

Annual Report

midlands
LGBT+
project

2021

Funded by



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

Supported by Youth Work Ireland
LAOIS



Introduction

Hello,

Welcome to our very first annual report! I am so excited ten months in to be able to show off all the wonderful work we have done this year.



Midlands LGBT+ Project was established in February of this year as Laois LGBTI+ Project, but quickly expanded into Midlands LGBT+ Project due to the huge demand we were seeing from people in Kildare, Offaly, Laois and beyond.

The project started as an idea from Youth Work Ireland Laois, of hoping to reach some LGBT+ adults in Laois, to help them develop a community and network and give them a space to come together but what it has developed into has been that and so much more.

It has been a challenging, exciting and incredibly rewarding year, from launching the project in the midst of a pandemic, being limited to meeting all of our members on zoom calls, getting news of our existence into all the places it needed to be and having our official launch in September, but all of it has been worth it and more to see the amazing results detailed here in this report. I have been immensely proud to coordinate the project this year and I am so excited to see where 2022 brings us.

Christina Fitzharris
LGBT+ Community Development
Coordinator

Hi all,

Just a few words to keep you up to date on how we have been getting on over the past 10 months. We started with an idea to set up a Laois LGBT group, but it grew so quickly and we had interest from all over the Midlands.



So to facilitate everyone, we decided to have a Midlands group and called it the Midlands LGBT project. It has been so successful in reaching out to our LGBT friends and we are building a great community, where people can be themselves. It was no easy fete in the middle of a pandemic, but it has helped so many people through such a dark and lonely time.

Although we haven't held many events, we have managed to stay in touch through Zoom. We have so many volunteers helping out, too many to mention, I would like to say a big thank you to you all. And a special thank you to our co-ordinator Christina Fitzharris, this project would not have been as successful if it wasn't for all the time and effort you put in.

We are so looking forward to next year, hopefully a brighter more colourful time with lots more events planned. I would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

Aisling Moran
Chairperson of Steering Committee
(County Councillor in Laois)

Meet the Team:

Coordinator



Christina Fitzharris:
LGBT+ Community
Development Coordinator

Steering Committee



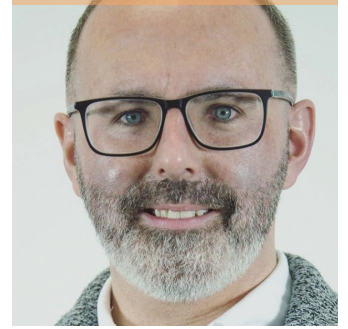
Aisling Moran
County Councillor
Laois

Steering Committee



Clive Davis
Youth Work Ireland Laois
Regional Director

Steering Committee



Steven O'Riordan
LGBT Ireland

Steering Committee



Joan Bolger
Portlaoise Community &
Family Resource Centre

Steering Committee



Sam Kelly
Trans Midlands Peer
Support Group Coordinator

Volunteer



Andrew Gannon
Schools Coordinator

Volunteer



Annie Moore
Book Club Coordinator

Volunteer



Caroline Cahill
General Volunteer

Volunteer



Danny Scally
General Volunteer

Volunteer



Ian O'Neill
Offaly LGBT+ Group
Coordinator

Volunteer



Jennifer Pucka
General Volunteer

Volunteer



Mia Fitzpatrick Macay
General Volunteer

Volunteer



Roisin Lalor
Book Club Coordinator

Volunteer



Shauna
Laois LGBT+ Group
Coordinator

Highlights of 2020



February

- Laois LGBTI+ Project was established

March

- First support group launched - Laois LGBT+ Virtual Social Group

April

- Laois LGBT+ Project expanded to Midlands LGBT+ Project

May

- Pride Flags raised at Laois, Offaly and Kildare County Council for International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia



June

- First in person group
- Volunteer recruitment

July

- Trans Group Launched



August

- Rainbow Window Display Launched
- First Kildare Social Group Meet Up

September

- Official Launch
- Volunteers Trained



October

- Schools Workshops delivered in: National Learning Network Portlaoise and Dunamase College Portlaoise

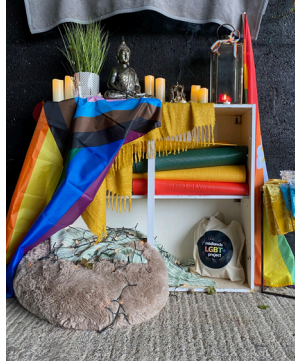
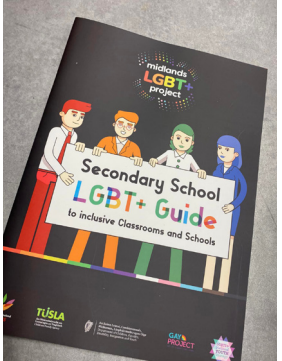
November

