



# Annual Report 2022



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Funded by



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,  
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Oige  
Department of Children, Equality,  
Disability, Integration and Youth

Supported by Youth Work Ireland



# Introduction

## Hello,

Welcome to our second ever annual report. I am very excited two years in to be able to show off the incredible work we have done in 2022 and how much we have grown in that time.

Midlands LGBT+ Project was established in 2021 as Laois LGBTI Project and I am delighted to be involved since its inception and to have seen it go from strength to strength over the past two years.

2022 highlights for me include expanding into Westmeath, the first ever Laois Pride and our incredible launch party in Offaly.

This past year has been the busiest we have seen yet, and we wouldn't have it any other way. We have delivered over 100 groups throughout the year to the LGBT+ community in Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Kildare, spoke to and helped hundreds of people, held incredible events and so much more.

Thank you all so much for being here with us on this incredible journey and we can't wait to show you what's in store in 2023.

**Christina  
Fitzharris  
Midlands  
LGBT+  
Project  
Coordinator**



## Hey There,

We're so proud to round up another wonderful year of Midlands LGBT+ Project. There were countless great events in our past year of work, where to begin?

Our labour of love in 2022 includes putting together the first ever Laois Pride! Seeing a vibrant community flourish and connect in the midlands through our groups and events has been so rewarding - everything from online groups, coffee mornings to sports groups and drag shows! Among our bigger events like Laois Pride, some of our grassroots groups that started off coming out of covid are going stronger than ever, such as our queer book clubs.

We've watched new faces join our groups and new volunteers join our team to help us continue to build our work into the future. We're leaving our mark in the midlands, such as our wonderful Mural in Portlaoise that we unveiled last February!

We've also branched out with our expansion into Offaly and Westmeath! It has been so rewarding and uplifting to see how much community has developed around us and made use of our services, and I am so proud to play a small part in it.

We can't wait to see what the next year has in store for us - the challenges we'll no doubt take on and the new achievements we'll celebrate. Here's to another great year!

**Samuel Kelly  
Midlands LGBT+  
Project Community  
Development Worker**



# Hello Everyone,

**It's hard to believe that Midlands LGBT +Project is only 2 years in existence, when you look at all the amazing work established.**

We are now working across so many age groups and counties, providing engagement, support, information and signposting for so many. It's just great to see how the organisation has evolved in such a short period of time.

Our groups include: Midlands Crystal Queer LGBT Book Club, Couch to 5K, LGBT Volleyball Course, Trans Zoom Groups, Coffee Catch Ups, Over 50's Group to name a few, all across the Midlands Region. We also have therapeutic supports, training and research work too. This year a training programme for second level schools was developed and delivered and Proud Spaces Research was completed.

As a Board we are delighted, throughout the last year to have welcomed new staff , volunteers and steering group members, who have brought with them many skills and ideas for further development and inclusion. Volunteers are the driving force that keeps Midlands LGBT+ Project going and energised. We appreciate your commitment and the time you give so willingly. It's inspiring.

Our Coordinator Christina Fitzharris and her team of staff, we acknowledge your hard work in developing so many groups, social opportunities and trainings. You make the work of the Steering Group very easy, as you all are so focused and creative. Please know that we appreciate you all.

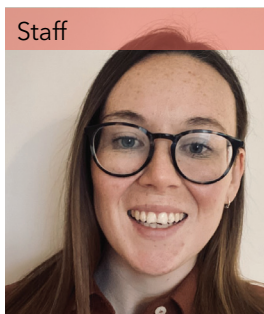
On the steering committee we are so please to have representatives from across the midlands, the LGBT+ community and LGBT+ Allies on the committee. Having diversity on the committee facilitates the development of creative ideas. So here's to another great year ahead.

**Joan Bolger**  
**Member of Midlands LGBT+ Project**  
**Steering Committee**





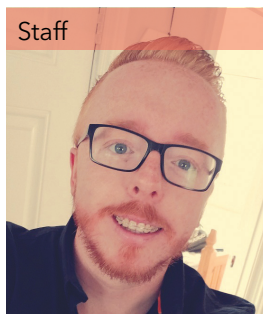
# Meet The Team:



Christina Fitzharris  
(Coordinator)



Sam Kelly  
(Community  
Development Assistant)



Andrew Gannon  
(Community  
Development Assistant)



Roisin Lalor  
(Community  
Development Worker)



Clive Davis  
(Regional Director of  
Youth Work Ireland  
Laois)



