the Brighton Dome & Festival.

Significantly, the organisation also expanded its Trans Pride and Brighton Pride events into radical celebrations in recent years, particularly at a time when the trans community began to feel less welcome in standard LGBTQ+ spaces. Trans Pride in the UK was initiated in Brighton and the Marlborough Pub & Theatre has, to date, been the march’s initial meeting point. Providing a welcoming, safe environment and taking a specific interest in the intersection between LGBTQ+ and BAME identities, Marlborough Productions has historically recognised these communities as pivotal in the organisation’s evolving programme, as well as at the Trans Pride and Brighton & Hove Pride parties.

Tarik and David, co-artistic directors, say: “After ten years and hundreds of performances, we made the difficult decision to leave the Marlborough & Theatre. We’re so proud of the artists who contributed to the creative life of the building, the cultural life of the city and the community that’s made it their queer home. We want to thank our team members past and present for all they’ve done in supporting The Marlborough and making it one of the most radical and joyful venues in the UK. We recognise the achievements of The Marlborough wouldn’t have been possible without the bravery and unending creativity of the black and brown, queer, trans and non-binary artists and communities. We compel all arts organisations to do the vital and necessary work to dismantle structurally racist hierarchies within our sector and across society.

Marlborough Productions is thrilled by the support received so far for this new chapter from partners across Brighton & Hove and more widely across the UK. The company looks forward to continuing its trailblazing work in the future.
creative opportunities it has afforded me. David and Tarik are also wonderful facilitators and producers and are supportive to marginalised communities, they give me hope for the future.”

Juno Dawson: “David and Tarik work tirelessly to showcase diverse up-and-coming talent from all around the globe. The works are groundbreaking, thought-provoking and challenging; everything art should be. They’ll continue to put Brighton on the cultural map in this new phase.”

Le Gateau Chocolat: “The Marlborough, under David Sheppeard and Tarik Elmoutawakil, has been essential in scaffolding and platforming the works and practices of the LGBTQ+ community. Not just of artists in Brighton but from all over the country and international imports as well. Personally, as an arts institution, they supported my development by offering in kind help whenever I needed it; the valuable resource of space for rehearsal, research and development and tech support. This assistance provided much needed security as I navigated the evolution of my work and practice from small to mid-scale. A beacon and haven of queer arts, diversity inclusivity and identity.”

Boogaloo Stu: “Over the past decade David and Tarik have revived the very soul of this battered old beauty, bringing it back to life as a unique, glittering polestar for queer life in Brighton and beyond. I’m thrilled and honoured to have been a part of their journey.”

**DISTANCING**

Brian Butler looks at Brown Boy Productions’ new online drama

Filmed on smartphones and set on messaging video apps, each episode captures Adam’s and Jake’s video chats. Lopez directs each episode on Zoom with the actors who film on their phones, and then it’s sent to Lopez to edit. The six weekly episodes are distributed free via YouTube through Lopez’s production company Brown Boy Productions.

**MORE INFO**

- To watch episodes, visit: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KA47vYuA](www.youtube.com/watch?v=KA47vYuA)
- To watch another LGBTQ+ lockdown-inspired film by Leon Lopez from Brown Boy Productions, visit: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaOn-Q9XzW1&feature=youtu.be](www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaOn-Q9XzW1&feature=youtu.be)
- For more information, visit: [www.brownboyproductions.com](www.brownboyproductions.com)

Alex is a marketer, DJ, pirate radio show host and all-round happy chap. Festivals, travelling and cooking are top of his ‘fun list’, but *Fortnite*, starting fires and playing in the forest are also key features of his existence.

Jonesy is a club promoter and lectures (higher education) on the subject of event management. He loves lists, spread sheets, drag queens and raving. Also, he’s a big fan of takeaways and a nice selection of dips.

Toby is a DJ, radio show host and occasional lecturer (DJing, video editing). House music and clubbing are his go-to entertainment, but he also finds it hard to resist a *Minecraft* raid and a bag of crisps (on equal footing...)”