- LGBT+ Inclusivity Training delivered to 84 professionals
- Minister Pippa Hackett visits
- €46,000 in funding secured for the service
- Guide to Inclusive Secondary Schools Published



December

- Book Club's first meeting



News & Media Engagement

Laois LGBT+ Project launched

Laois Today - March 4th 2021

Story also featured by Laois Nationalist and Laois People



leinsterexpress

Pride flag to fly at Laois council's HQ to celebrate new LGBT+ service



LAOISTODAY.IE

New adult LGBT+ service launched in Laois

By Alan Hartnett - 4th March 2021

Councils raise LGBT flags in support

Leinster Express - May 14th 2021

Story also featured by Offaly Independent

Official Launch

Leinster Express - September 8th 2021

Story also featured by Laois Nationalist



OFFALY INDEPENDENT

€46k in funding for Midlands LGBT+ Project welcomed



leinsterexpress

Drag queen bingo, live music and family fun at Midlands LGBT+ launch in Laois

€46k in new funding welcomed

Leinster Express - September 8th 2021

Story also featured by Laois Nationalist



- 3rd March - Soundbite recorded by Christina on Midlands 103
- 17th May - Tom interviewed on Midlands 103
- 20th May - Andrew on Midlands 103
- 22nd June - Christina Soundbite on Iradio



Tom interviewed on Glam Doll Ireland

23rd June 2021 - Tom and Simon are owners of @simonsweeneyhairdesign and @destination_sshd and create safe inclusive spaces for everybody.

Launch Party | September 11th 2021

@pippa_hackett 

Minister of State
in the Department of Agriculture

A real (and unexpected)
honour to help cut the ribbon
at the opening of the Midlands
LGBT+ Project in Portlaoise with
@fhrek (Christina Fitzharris) &
@clivedavid2017.

This project is supporting LGBT+
adults in #Laois, #Offaly, #Kildare
and surrounding areas, and
is doing some amazing work.
#LGBT



Adult Support Groups

Laois LGBT+ Social and Support Group

Our social meetups are for anyone over 18 who identifies as LGBT+ or are questioning their sexuality or gender. It is a relaxed informal space to meet others. It is group led meaning you decide what happens whether that is an informal chat, a walk or a workshop. The group meets monthly in different parts of Laois depending on the activity happening that month.

Offaly LGBT+ Social and Support Group

Our newest social group is a monthly group for LGBT+ adults in Offaly who want to make friends, get support and do different activities from hiking to cinema trips or dinners and everything in between.

LGBT+ Book Club

Another new group, our queer book club is in demand and had a waiting list of members even before its first meet up. It is a virtual group where members pick an LGBT+ related book each month to read and discuss.

Trans Midlands Peer Support Group

Trans Midlands is a group for anyone over 18 in the midlands who is transgender, non binary, intersex or questioning. The group is a safe peer support and social space for our members to meet others, share experiences and seek support from their peers.

Midlands Parents of LGBT+ Young People Group

Parents of LGBT+ Young People Group is an informal group for parents/ carers/ family members of LGBT+ young people looking for advice and support. The group communicate virtually and Midlands LGBT+ Project has quarterly workshops for them on different topics or areas that they are interested in.

If you would like to join or get more information on any of our groups, please email us at help@midlandslgbtproject.com



Testimonials

I have really enjoyed the outings that I have gone on with the group and the monthly trans meet ups are good for helping me meet more trans people. I would wholeheartedly recommend anyone join us.

*Max
(Trans Midlands Group Member)*



Midlands LGBT Project to me is a sense of community and happiness! It's a place to build new friendships and find people like me! It's also a ray of hope for younger people in the community who may still be afraid to come out and be themselves!

*Andrew (Volunteer and
Social Group Member)*



My wife and I moved to the Midlands mid pandemic. We didn't know anyone there so this group was a chance to meet people in the LGBT+ community. We have been able to through the group meet up with other members for walks and chats and it is a social outlet that I am so grateful for. People in the group are of varying ages and backgrounds so there is a conversation for everyone and everyone is made to feel so welcome.