Josephine Rigney  
(HSE Resource Officer  
for Suicide Prevention)



Steven O'Riordan  
(Services Development  
Coordinator for LGBT  
Ireland)



Aisling Moran  
(Laois County  
Councillor)



Joan Bolger  
(Manager of Portlaoise  
Family Resource Centre)



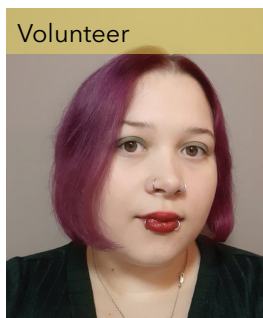
Annie Moore



Caroline Cahill



Jennifer Pucka



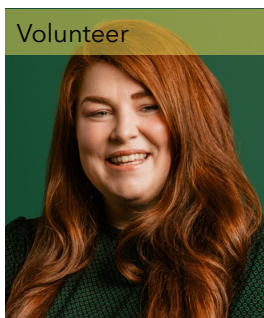
Mia Fitzpatrick-Mackay



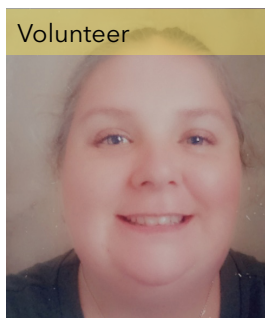
Mary Flanagan



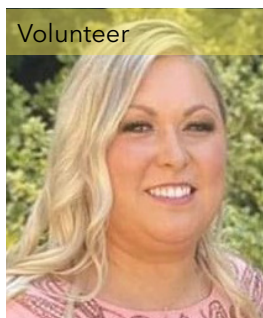
Noreen McInerney



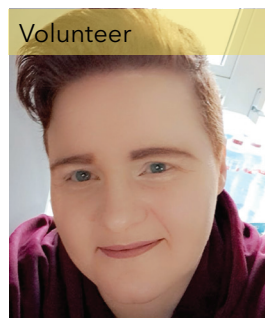
Rosie Palmer



Amy O'Brien



Amy Byrne



Dani Ronan



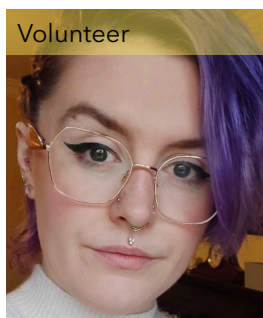
Cian Mac Gearailt



Vanessa Hickey



Helen Lanigan



Lysagh Rossa



Heather Law



# Statistics

Help and Support Enquiries Answered: **294**  
Increase of 58% from 2021



## 2022 achievements



# Support and Social Groups

## Laois

### Portlaoise Coffee Morning

Laois Coffee Morning is a monthly get together in Portlaoise for adults in the LGBT+ Community who want to grab a coffee, get breakfast or cake together and meet new people in a friendly and laid back environment.

### Queer Film Club

Queer Film club is a monthly social group for adults in the LGBT+ community who want to meet up to watch and discuss film and media about queer stories or written by queer artists

### Over 50's Group

Our over 50's LGBT+ group is just what it says on the tin. It is a group for LGBT+ people aged 50+ who want to meet up every month, do an activity, have a chat and meet others.

### Laois Social Group

The Laois Social group provides a relaxed space for anyone who identifies as LGBT+ or is questioning. Members decide on what activity they would like and meet in informal settings where they can connect with like minded individuals. Activities can range from social dinners, sports, and workshops; depending on what members are interested in.

### Laois Pride Committee

Laois Pride Committee is responsible for organising and hosting the Laois Pride week events, including events such as the parade, Poster Making workshops, drag events, and many other festivities.



## Offaly

### Tullamore Coffee Morning

Offaly Coffee Mornings is a monthly meet up in Tullamore for adults in the LGBT+ community who want to meet new people and catch up with others in a relaxed setting over breakfast or coffee and a cake



# Support and Social Groups

## Westmeath

### Athlone Coffee Morning

Westmeath Coffee Mornings is a monthly meet up in Athlone for adults in the LGBT+ community who want to meet new people and catch up with others in a friendly environment over breakfast or a quick coffee

