

HERE NI ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



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.



MILLION

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

2022-2023 has been a period of considerable growth and positive change for HERe NI. I would like to share just some of our highlights with you.

During 2022-2023, HERe NI have been one of the driving forces in collaborating with and improving Belfast Pride. During 2022, HERe NI Director Cara McCann was Co-Chairperson of Belfast Pride. We will continue to support Belfast Pride to reach its full potential.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, the staff, volunteers and Board have responded positively, have shown their resilience, leadership, and creativeness in regards to the vast amount of events and support provided to clients. One example of this is the Supermarket Voucher Scheme administered by Belfast City Council to support those in financial difficulty. We are delighted to report that 39 LGBTQIA+ women benefitted from this initiative.

Our relationships within Belfast City Council have strengthened during this period. The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Tina Black chose HERe NI as one of her charities for her time in this position. We have also been one of the key players engaging with Belfast City Council around the concept of a new LGBTQIA+ Hub for the city. 2022 brought financial support from the Council for a feasibility exercise into what an LGBTQIA+ Hub would look like. We are excited to see this develop and become a reality in the near future.

Throughout this period of time, the Board of Trustees have continually evolved and developed through an extremely positive recruitment campaign to attract new Trustees. I would sincerely like to thank the HERe NI staff, Board, service users, sector partners, funders and volunteers for their support and commitment during this time.

Martina Hanna
HERe NI Chairperson

DIRECTOR REPORT

2022-2023 has seen Here NI grow from strength to strength. During this period, our team has grown. I would like to welcome Jennifer McKinnon (Older Womens Engagement Officer) who facilitates the Wednesday Older Women's group to ensure the voices of older LGBTQIA+ women are heard. Our new Heritage project, in partnership with Cara-Friend and The Rainbow project brought Mary Ellen Campbell as LGBTQIA+ Heritage Volunteer & Training Development Officer and Joe Walsh as LGBTQIA+ Heritage Development Officer in 2022 for a period of 6 months to develop the project. I am delighted to report that we have received an additional 3 years funding for the Heritage project and Mary Ellen and Joe each have a 3 year post to 2026 to deliver this exciting project. I would also like to welcome Sophie Nelson as our Policy Development Officer.

2023 has seen the development of a new LGBTQIA+ Hub for Belfast, along with the enhancement of key relationships to make this dream a reality. HERE NI have been one of the key players involved in securing a new home for our sector. I look forward to this exciting project developing over the next 2 years.

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. We anticipate that we will increase and diversify our funding streams during 2023 to 2024.

Future Priorities:

- Increased focus on Trans issues.
- Increase number of staff in key areas.
- The development of new and emerging groups based on the needs identified thus far with appropriate funding sourced.
- Increased partnership working within and external to the LGBTQIA+ sector.
- Increased amount of funders to support our core work.
- Development of an LGBTQIA+ Hub in Belfast.

Without such a wonderful and dedicated staff team, volunteer team, clients 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 aiming to expand our services.

Cara McCann
HERE NI Director

TREASURER REPORT

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 National Lottery Community Fund
- Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
- The Tudor Trust
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund
- LGBT Consortium
- Community Foundation NI
- Belfast City Council
- Training for Women Network
- Halifax Foundation
- Citibank
- Working with Pride
- Cinema for All

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.

HERe NI returned net outgoing resources for the year of £20,100 (net incoming resources 2021: £12,403) leaving unrestricted funds of £116,284 (2021: £100,850) and restricted funds of £64,818 (2021: £100,352).

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 2022. 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

Board of Trustees

Martina Hanna (Chairperson)
Geraldine McParland (Treasurer)
Helen Coburn (Secretary)
Alison McDowell
Sally Bridge
Danielle Mackle
Keira McCormack
Erin McCarney
Charlene McKeown
Sarah Jo Haveron
Grainne Starrs
Bethany Moore
Lauran Boden

STAFF

Cara McCann - Director
Tracey McDowell - Finance & Admin Manager
Grainne Gibson - Children & Young People's Empowerment Officer
Sabrina Day - Early Years Project Officer
Jennifer McKinnon - Older Women's Project Officer
Sophie Nelson - Policy Development Officer
Mary Ellen Campbell - LGBTQIA+ Heritage Volunteer & Training Officer
Joe Walsh - LGBTQIA+ Heritage Development Officer
Amanda McGurk - LGBTQIA+ Mental Health Advocate
Amie Martin - LGBTQIA+ Mental Health Advocate



EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Some of our great events:

- Adults arts and crafts
- Children's arts and crafts
- Cooking demos
- Crystal Queer Film Club
- Quiz night
- Games night
- Coffee hour
- Menopause Cafe
- Children's Botanic Garden's Trip
- Community Safety Event
- Children's song and rhyme time
- Streamvale Farm Trip
- Roller Disco
- Scrapyard Golf
- LGBTQIA+ History club
- Gender equality strategy workshop
- LGBTQIA+ Heritage Tours
- Online mash up with NI Screen and PRONI
- Consultation & Focus Group on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
- Online LGBTQIA+ History Archive
- Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity awareness training
- An evening at the Opera
- Slime Time!
- Trip to the Ulster Museum
- Spring social dinner

Not to mention all the Pride events - this year we attended Belfast, Omagh, Mid-Ulster, Folye and Causeway & Trans Pride.