**STUPID BOYS CLUB**

Buckle up for *Stupid Boys Club*, a new podcast from three long-time friends, Alex, Jonesy (Steve) and Toby Lawrence, who haven’t quite figured out how to be adults. Join these three ‘grown-ups’ as they discover the art of adulting and hark back to times when they really could have done a better job.

**MORE INFO**

- To tune in, visit: [www.stupidboysclub.com](www.stupidboysclub.com)
Hudson’s sexual orientation, although our communities, is a lie. In the real world, challenges to become an inspired advocate of fought all manner of personal and professional extremely dangerous. Portraying Rock Hudson remembering of history in broadcast. However, I consider the written decades before they were produced for truth. Interesting to note: both of these were course of Larry Kramer’s. #BeMoreLarry

The recent Netflix series Hollywood, produced by gay of the moment Ryan Murphy, has been a runaway success with many in our broadening communities singing its praises across social media platforms. I applaud much of Murphy’s work, particularly his adaptation of Larry Kramer’s The Normal Heart, and of course Pose, both of which portray a social truth. Interesting to note: both of these were written decades before they were produced for broadcast. However, I consider the remembering of history in Hollywood to be extremely dangerous. Portraying Rock Hudson as both stupid and a pioneering gay man, who fought all manner of personal and professional challenges to become an inspired advocate of our communities, is a lie. In the real world, Hudson’s sexual orientation, although rumoured, was exposed to the world when he died from AIDS related complications in 1985 and the heteronormative masses were horrified. I remember it well. That week some boys in my class stole my bag and upon returning it I discovered they had replaced my name on my exercise books with the two words. Rock Hudson. It wasn’t a compliment. I appreciate Hollywood is a retelling, a deliberately inverted ‘but what if it was this way’ celebration of women producers and black actors who not only secured leading roles in movies but were allowed to sit in the front row at the Oscars. They did not and they could not. It is a lie. The 2015 film Stonewall has a good-looking Hollywood studio acceptable white gay boy throwing the first brick that sparked three days of rioting inspiring the gay rights movement. It is a lie. That brick was thrown by a black trans activist. The runaway musical success Hamilton reimagines the founding fathers of the United States and the birth of the constitution. It does so with a completely black cast and contemporary hip-hop musical score. The unusually diverse (for the West End) audience leave feeling great about the universe and head off back to their segregated suburbs congratulating themselves that they now know black history. They do not. It is a lie. We know it to be a lie because hundreds of years after the birth of the constitution we watch a black man murdered on the streets in daylight by white law enforcement officers. And the masses want to know “why are they setting fire to their own neighbourhoods? It makes no sense”. Because they are angry. They are angry because they see that everyone sees and it makes little difference. In the same way Larry Kramer was angry. Angry when hundreds, then thousands, of gay and bisexual men were dying of a virus as the world watched but did nothing. Angry because he saw that to those in authority we did not matter. And who were Larry’s greatest enemies? The authorities? The conservatitives or Republican politicians? The Christian right? No. Gay men. His greatest enemies were gay men who didn’t like his shouting. Who felt that in making a show of himself he was drawing unnecessary attention to them and they were embarrassed. Gay men who were uncomfortable with Larry Kramer outing closeted politicians on television who, while allegedly secretly gay, took an active role in denying healthcare to gay men dying in their districts. His enemies were gay men who didn’t want the word “GAY” to appear in the name of the Gay Men’s Health Crisis organisation. Gay men who had elected conservative politicians to their seats, gay men who worked for government departments but who did not want to rock the boat. Gay men who were journalists for newspapers burying the AIDS crisis on page 17. Gay men who could not shake their shame and would not use their privilege for progress. And here we sit in the shadow of a government lying to our faces on national television. A government who did not dither in February or March but who took a decision led by advisors that the plague among us would only kill the weak and old. Natural selection and dispensable fodder. Whose only inspiration to take action at all was when some of their number began to fall ill. Heterosexual and white people. A government whose arrogance is so great they want you to believe a man drove 30 miles up a busy A road to test his eyesight. If we lie to your faces and do not crack a smile you will believe us eventually. And, like those governments in the 1980s across the world and here in the UK, this behaviour is anything but incompetent. It is their ideology and you should be aware of that. They want it like this. The economic toll of Brexit and be blamed on a virus, Covid-19 is an opportunity for those people in the way that some believed AIDS had been sent by God. Get angry and then get up and do something. Act up. Fight back. #BeMoreLarry.
Growing up, I didn’t really think about gender roles. I was brought by my sister and other female family members, including my nana who chopped wood as much as she made cakes.

