

# HERe NI ANNUAL REPORT 2021 - 2022

The logo consists of the word "here" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered within a dark purple circle. This circle is surrounded by two concentric rings of a lighter purple color. The background of the entire page is a vibrant purple. In the lower half, there are several abstract geometric shapes: a large, light purple circle at the bottom center; a smaller, white circle to its upper right; and two large, semi-circular areas on the left and right sides filled with white diagonal lines. The overall design is modern and minimalist.

**here**

## **Mission Statement**

**HERe NI empowers, supports and advocates for all lesbian, bisexual women, and their families.**



## **Vision Statement**

**Our vision is that all lesbian and bisexual women are visible, included and valued in all aspects of society.**



## **Values and Principles**

**All our work is founded upon the following values and principles:**

- Equality and Inclusion**
- Respect and Non-Judgemental**
- Professional and Knowledgeable**
- Person-Centred and Empowering**
- Reactive and Proactive**

# CHAIRPERSON REPORT

2021-2022 has been a period of huge change for HERe NI, particularly with the emergence of, and emerging from COVID - 19. I would like to share just some of our highlights with you.

In 2021 we developed and enhanced our family support work and are thankful for funding from CFNI to do this.

With the increase in media participation round many policy issues and an increase of online events, we are becoming more visible. While we continue to adapt and change, we are clearer about who we are, who we are here to support, and what support we can offer.

The organisation has shown its resilience by working extremely hard during the COVID-19 pandemic. The HERe NI staff team have adapted to hybrid working to ensure we meet the needs of all the women who engage with us.

We have strengthened relationships with sector partners through formal joined up working. We will progress in this area of work and look forward to cementing relationships even further, especially around the issue of a sustainable LGBTQ+ Centre. During this period, Belfast City Council have committed resources for a scoping exercise to look at what a improved, bigger LGBTQ+ Centre will look like. Our Director and Trustees are excited to work on this project. We are very excited about the new mental health project in partnership with The Rainbow Project that began on April 2022. This project will support those who are most in need.

Throughout this period of time, the Board of Trustees have continually evolved and developed. We look forward to going out to public recruitment for Trustees early 2023.

In my time as chairperson this term, I would like to thank the HERe NI staff, Board, service users, sector partners, funders and volunteers for their support, commitment and resilience during this challenging time.

Martina Hanna (HERe NI Chairperson)

# DIRECTOR REPORT

The past year and a half has seen HERe NI grow from strength to strength during the most challenging and difficult times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on every single one of us and has also impacted on the way we work.

This year our small team has grown. I would like to welcome Sabrina Day (Early Years Officer) who will work with children from birth to 7 from LGBTQ+ families. Our new heritage project that is in partnership with Cara-Friend and The Rainbow project brought Mary Ellen Campbell as Heritage Training and Volunteer Officer and Joe Walsh as Heritage Community Development Officer in October 2022. I would also like to welcome Amanda McGurk and Amie Martin as our new Mental Health Advocates for our mental health project in partnership with The Rainbow Project. During this period of reporting, it is extremely clear that by working together we are stronger together.

From July 2021, HERe NI has had organisational representation on the Board of Belfast Pride. The work with Belfast Pride has been a mammoth task and much change has occurred within the organisation during this time. I am honoured to be Co-Chair of Belfast Pride and would like to thank HERe NI staff and Board for their support during this time.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the staff have shown their resilience, leadership, and creativeness in regards to the vast amount of events. We will continue to work in a way that makes our events and support easily accessible to all who engage with us.

During this period, we have seen an increase in successful funding applications. This has enabled us to grow the scope of our work and to engage with more women.

Without such a wonderful and hard-working staff team and committed Board of Trustees, the content of this report would not be possible.

From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank each and every one of the staff and Trustees that worked tirelessly to put our clients at the heart of every single thing that we do.

We look forward with excitement to our future and aim to expand our services.

Cara McCann  
HERe NI Director

# TREASURER REPORT

## Financial Overview

On behalf of the HERe NI Board of Directors, I would like to thank the funders & donors who have supported our work throughout this financial period. They are:

- The Big Lottery (Empowering Young People)
- Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
- The Tudor Trust
- Belfast City Council
- CFNI
- The Heritage Lottery Fund
- Working with Pride

In the current economic climate, sustaining the work of HERe NI is a high priority and we will continue to work with agencies and funders to ensure that our work continues and grows on a regional basis.