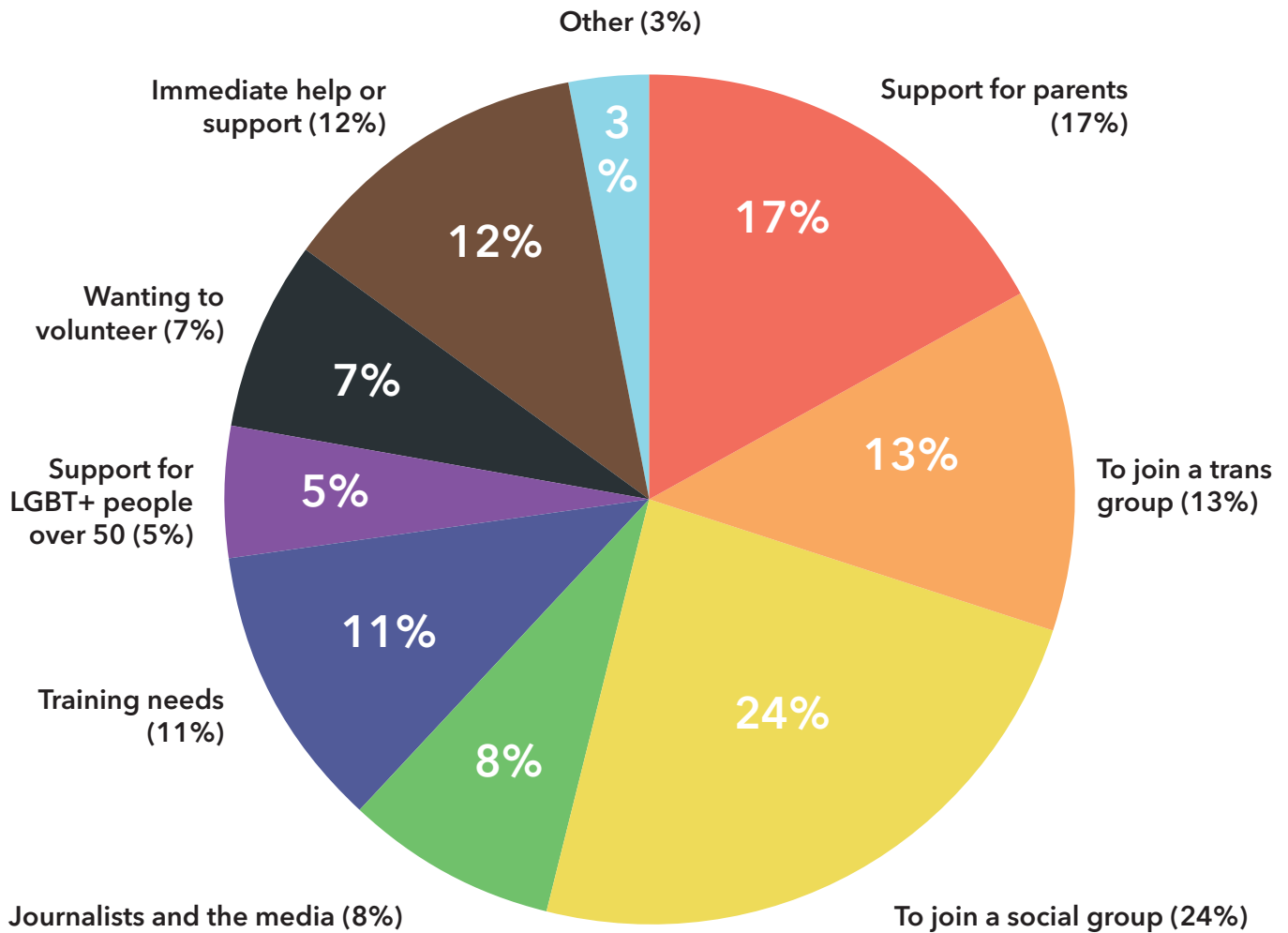
I really hope the group continues to be a success as there was little to no visibility regarding anything LGBT+ related in the Midlands and it is important people know there is a community out there and friends to be made.

Bronagh (Social Group Member)



Statistics

Help and Support Enquiries Answered: **186**



Plans for Next Year:

**schools training, schools workshops,
over 50's, book club, more events....**

Schools Workshops

**Deliver 50 LGBT+ workshops to
secondary schools in the Midlands**

Volunteers

Recruit 15 new volunteers

Steering Group

Grow and diversify our steering group

Launch an over 50's LGBT+ Group

**Deliver workshops to mental health
professionals in the Midlands**

**Develop LGBT+ resources
for schools as Gaeilge**

**More in person events celebrating events
such as National Coming Out Day,
Trans Day of Visibility and more**

Stay tuned for more.....

  **@midlandslgbt**

 **www.midlandslgbtproject.com**

Thank You to our funders and partners!

We at Midlands LGBT+ Project would like to express our gratitude to the funders and partners who have supported our work this year.

With their help we have been able to provide and grow our many services.



Youth Work Ireland
LAOIS



Laois County
Library Service



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




Seirbhís Sláinte
Níos Fearr
á Forbairt

Building a
Better Health
Service



 Midlands LGBT+ Project
c/o Youth Work Ireland Laois,
James Fintan Lawler Avenue,
Portlaoise, Co. Laois.
R32 W310

 Mobile: 086 0757985

 help@midlandslgbtproject.com

 www.midlandslgbtproject.com