Most of the games I played didn’t need a gender, my Action Man was just as happy being in my sister’s Sindy doll’s kitchen as he was in his tank.

There was one day at school when the headmaster told the assembly that if boys wanted to wear an earring then they would have to wear a skirt as well. I was amazed when after lunch one of the rough boys who used to bully me walked through the playground with his single gold ear stud in and a grey schoolgirl’s dress on. He was soon sent to the headmaster’s office, but I thought he was brilliant, even though he was really horrible to me.

**“One of the rough boys who used to bully me walked through the playground with his single gold ear stud in and a grey schoolgirl’s dress on”**

When I was 14 or 15 years old I challenged the school’s policy that boys did woodwork/metal work while the girls did cookery and needlework. I got it in my head that I wanted to be a baker. It took a bit of persuading, but after that year, boys and girls had the opportunity to choose.

Around this same time the extended family went on holiday to Clacton-on-Sea. We stayed at a guest house called The Boomerang. Also staying at The Boomerang were two lesbians and their two sons. This was to be my first experience of what was known back then as the lipstick lesbian, preferring ball gowns to 501s. Those formative years equipped me with the knowledge of making no assumption when it comes to who people are from the inside out.

From here I found the gay scene (one club, Caribbean Club, and one bar, Norfolk Weary) that unlike London were mixed, The Caribbean was a melting pot for every inner thought to be expressed with comfort. From Arty Mark, who curved the idea of gender, to Carrie, the lipstick lesbian, preferring ball gowns to 501s. Those formative years equipped me with the knowledge of making no assumption when it comes to who people are from the inside out.

I recall the days of the Gay Liberation Front way back 40 or so years ago, when we had some very nice but quite discreet events with the occasional demo/march. It was all quite exciting in a world which didn’t want to know. Times have changed, so tell the world, be proud of who you are, why not.
“What are your pronouns?” is a question that I used to be shocked by. About three years ago, I shed everything to do with my hyper feminine life, being a lapdancer at the time. Everything from my eyeshadow down to my toenails was there for one reason only, to project the correct message to men. I walked into that club expecting to be one thing forever, and when I walked out, it made it literally impossible to walk back in the same.

2017 was a pivotal year for me, it was the year I came out, and the year I learned about my personal gender liberation, which is partly in thanks to the club confining me in the first place.

I’m writing about this place in particular because a straight strip club is possibly the best place to see the biggest divide in ‘female’ and ‘male’, testosterone and oestrogen figuratively on other sides of the room, one buying, one selling. If Attenborough narrated it, it would read no different to a wildlife programme. And when I stepped back and saw this as purely a social observation rather than a job, I really began to question gender as a construct and why some things are linked purely to women, and why some things are reserved for men only.

Most of us grew up being told that blue was for boys, and pink was for girls, and never questioned it until we questioned ourselves. Why do we assume the things we do? Why do we put people into boxes just to make ourselves feel more comfortable? I shaved my head and someone asked if I was a boy. I’m not offended. Yes, I took off the part of myself that I felt was oppressive, but I’m more interested in why something as simple as a hair cut can spark a question of gender.

The girl I was is far from the woman I am now. “What are your pronouns?” is a question that’s asked frequently since embracing my androgyny, and instead of being shocked by it, I’m grateful, not for the trans, non-binary, and Agender community. Being a cis woman I have the luxury of rarely being offended, but for so many people the outrage that people have about something as simple as a hair cut can spark a question of gender.