## Financial review

HERe NI returned net incoming resources for the year of £12,403 (net outgoing resources 2020: £11,492) leaving unrestricted funds of £100,850 (2020: £87,349) and restricted funds of £100,352 (2020: £101,450).

The unrestricted funds are considered to be essential to provide sufficient funds to cover any unforeseen costs which may arise and fulfil legal obligations of the charity in the event that current levels of income are not maintained.

A full summary of financial information can be obtained from the full accounts for the year ending 31st December 2021. A copy of which can be obtained by writing to the Company Secretary, HERe NI, 23-31 Waring Street, Belfast, BT1 2DX.

Geraldine Mc Parland  
HERe NI Treasurer



# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Martina Hanna (Chairperson)**  
**Alison McDowell (Secretary)**  
**Geraldine McParland (Treasurer)**  
**Dr Danielle Mackle**  
**Karen Ritchie**  
**Keira McCormack**  
**Sally Bridge**  
**Helen Coburn**  
**Emma Campbell**  
**Lauren Killen**  
**Erin McCarney**

# STAFF

**Cara McCann (Director)**  
**Tracey McDowell (Finance & Administration Manager)**  
**Grainne Gibson (Children & Young People's Empowerment Officer)**  
**Danielle Roberts (Senior Policy Development Officer)**  
**Mary Ellen Campbell (LGBTQ+ Heritage Volunteer & Training Officer)**  
**Sabrina Day (Early Years Support Officer)**  
**Joe Walsh (LGBTQ+ Heritage Development Officer)**  
**Amanda McGurk (LGBTQ+ Mental Health Advocacy Officer)**  
**Amie Martin (LGBTQ+ Mental Health Advocacy Officer)**

# STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

## Cara McCann – Director

Cara is a mum of a grown up son, is from West Belfast and lives with her wife, 2 Pomeranians and their cat. Cara has a degree in Sociology and a Master's degree in Gender Studies. She has many years experience in the community development field and has also taught Sociology, Social Policy and Gender studies at Queens University. In her spare time, she loves to play guitar, harp, sing and travel. Cara has been in her post as HERe NI Director 11 years.

## Tracey McDowell – Finance & Admin Manager

Tracey has many years experience in finance and administration working in banking and in the voluntary sector. She has experience of delivering sexual orientation awareness training and currently provides support and information to clients trying to start a family. As an adoptive Mum, Tracey is a strong advocate for adoption.

Mary Ellen Campbell -  
LGBTQ+ Heritage Volunteer & Training Development Officer, in partnership with The Rainbow Project & Cara-Friend  
Mary Ellen has over 20 years experience working in community development and working with community groups across Belfast. Over the last 10 years she has also managed her own family research business which included delivering training courses in research methodology, family and local history. She has previously managed the LGBT Heritage Project in partnership with HERe NI, The Rainbow Project & Cara-Friend.

## Danielle Roberts-

### Senior Policy Development Officer

Danielle has a background in law and Human Resources, qualifying as a solicitor in 2009 before completing a PgDip in Human Resource Management in 2013. For the past few years Danielle has been working on a PhD project at UU researching barriers to PUL women's political participation, and teaching politics and social policy. Danielle is also involved in feminist activism with Belfast Feminist Network and Alliance for Choice, and co-organiser of the annual Reclaim the Night Belfast march against street harassment and gender based violence.

## Grainne Gibson-

### Family Support Officer/ Young Peoples Empowerment Officer

Grainne has a BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Studies combined with almost 20 years of experience of working with children aged 0 to 11. For the past 10 years she has worked with young children & families in a family support role. Grainne has 3 fabulous children who as she puts it are her greatest achievement & she loves to spend time with them. Grainne also enjoys reading & baking & has recently taken up sewing.

## Sabrina Day -

### Early Years Support Officer

Sabrina is from dunmurry where she lives with her two children and her dog. Sabrina has over 20 years working in child care. Sabrina enjoys reading and spending time with her family and friends.

# STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

Joe Walsh -  
LGBTQ+ Heritage Development Officer, in  
partnership with The Rainbow Project & Cara-  
Friend

Joe is from a youth and community background,  
working throughout northern Ireland with various  
organisations over the last 25 years. He is a  
qualified reiki healer with an interest in positive  
mental health. Joe lives in Newtownards with his  
partner and 4 cats. Joe likes to go cold water  
swimming usually along the coast in North  
Down.

Amanda McGurk - LGBTQ+ Mental Health  
Advocacy Officer in partnership with The  
Rainbow Project Amanda graduated with a  
degree in Sociology from UU in 2018. Amanda  
previously worked supporting women who have  
experience of, or at risk of, sexual and domestic  
violence. Amanda lives with her wife, 2 dogs and  
cat. In her spare time Amanda loves to spend  
time with her animals, travel, bake and read.

Amie Martin - LGBTQ+ Mental Health Advocacy  
Officer

Amie is LGBTQ+ Health Advocate in partnership  
with The Rainbow Project and HERE NI. Part of  
Amie's job is to promote mental and emotional  
health and wellbeing for LGBTQ+ people across  
Northern Ireland. When they are not at work ,  
they enjoy spending time with their partner and  
cat , Sage. They also like to watch movies , hang  
with friends and love singing and performing with  
their theatre group.

# TRUSTEE BIOGRAPHIES

## **Martina Hanna - Chairperson**

Martina retired from the Northern Ireland Civil Service after 38 years. She worked, before retiring as a Policy Lead on Gender and Sexual Orientation as well as Disability Equality. She worked on a variety of projects including supporting an EU funded programme on Gender Equality in Macedonia. She spent eight years as a member of the Board of Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB). KNIB is an environmental charity whose mission is to inspire all sectors of society to take responsibility for creating cleaner, greener and more sustainable communities. Martina is passionate about equality for all.

## **Alison McDowell- Secretary**

Alison is a barrister specialising in family law with a particular emphasis on same sex families, surrogacy and equality issues. Alison is also a member of Lawyers with Pride. Outside of work Alison is a member of a local choral society and loves spending time with her family.

## **Geraldine McParland - Treasurer**

Geraldine is a psychologist with extensive experience of working in the NHS and the public sector. She also has significant experience of research and has managed research projects. Geraldine has experience of serving on several boards.

## **Dr Danielle Mackle**

Danielle is a lecturer in Social Work at Ulster University and has a wealth of practice experience working in the fields of mental health, with refugee and asylum seeker children and families as well as working with young people living in the care system. Danielles research interests span evidence based practice, research on the human development and well-being of the LGBTQ+ community, fertility treatment for lesbian women as well as the area of Female Genital Mutilation.

## **Sally Bridge**

Sally and her partner, Catherine, started Dykes With Babes, the first lesbian parenting group in Northern Ireland, in December 2000 and their 2 young sons were founder members. She has since worked on the Love Equality campaign and her Master's research looked at school libraries in NI and how they support the information needs of their LGBT pupils. Sally works as a Librarian in Queen's University Belfast and is the co-chair of the staff LGBT network, PRISM.

## **Keira McCormack**

Keira ran the charity Gender Essence Support Services, stepping down recently to concentrate on other parts of the charity. She currently works for a Domestic Abuse charity as an IDVA, helping to set up their LGBT specific services. Keira has significant experience working in the women's sector in particular the Rape Crisis centre and Women's Aid on developing groups. Keira co-founded Essence Arts, delivers training and is a qualified Counsellor.

# TRUSTEE BIOGRAPHIES

## **Karen Ritchie**

Karen is a Mum of two. Karen has experience in learning consultancy and HR. She enjoys mountain and marathon walking, gardening, art, cooking and is a vinyl record collector.

## **Helen Coburn**

Helen has 15 years' experience working in the voluntary sector with a focus on youth arts, community development, building resilience and tackling prejudice. She has a professional visual arts background and is a qualified youth and community worker. Helen is passionate about equality and the transformative effect of creative expression. Areas of practice include mental health, governance and event management.