STAFF SPOTLIGHTS



GRAINNE GIBSON

The Children and Young People's Empowerment Officer has engaged with a wide-range of families through the Here Together programme. Grainne has been working across Belfast and Derry to engage with young people and their families. Some of the activities within the programme have included: the Halloween Spooky quiz (an engaging and well-attended event with new faces joining in), cooking sessions (with adventurous new dishes) and a roller disco. Families of all ages and backgrounds engaged throughout Pride; both Belfast and Foyle Pride were successful this year, with a great post-parade atmosphere and a longer stay in the Peace Garden. Grainne has loved seeing new faces at all the events this year.

LGBTQIA+ Awareness Training

Lee Cullen

Cara-Friend
(He/They)

Amie Martin

The Rainbow Project
(They/Them)

Grainne Gibson

HereNI
(She/Her)



JENNIFER MCKINNON

Since becoming the Older Women's Engagement Officer in Feb 2023, Jennifer has expanded the project with new activities and opportunities for service users aged 35+. The regular Wednesday Older Women's (WOW) Group has seen rising attendance this year.

Special events have included a spring social dinner, street art walking tour, evening at the opera, and a trip to the Ulster Museum. The WOW group were part of a successful event at Belfast City Hall hosted by the Lord Mayor of Belfast, highlighting issues facing older LGBTQIA+ women in Northern Ireland. The Engagement Officer has represented HERe NI at various events and conferences. The project hosted 5 events for Pride, with over 100 attendances, including a pre-Pride dinner, relaxation evening, and community safety event.

The project has continued to provide one-to-one support to help older women deal with various difficulties, as well as support in accessing IT sessions and life coaching funded by Training for Women Network.



AMIE MARTIN

Amie is one of two Mental Health Advocates working across HERe NI and the Rainbow Project who have made significant strides in improving the wellbeing of the LGBTQIA+ community. The Mental Health Advocacy team deliver Health and Wellbeing sessions, Care Plan sessions, Listening Ear sessions, and conduct referrals to relevant organisations. The Mental Health Advocacy Team have been busy delivering Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Awareness training sessions. In addition, the team has hosted over 50 workshops and events.

This is an amazing achievement from the Mental Health Advocacy team and shows the need for the services provided and how going forward we would need a similar model in place for future clients. This success highlights the importance and necessity of services. Alongside the formal services that HERe NI and the Rainbow Project offer, Amie has also been involved in the provision of Trans Swimming.



AMANDA MCGURK

Amanda is the other Mental Health Advocate that works between HRe NI and the Rainbow Project. Amanda's work similarly involves delivering Health and Wellbeing sessions, Care Plan sessions, Listening Ear sessions, and conducting referrals to relevant organisations. The Mental Health Advocacy team have also been active in the community, attending events and conferences to raise awareness about mental health. Amanda has delivered a number of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity sessions throughout the year and attended a range of conferences and events, including a focus group around the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and speaking on a panel of experts on this topic.

Our Mental Health Advocates were visible throughout Pride and even had the opportunity to meet with the Secretary of State. In addition to our outreach efforts, the team have also been providing ongoing support within the community. Amanda hosts a monthly Menopause Group and Games Night, providing a safe space for LGBTQIA+ women to connect and socialise.

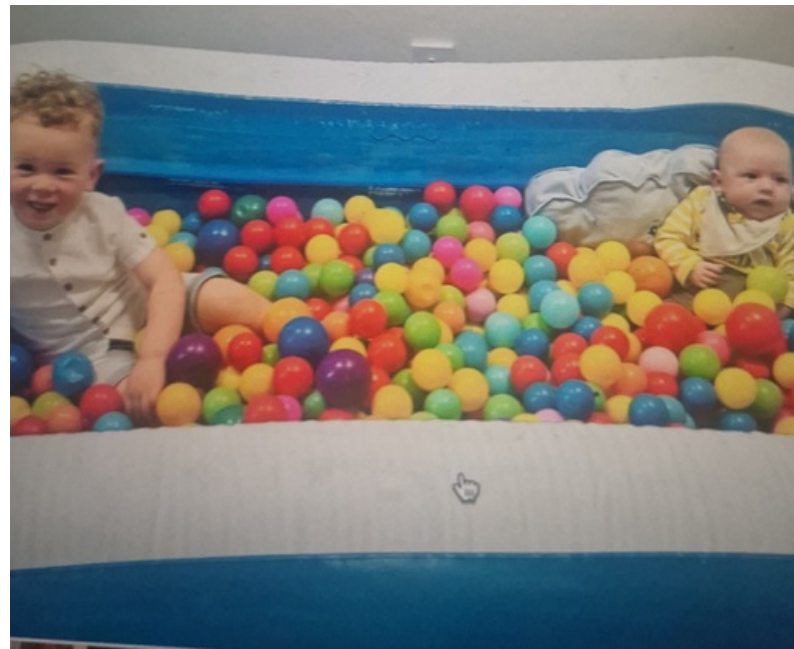


SABRINA DAY

The Early Years Project Officer has continued to deliver a varied programme for our 0-7 year olds. Sabrina has engaged with a wide range of families and their young children through the Start Together project, which has been a resounding success.