I watched a few pilot episodes of some sitcoms to see how they tackled this and it seems that there’s no way around it. It will always sound clunky. It will seem as though a big sign with the word ‘FACT’ written on it in large letters will have been flashed in front of your face. It’s like this in the Golden Girls pilot, as in the Friends pilot. You only know Rodney is Del Boy’s brother because someone mentions it.

The BBC has put a call out to aspiring writers to write the first episode of a sitcom to see if it can become a fully fledged thing that may then go into production. And so, having a bit of time on my hands, I’ve given this a go. Good grief it’s hard. The hardest point seems to be introducing people and facts about them in a conversational way. For example. I know who the character of ‘Dave’ is. I know I have to get across what he does for a living as it’s crucial the audience know this. How do you insert it into an exchange of words without it seeming really clunky and obvious?

Ah, the blank piece of paper! Nothing holds quite so much potential as the blank piece of paper. ‘What will I write on you today?’ I ponder as I sit myself down in front of it. Will it be mildly entertaining? Will it be moderately chucklesome? Will I write a searing attack on the current government and its utter cocking up of the pandemic situation? Well, ‘No’ is the answer to the last of those questions and ‘I hope so’ is the answer for the first two. My only comment on the latter one would be to picture me with arms raised in an exasperated pose with a ‘what the hell?’ expression on my face.

“Nothing holds quite so much potential as the blank piece of paper. ‘What will I write on you today?’ I ponder...”

But yes, back to the blank piece of paper. Conjuring up something out of nothing to entertain and enthrall. It’s very hard to do at times. Over the past month or so I’ve been sat in front of my ageing lap top trying to put finger to keyboard in an attempt to write some sort of sitcom. It’s like this in the Golden Girls pilot, as in the Friends pilot. You only know Rodney is Del Boy’s brother because someone mentions it.

Over the past month or so I’ve been sat in front of my ageing laptop trying to put finger to keyboard in an attempt to write some sort of sitcom. The BBC has put a call out to aspiring writers to write the first episode of a sitcom to see if it can become a fully fledged thing that may then go into production. And so, having a bit of time on my hands, I’ve given this a go. Good grief it’s hard. The hardest point seems to be introducing people and facts about them in a conversational way. For example. I know who the character of ‘Dave’ is. I know I have to get across what he does for a living as it’s crucial the audience know this. How do you insert it into an exchange of words without it seeming really clunky and obvious?

Androgyny is photographed and put on runways. Everyone from Tilda Swinton to Grace Jones to David Bowie has featured in huge glossy Vogue spreads in the name of fashion, but when it comes to the trans community umbrella, it seems that if it isn’t being fetishised, it’s being marginalised. The trans experience is not something that should be shocking. Asking a pronoun shouldn’t be shocking, and the conversation about gender is everyone’s responsibility. Misgendering or being assumptive of a person isn’t a right, it’s ignorance, and that’s why a simple question of how to address someone is starting to slowly dissolve the norms of pink and blue.
A DRY SPELL

You will all have noticed that there has been a distinct lack of precipitation over the past couple of months. Being a country lad (!) I’ve always found that Mother Nature is very good at balancing her books and that a dry spring will often lead to a wet summer!

Despite this, the Jerusalem artichokes are going great guns having had no liquid assistance from me. The onions are looking good and the broad beans are ready for picking. The dry weather has made it difficult for the seeds to germinate and they are looking a bit sad and undernourished.

Strawberries are beginning to ripen and will be ready to pick soon.

Herbs, brought some mint home the other week and didn’t get round to using it and, noticing it had started rooting, I took it back up and potted them.

USEFUL TIPS

Please look out for Rosemary Beetle (she’s not nice). We haven’t had her visit but she’s around mostly from August through to April and then through the summer you’ll just get adults. If you use pesticides these will be more effective against the larvae. Adults should be handpicked off the plant or tapped off with newspaper beneath the bush. Rosemary Beetle is partial to rosemary, thyme, lavender, sage and related plants, I think someone may have written a song about her. If you see her, the RHS would like to know for their survey.