## **Emma Campbell**

Emma is completing her practice-based PhD addressing photography as an activist tool in the movement for abortion rights and is also part-time co-convenor of Alliance for Choice, meaning she was part of the team who helped decriminalise abortion access in NI and is still working towards widespread service delivery. Whilst in London Emma was a picture editor and campaign manager for The Times and The BBC, as well as photographing for music festivals, award ceremonies and drag shows. Emma has exhibited her work in solo shows in Belfast, Dublin & Berlin and in group shows in London, Liverpool, Donegal, Dublin, Belfast, Stockholm, and Bangkok as well as through street art and online.

## **Lauren Killen**

Lauren is a Marketing Executive for a global law firm, and previous Chairperson of the employee LGBT+ Network (2018-2021). Lauren is passionate about working with local charities, and planned the last 'Out on the Roof' event – raising £15,000 on the night for The Rainbow Project and SAIL NI. Lauren recently completed her Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) Level 6 Diploma, and holds a MSc in Marketing and a BSc in Psychology. While completing her MSc Lauren lived in Suzhou, China on a British Council Business Scholarship. Her MSc area of study was Corporate Social Responsibility. Lauren lives in East Belfast with her partner and their dog Reuben.

# EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

## Some of our great Events:

- Adults arts and crafts
- Family Group: Early Years & HERe Together Activities & Workshops
- HERe Together Conservation Programme
- Cooking demos & workshops
- Film night
- Quiz night
- Games night
- Coffee hour
- Creative writing
- Meditation
- Menopause awareness workshop
- Adoption & fostering workshop
- Mums the word panel: Family planning
- LGBTQ+ History club
- Gender equality strategy workshop
- LGBTQI+ engagement session
- Domestic Abuse workshop
- Sexual orientation awareness workshop
- LGBTQ+ Families Awareness Training
- Mental Health Awareness Workshop
- Just Talks: An International Perspective on Trans Rights
- Launch of The Troubles I've Seen Documentary
- Launch of Mental Health Advocacy Project in partnership with The Rainbow Project

# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

**In 2021-22 we have continued working with partners outside the LGBTQ+ sector to deliver programmes and events, and to raise our collective voices.**

**Some examples are highlighted below.**

- We have co organised several large events including the Just Talk(s) event on international perspectives on Trans rights, Nothing About Us Without Us conference on amplifying grassroots women's voices and a multi-cultural family fun day. These events had allowed us to work with academics, community groups, and international actors such as the Embassy of the Netherlands in the UK which have helped us reach a bigger audience, as well as diversifying what we can offer our service users.
- We have been involved in a number of policy coalitions, including signing open letters on the treatment of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, highlighting the risks posed by the planned removal of of the Human Rights Act and on the Cost of Living Crisis. Our Senior Policy Development Officer received a bursary to attend a UK wide conference 'Championing a high standards UK: a UK-wide civil society conference'. This work has allowed us to raise concerns of lesbian and bisexual women in a broader human rights arena.
- We have continued with creative projects in partnership with Prime Cut Productions. In the past year this has resulted in a series of short films, contributions to a published anthology of women's writing 'What if? In my own words', and ongoing development of a theatre performance.
- The LGBT Heritage Project has hosted a monthly history club along with the Linenhall Library. The 'Troubles I've Seen Documentary' has been toured around various Pride Festivals and community centres. as well as a key element of the Bona Palooza festival exploring LGBTQ+ rural stories hosted at the Ulster Folk Museum.





# EVALUATION

“I’ve really enjoyed everything we have done as a group, the quizzes are really good fun and I love doing activities online or at the lgbt centre. I really enjoyed the cookery lessons”

“I really enjoy the cooking and anything at lgbt centre especially if we get pizza too. The craft sessions are brilliant. My mummy made me go to the online safety talk, I didn’t think I’d enjoy it but I did.”

"I love the idea of my children growing up knowing and socialising with other children from same sex parents and getting support with my own queries from other parents. I am therefore thankful that the Early Years group exists."

"The LGBT Heritage Project should be really proud of the documentary, such important work."

"I learned of HERENI at a time of great personal distress, and it made a huge difference in my life's course. I found many of the activities quite enjoyable, particularly the quiz which helps me relax after a long day".



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