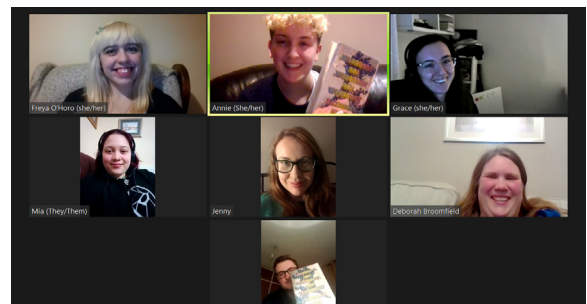
## Online

### Parents of LGBT+ Young People Support Group

A support group for parents and guardians of LGBT+ young people that provides a safe and confidential space for parents who might seek advice and support from others with similar experiences

### Crystal Queer Bookclub

Crystal Queer Bookclub is a monthly virtual group for adults who are interested in queer literature. Members select a book to read and discuss throughout the month, whether it be an LGBT+ story or author. There are two bookclubs due to demand for these groups.



### Midlands Trans

The Midlands Trans peer group is a monthly social and support group for people over 18 who identify under the trans umbrella. The group takes place online and provides an opportunity to share experiences and seek support from their peers.

## Sports & Leisure Activities



# Highlights of 2022

## January

- Schools Volunteer Training



## February

- Mural
- Over 50's group launched



## March

- Volunteer Training



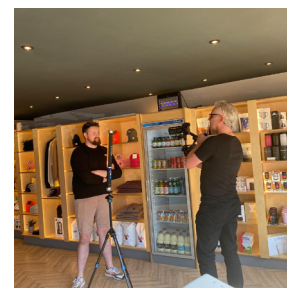
## April

- Offaly Launch
- School workshop
- Vigil held in memory of Aidan Moffitt and Michael Snee



## May

- Westmeath Expansion
- IDAHOT Video  
(International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia)



## June

- Marched in Dublin Pride
- Gaisce Event  
(The President's Award)





# Highlights of 2022

## July

- Proud Spaces
- Research survey launched
- Tennis
- Offaly Swimming



## August

- Laois Pride Sponsorship Packs
- Kayaking



## September

- Laois Pride



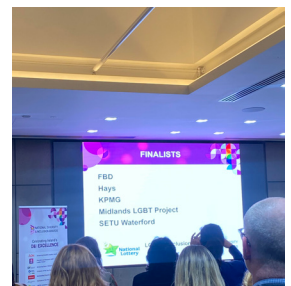
## October

- Athlone Coco
- TUS Freshers Fair
- Maynooth Uni Connections Cafe



## November

- Healthy Laois Consultation Day
- Painting Classes
- NDI Shortlist



## December

- Bookclub Christmas Party
- MLP Christmas Party
- Mullingar CoCo



# First Ever Laois Pride

The first ever Laois Pride was nothing short of an incredible day, with over 1000 people visiting us throughout the day, the sun shining, bands singing, we are already excited for September 2023.



Midlands LGBT+ Project @MidlandsLgbt · Sep 22, 2022

The first ever **Laois Pride** Festival is complete and what a week we have had.

Thank you to everyone who came to celebrate with us and helped to make it happen! It is a proud week in **Laois**.

#locallive #laois #midlandslgbt #laoispride @DeptCultureIRL



Pippa Hackett @pippa\_hackett · Sep 17, 2022

A very special day in Portlaoise today as the first ever **Laois Pride** march took place. A sea of colour & solidarity, and such support from the crowds who lined the streets. Thank you to @MidlandsLgbt and all who made it a resounding success! #BeProud #Pride #LoveIsLove #Laois





# Offaly Launch Party

We were delighted to officially launch Midlands LGBT+ Project in Offaly in April 2022 with an incredible day (and night) of fun. A huge thank you to Hugh Lynch's Bar in Tullamore for lending us their outdoor space for day time activities and indoor space for our sold out Drag show that night.





# News & Media Engagement

## Launch of the LGBT+ Mural in Portlaoise

IN PICTURES: Laois pride for first LGBT+ street mural

LEINSTER  
EXPRESS



Powerful new mural unveiled in Portlaoise to mark Midlands LGBT+ Project 1st birthday

A brand new mural was unveiled today in Portlaoise by Minister Roderic O'Gorman to celebrate the first year of Midland LGBT+ Project.

NEWS | 28 FEBRUARY, 2022. WRITTEN BY HAN TIERNAN



## Offaly Proud Launch

Midlands LGBT+ Project launch spectacular 'Offaly Proud' event

Midlands LGBT+ Project are coming to Offaly with an exciting round up of events.