For more information and a mugshot visit the RHS website: www.rhs.org.uk. If it isn’t pigeons, slugs, snails and mice there’s always something to keep you vigilant.

I’d like to thank Donald (King Weeder and bearer of the shortbread) and Tina Thyme for typing and photography. Happy growing!
I found my old biscuit tin, dusty and filled with trinkets. My Grandmother Ivy had given it to me. I opened it and the scent of her soft pink face powder wafted up and I was taken back 40 years. Sitting in front of her hearth, scrubbed pink from a carbolic soap bath in a half inch of tepid water, wrapped in rough towels and sipping Bovril from her second-best china. In these quiet moments when the purring coals would be reflected in her wistful eyes I’d sometimes take a punt and ask her to tell us a story. She replied that “Stories were for books, you’ll only get truth from me”, and reached up to the mantel.

Ivy reaching into the enamel cake tin and took out some torn fabric. You could see some of the writing on it, “ascism can and will win Brit’. It was shredded and burned. “Took that from a wrong’un myself,” she said telling us she’d taken it from an English Blackshirt who had slapped her during a protest in Lun’dun.

Cable Street is written up by historians as a coalition of Jewish and Irish communities, Labour and Communist Party. But the Labour Party and communist parties had told their members not to face down the fascists. It was the Jewish community and their neighbours who fought back alongside Welsh miners, dockers and working-class people. The 100,000 people who gathered to block the British Union of Fascists were decent citizens acting on their own accord. They succeeded that day, one battle in a long war.

Ivy, after being struck, had wrenched it from him, torn it in half, caught him round the neck with the other half as the four other women with her, all gutters from Billingsgate fish market with arms like pistons, held him fast. He was dragged across the street where other women waited with full chamber pots, which had been left to fester for a few days, that were emptied over him. Mops came out and stiff yard brooms rained down on the violent English Fascists, kicked away as the next was dragged up to the women to be rebuked. I learnt the word ‘rout’ that night, at my Nana’s knee.

In 1936, the British Fascists malevolently sensed an opportunity and decided to march through a Jewish community in the East End of London along Cable Street. This wasn’t subtle; this was pure anti-Semitism and racism, wrapped up in black shirted threat and thuggery. English men, marching for En-Ger-Land. Perhaps your grandfather dear reader, or great uncle? Did you ever think to check? The battle wasn’t only with fascists. It was fought against 7,000 policemen who had been deployed by Tory PM Stanley Baldwin to allow the march to proceed. Two thousand fascists turned up, against 50 times as many saying “No, you shall not pass”.

Communities galvanised to face down privileged entitlement and bullying, violent white men. Sound familiar? Mosley was the Farage of his day, before we understood the beguiling whisper of fascists’ lies. Right-wing nationalists were elected across Europe, the Spanish Civil War had just broken out, the abdication of the King, the great depression was in full swing, it was very 2020. An awful time, but people understanding the right thing to do, did it. They stood up and said ‘No, this will not go on’. Ivy’s sister Aelwyd, who was with her that day, met a charming fisherman from Bilbao and after a torrid few weeks of passion in Pontypool, returned to Spain with him to start a new life – Ivy never saw her again. She’d given Ivy the cake tin filled with home-cooked Bara brith as a paring gift.

Ivy turned back to the fire that night, hugging us closely to her, humming softly to herself, I wondered why she could never just be exquisite and never explain.
**LGBT SERVICES**

- **ALLSORTS YOUTH PROJECT**
  Drop-in for LGBT or unsure young people under 26
  Tues 5.30–8.30pm 01273 722111 or info@allsortsyouth.org.uk www.allsortsyouth.org.uk

- **BRIGHTON & HOVE POLICE**
  Report any homophobic, biphobic or transphobic incidents to: 24/7 assistance call Police on 101 (emergencies 999)
  Report online at: www.sussex.police.uk
  LGBT team (not 24/7) email: LGBT@sussex.pnn.police.uk
  • LGBT Office PC James Breeds. Tel: 101 ext 551686
  James.breeds@sussex.pnn.police.uk