The Start Together group have had many activities this year, including arts and crafts, song and rhyme time, pizza making and well attended trips to the farm and Botanic Gardens. The farm trip in particular received excellent feedback from parents who were impressed with how much their children learned about the animals and how much fun they had.

Our Early Years Project Officer was also heavily involved with Pride in both Belfast and Foyle. Sabrina worked tirelessly to make sure that everyone felt welcome and included; the Pride Picnic, arts & crafts and the Pride Village were all a great success with hundreds of people attending the various events.



MARY ELLEN CAMPBELL

Mary Ellen is one of two LGBTQIA+ Heritage Project Officers. The LGBTQIA+ Heritage Project appeared in articles in The Belfast Telegraph, the BBC, and Dig with It Magazine (issue 10). The project organised 10 events during LGBTQIA+ History Month and sit on the International LGBTQIA+ History Month Committee with representatives from 35 countries (of which Mary Ellen is a founder member).

The project has maintained its volunteer base who have attended a range of events, including visiting a Virtual LGBTQIA+ Museum and a number of Heritage sites in Belfast as part of European Heritage Open Day. Both Heritage Project Officers took part in archives week with PRONI and Outing the Past. Volunteers have attended Omagh and Causeway Pride where the project's documentary *The Troubles I've seen* was shown & Mary Ellen & volunteers spoke at both events.

The project has engaged with the business community through 'Lunch and Learn' and Heritage tours, as well as working on a programme of events for Belfast Pride developing stronger working relationships with partner organisations.



JOE WALSH

Joe Walsh started with the LGBTQIA+ Heritage project in October 2022. Since then he has undertaken archive training and has expanded the programme significantly alongside Mary Ellen Campbell. As part of the archival work, Joe has categorised material for each of the LGBTQIA+ organisations and campaigns including Love Equality - the campaign for equal marriage. Joe has founded the Crystal Queer Film Club which was launched in September 2023 with a screening of Rebel Dykes at the Strand Cinema. The LGBTQIA+ Heritage Project were able to do this with a bursary from Cinema For All part of the Startup Programme.

The LGBTQIA+ Heritage Officers have networked with organisations and businesses, including Citibank, QUB, and Civil Service LGBTQIA+ Network, Public Records Office NI, The Charity Commission, HMRC, the Civil Service LGBTQIA+ Network and NI Screen. They have also facilitated Heritage Tours with many of these groups and received positive feedback. Another success has been the LGBTQIA+ History Club which runs monthly with fascinating guests. The History Club sessions are recorded and uploaded to the project's YouTube channel.



SOPHIE NELSON

We welcomed the new Policy Development Officer to the HERe NI team in September 2023. Sophie began her role by submitting a response to the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework, highlighting the need for greater LGBTQIA+ inclusion within the Strategy. As part of this, Sophie held an LGBTQIA+ focus group with the Executive Office to gather the views of the community. Since then she has attended a number of events, including: Trans Pride 2023, a Queering Women in Peace and Security talk at QUB and a Women's Policy Group Strategy Day. Sophie has attended All Party Groups on Childcare and Healthcare and will be lobbying for a Women's Health Strategy in the months to come.

Sophie also received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to attend the Young One World Conference. Where she engaged with other delegates from across the world who are young leaders in their communities. Over the past few months Sophie has been engaging with members of the Equality Commission and recently took a seat on the Civic Initiative where she will be working to examine and support the advancement of peace and reconciliation and well-being 25 years after the Good Friday Agreement.



EVALUATIONS

**'Listening ear has helped me
build my confidence and
validate my own choices'**

Amie's Listening Ear Client

**'Thank you so much for letting me
speak out loud what was in my head
and heart it has really helped me
process a lot of the thoughts and
feelings that have been rattling
around my head for a while.
Thank you'**

Jennifer's Older Women's Group

**'Fun, relaxing space with great
opportunity to meet other same
sex families. Sabrina was very
welcoming and friendly and
introduced us to everyone.'**

Sabrina's Start Together Group

**'Meeting all the lovely ladies
- games were great.
Amanda is cracker'**

Amanda's Games Night

**'My contact with Jennifer has enabled me to
have the courage to have difficult conversations
with my friends and family, to feel more
empowered in my identity and more secure in
respect of my mental health. It has supported
me to take action to put things in place which
help me to find my authentic self and reduced
the terrible and debilitating feelings of isolation.'**

Jennifer's Older Women's Group



www.hereni.org

Twitter: [@Here_NI](https://twitter.com/Here_NI)

Facebook: Facebook.com/NIHere

Instagram: [@hereni_](https://www.instagram.com/hereni_)