NEWS | 5 APRIL, 2022. WRITTEN BY HAN TIERNAN.

gcn



## Meet MLP

Meet Midlands LGBT+ Project, the organisation bringing vital services to rural Ireland's queer communities

GCN spoke to Andrew Gannon of Midlands LGBT+ Project about the organisation's work to date, and what we can expect to see in 2022.

TOP NEWS | 20 JANUARY, 2022. WRITTEN BY ALICE LINEHAN.

gcn



## Westmeath Expansion

Midlands LGBT+ Project Planning Westmeath Expansion

News Home More from Midlands News

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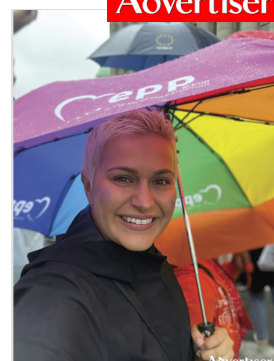
## New Funding

Funding for Midlands LGBT+ community services will provide support to rural groups

Athlone  
Advertiser

A grant of €98,000 has been awarded to the Midlands LGBT+ Project for operating costs for the coming year.

Confirming the government funding, Minister of State, Deputy Pippa Hackett, stated that the grant will help Midlands LGBT+ to support LGBT+ people to feel safe, welcome and included in the communities of Westmeath and wider Midlands region.



Midlands North West MEP, Maria Walsh



# Launch of Laois Pride

Laois to host historic first-ever Pride parade

gcn

Speaking to GCN, Christina Fitzharris, coordinator for Midlands LGBT+ Project, said that it will be a "momentous occasion".

EVENTS | 11 AUGUST, 2022. WRITTEN BY ALICE LINDHAN.



'We want Laois Pride to be as big and successful for the community as possible'

By Caroline Allen - 15th September 2022



## Vigil

Tullamore hosts LGBT vigil after shocking deaths in Sligo



People gathering in Tullamore last Friday for the vigil organised in response to the tragic deaths of Aidan Moffitt and Michael Snee in Sligo.

## Mural Defaced

Laois Pride mural defaced with insult ahead of county's first Pride festival



## Laois Pride 2022

IN PICTURES: Laois proud to celebrate first Pride

LEINSTER EXPRESS

In Pictures: Wonderful selection of images from Laois Pride parade in Portlaoise



# Testimonials



Please don't stop the good work as we have really enjoyed the kayaking. Great fun and good value. *Frederic & Sean*



Midlands LGBT + Group is great. As an older lesbian I have enjoyed the meet ups with the 50+ Group. The kayaking was great fun and so too the painting class. I look forward to more events. I feel supported by this group. *Marie*



As someone who's only begun coming to terms with her sexuality in the last two years, discovering the Midlands LGBTQ services on my Instagram feed was a huge moment for me. Seeing people in my area being so comfortable with who they were was an amazing thing for me to keep in mind when those around me weren't so welcoming. I decided to start small with the online book club - which is filled with the best people and most engaging conversations - but I can definitely see myself getting the confidence to go to in-person meetups in the future, my biggest goal being a midlands pride event <3. *Claire*



The free counselling I received from Midlands LGBT+ Project was invaluable, I am not yet ready to attend a group but the 12 free sessions I got with a therapist helped me come to terms with my gender and I am in a much better place than I was before. *Anonymous.*



I'm a volunteer for the Midlands LGBT+ Project. I have been volunteering for over a year and help to run the Laois Social groups and coffee meet ups. The charity is doing amazing things for the LGBTQIA+ community in the Midlands, focusing on the reduction of isolation and works to build a sense of belonging and inclusion. It has been amazing to be a volunteer over the past year and it so rewarding to give back to the community. I also helped organise the first ever Laois Pride march last year and it was an amazing success. Seeing the streets of Portlaoise being filled with supporters and so many businesses showing their support, made me so excited to get involved this year and continue being a volunteer! *Shauna Golden*



# Thank You!

We at Midlands LGBT+ would like to extend a huge thank you to our funders, partners, volunteers, service users and everyone who has helped or used our service the past two years.

Without everyone coming together, none of this would exist. We are grateful to the four counties (Kildare, Laois, Offaly and Westmeath) we work in who welcome us with open arms, who enable us to grow year by year and we are so excited to see what the future holds.



**Laois County Council**  
Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois



Seirbhís Sláinte  
Níos Fearr  
á Forbairt

Building a  
Better Health  
Service



Healthy  
Laois



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,  
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige  
Department of Children, Equality,  
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@midlandslgbt



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