- **BRIGHTON & HOVE LGBT SAFETY FORUM**
  Independent LGBT forum working within the communities to address and improve safety and access issues in Brighton & Hove. For more info: 01273 675445 or admin@lgbt-help.com or www.lgbt-help.com

- **BRIGHTON & HOVE LGBT SWITCHBOARD**
  • LGBT Older Peoples’ Project
  • LGBT Health Improvement and Engagement Project
  • LGBT Disability Support Project
  • Rainbow Cafe: support for LGBT+ people with Dementia
  • Volunteering opportunities 01273 234 009 Helpline hours: Wed & Thu, 7–9.30pm; trans-only webchat on Sun 3–5pm; call 01273 204 050 email info@switchboard.org.uk
  webchat switchboard.org.uk/helpline www.switchboard.org.uk/brighton

- **BRIGHTON ONEBODYONEFAITH**
  Formerly The Gay Christian Movement. Contact: Nigel Nash nigelnash@me.com www.onebodyonefaith.org

- **BRIGHTON WOMEN’S CENTRE**
  Info, counselling, drop-in space, support groups
  01273 698063 or visit www.womenscentre.org.uk

- **LESBIAN & GAY AA**
  12-step self-help programme for alcohol addictions: Sun, 7.30pm, Chapel Royal, North St, Bhn (side entrance).
  01273 203 343 (general AA line)

- **LGBT COCAINE ANONYMOUS**
  Meeting every Tues 6.30-8pm, 6 Tilbury Pl, Brighton, BN2 1TP
  01273 675445 or visit www.lgbt-switchboard.org www.rainbowfamilies.org.uk

- **LGBT RAINBOW FAMILIES**
  Support group for lesbian and/or gay parents
  07951 082013 or info@rainbowfamilies.org.uk
  www.rainbowfamilies.org.uk

- **LGBT RAINBOW HUB**
  Information, contact, help and guidance to services for LGBT+ communities in Brighton, Hove and Sussex at Rainbow Hub drop in LGBT+ one-stop shop: 93 St James Street, BN2 1TP
  01273 675445 or visit www.therainbowhubbrighton.com

- **SOME PEOPLE**
  Social/support group for LGB or questioning aged 14-19, Tue 5.30-7.30pm, Haslingdons. Call/text Catherine Connolly 07973 3255076 or email somepeople@eastsussex.gov.uk

- **TAGS – THE ARUN GAY SOCIETY**
  Social Group welcome all in East & West Sussex Areas
  Call/Txt 07593 513171 www.tagsonline.org.uk

- **VICTIM SUPPORT**
  Practical, emotional support for victims of crime
  08453 899 528

- **THE VILLAGE MCC**
  Christian church serving the LGBT community. Sundays 6pm, 6pm, Somerst Day Centre, Kemptown 07476 67353
  www.thevillagemcc.org

**HIV PREVENTION, CARE & TREATMENT SERVICES**

- **AVERT**
  Sussex HIV & AIDS info service 01404 210202 or email confidential@avert.org

- **BRIGHTON & HOVE CAB HIV PROJECT**
  Money, benefits, employment, housing, info, advocacy. Appointments: Tue 9am–4pm, Wed 9am–12.30pm Brighton & Hove Citizens Advice Bureau, Brighton Town Hall.
  01273 733390 text 520 or www.brightonhovecabs.org

- **CLINIC M**
  Free confidential testing & treatment for STIs including HIV, plus Hep A & B vaccinations. Claude Nicol Centre, Sussex County Hospital, on Weds from 5-8pm.
  01273 664 721 or www.brightonsexualhealth.com

- **LAWSON UNIT**
  Medical advice, treatment for HIV+, specialist clinics, diet & welfare advice, drug trials. 01273 664 722

- **MARTIN FISHER FOUNDATION**
  HIV Self testing kits via digital vending machines available from: The Brighton Sauna, Sublime, Prowler, Marbrough Pub and The Rainbow Hub martinfisherfoundation.org

- **SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICE**
  Pavillions Partnership. Info, advice, appointments & referrals
  01273 731 900. Drop-in: Richmond House, Richmond Rd, Brighton, Mon-Wed & Fri 10am–4pm, Thur 10am–7pm, Sat 10am–1pm; 9 The Drive, Hove 01273 680714 Mon & Wed 10am-12pm & 1pm-3pm, Tue & Thu 10am-4pm. info & advice only (no assessments), Fri 10am–12pm & 1pm-3pm.
  • Gary Smith (LGBT+ Support) 07884 476634 or email gsmith@pavilions.org.uk
  For more info visit website: pavilions.org.uk/services/treatment-recovery-options/

- **SUSSEX BEACON**
  24 hour nursing & medical care, day care
  01273 694222 or www.sussexbeacon.org.uk

- **TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST SERVICES**
  For more info about these free services go to the THT office, 61 Ship St, Brighton, Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm
  01273 764200 or info.brighton@tht.org

  • Venue Outreach: info on HIV, sexual health, personal safety, safer drug/alcohol use, free condoms/lubricant for men who have sex with men.
  • The Bushes Outreach Service @ Dukes Mound: advice, support, info on HIV & sexual health, and free condoms & lube

  • Netreach (online/mobile app outreach in Brighton & Hove): info/advice on HIV/sexual health/local services.
  THT Brighton Outreach workers online on Grindr, Scruff, & Squirt

  • Condom Male: discreet, confidential service posts free condoms/lube/sexual health info to men who have sex with men without access to East Sussex commercial gay scene

  • Positive Voices: volunteers who go to organisations to talk about personal experiences of living with HIV

  • Fastest (HIV testing): walk-in, (no appointment) rapid HIV testing service open to MSM (Men who have sex with Men). Anyone from the African communities, male and female sex workers and anyone who identifies as Trans or non-binary. We now offer rapid 15 minutes results for HIV/Syphilis: Mon 10am–8pm, Tues-Fri 10am–5pm, Thurs 10am–8pm (STI testing available)

  • Sauna Fastest at The Brighton Sauna (HIV testing): walk-in, (no appointment) rapid HIV testing service for men who have sex with men, results in 20 minutes:
  Wed: 6–8pm (STI testing available)

  • Face2Face: confidential info & advice on sexual health & HIV for men who have sex with men, up to 6 one hour appointments

  • Specialist Training: wide range of courses for groups/individuals, specific courses to suit needs

  • Counselling: from qualified counsellors for up to 12 sessions for people living with/affected by HIV

  • What Next? Thurs eve, 6 week peer support group work programme for newly diagnosed HIV+ gay men

  • HIV Support Services: info, support & practical advice for people living with/affected by HIV

  • HIV Welfare Rights Advice: Find out about benefits or benefit changes. Advice line: Tue–Thur 1:30–2:30pm, 1:1–1:2 appts for advice & workshops on key benefits

- **TERRENCE HIGGINS EASTBOURNE**
  • Web support & info on HIV, sexual health & local services via netreach and myhiv.org.uk

  • Free condom postal service contact Grace Coughlan on 07584086590 or grace.coughlan@tth.org.uk

- **SEXUAL HEALTH WORTHING**
  Free confidential tests & treatment for STIs inc HIV, Hep A & B vaccinations. Worthing based 0845 111345645

**NATIONAL HELPLINES**

- **NATIONAL LGBT DOMESTIC ABUSE HELPLINE at galop.org.uk and 0800 999 5428**

- **SWITCHBOARD 0300 330 0630**

- **POSITIVELINE (EDDIE SURMAN TRUST) Mon–Fri 11am–10pm, Sat & Sun 4–10pm 0800 1696806**

- **MAINLINERS 02075 825226**

- **NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE 08005 67123**

- **NATIONAL DRUGS HELPLINE 08007 76600**

- **THT AIDS Treatment phoneline 08459 470047**

- **THT direct 0845 1221200**