



CONSORTIUM

for stronger lgbt+ communities

Exploring the experiences and visions of London's LGBT+ organisations

LGBT+ Consortium | London Report 2024

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LGBT HERO

LGBT+ Catholics Westminster

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London LGBTQ+ Community Centre

METRO Charity

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Opening Doors
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Pride in STEM
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Queer Croydon
Queer Diary CIC
Queer Wandsworth
QueerBee
Queers Without Beers
Quest Mosaic
Qwe're
Rainbow Migration
Sarbat Sikh LGBT group
Skills for Development
Spectra
St John's Deaf Rainbow Club
Stonewall
Stonewall Housing
The Cactus Club
The Outside Project
Tonic Housing Association
TORCH part of the Open House LGBT+ group at Oasis Church
Waterloo
TransActual
Traveller Pride
Unicorns LGBTQIA+ Netball Club
Wise Thoughts

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About LGBT+ Consortium

We are the national LGBT+ specialist infrastructure and membership organisation. We work to build the resource, sustainability and resilience of LGBT+ groups, organisations and projects across the UK, so that they can deliver direct services and campaign for individual rights.

This means that we work to provide the resources LGBT+ groups and organisations need to thrive and build a strong case for support; we support LGBT+ groups and organisations to prepare for, respond, and adapt to the changing environment; and we work to support the growth and development of LGBT+ groups, organisations and projects.

We have more than 200 member organisations in London, supported by a dedicated London team.

Resourced, resilient and sustainable - our three strategic pillars.

Key findings

1

Over half (52.7%) of London's LGBT+ organisations have an annual income of £10,000 or less.

2

68.9% of London LGBT+ organisations are concerned about finding funding for core services in the next 12 months.

3

Almost 2 in 3 (58.1%) London LGBT+ organisations are fully run by volunteers.

4

Near half (47.3%) of London LGBT+ organisations are worried about their staff and volunteers burning out.

5

More than half (50.7%) of London's LGBT+ organisations do not have paid staff.

6

Half (50%) of London LGBT+ organisations expect a further increase in demand for their services in the next 12 months.

7

Roughly 1 in 3 (29%) London LGBT+ organisations report a decrease in funding in the last year.

8

More than 1 in 3 (36.5%) London LGBT+ organisations work on a pan-London level.

Key asks from London LGBT+ organisations

1. Funding

- Better access to unrestricted funding sources.
- More financial support for grassroots organisations.

2. Collaboration

- More London-wide campaigning.
- Sponsorship from leaders beyond the sector.

3. Support for intersectional LGBT+ organisations

- More funding for intersectional LGBT+ organisations.
- Collective action against the politicisation of trans+ identities.

4. LGBT+ spaces

- More accessible, sober and inclusive LGBT+ owned spaces.
- More spaces for LGBT+ global majority people.

5. LGBT+ specialist services

- Urgent funding for specialist LGBT+ services, especially mental health, housing and those impacted by the hostile environment.
- Better and safer access to specialist services without fear of criminalisation or surveillance.

6. Working with local authorities and statutory services

- Local authorities to fund local and Pan-London LGBT+ services.
- Mandatory LGBT+ awareness training for all public services.

Introduction

London is home to the largest and most diverse population of LGBT+ people in the UK. We know that, at the very least, 1.5 million LGBT+ people live in London, all with different backgrounds, experiences and identities.

Despite London's many LGBT+ populations there is not much evidence available on their experiences, and even less on the experiences of London's hundreds of LGBT+ organisations, groups and projects. As the UK's LGBT+ specialist infrastructure and membership organisation, we are in a position to change this.

Presenting evidence from an infrastructure lens means that our focus is the experiences of LGBT+ organisations, and not the communities they support. This means that we have interviewed and surveyed LGBT+ organisations that work with LGBT+ communities and with LGBT+ individuals, but not the communities or individuals themselves.

The evidence in this report is informed by the experiences and expertise of 72 LGBT+ organisations, groups and projects across London. This work belongs to them, and we invite anyone else to consider how their organisation, business or company can best act to sponsor London's LGBT+ sectors.

Background

In order to understand the challenges LGBT+ organisations are facing, we need to outline the systemic and political contexts in which they currently operate. This will give context to the organisations' visions for the future, which we will cover in later sections.

Below we will outline the systemic and political challenges our respondents highlighted most frequently, namely rising anti-LGBT+ sentiments, the hostile environment and criminalisation, the cost-of-living crisis and the worsening material reality of LGBT+ Londoners. These systems are all interlinked and upheld by the UK's current systems and national political leadership.

Abuse and hate crimes against LGBT+ communities are rising at alarming rates. In 2021-2022 there was a 56% increase in hate crimes against trans people, and a 41% increase in hate crimes against lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Far from all hate crimes are reported, due to among other things safety concerns and lack of trust in the police. Therefore we know that anti-LGBT+ hate crimes occur more often than what official estimates tell us.

This alarming increase in anti-LGBT+ hate crimes is not happening in a vacuum. There is a clear link between harmful discourse upheld by the national political leadership and media, and the increase in prejudice, violence and discrimination against our communities. LGBT+ organisations we spoke to are deeply concerned about how anti-LGBT+ sentiments influence professional and public spheres:

Hostile media and government - trans folk disproportionately affected by economic injustice and trans people with additional marginalized identities face exacerbated challenges (edited).

General anti-LGBT sentiments, challenge to the politicisation of our identities [is] starting to create barriers to our working relationships with clients who see trans health as 'too risky' to support in the current climate.

The demand for support has increased considerably over the past year; we are concerned that transphobia and homophobia inside and outside prison is on the rise.

Rising anti-LGBT+ hate crimes are accompanied by the violence of the hostile environment – a series of immigration policies designed to make the UK as inhospitable as possible to people escaping persecution and violence in other countries. The hostile environment policies also criminalise global majority people and other minoritised communities with the right to reside in the UK. Many LGBT+ organisations in London are directly impacted by, or support people who are impacted by the hostile environment:

The hostile environment has increased towards Black and Brown LGBT+ people.

Structural and systemic barriers particularly to healthcare, transphobia, sex worker criminalisation, migrant phobia [are key issues] (edited).

Discrimination, cost of living, isolation, surveillance and criminalisation are systemic issues that are interlinked and upheld by the state.

The cost-of-living crisis is negatively impacting the material reality of many LGBT+ people in London, and for many it compounds existing systemic barriers. Access to housing, adequate healthcare and employment has become increasingly difficult for LGBT+ people in London over the last 12 years. This is particularly true for LGBT+ people from the global majority, as well as trans and non-binary people.

It's really hard to make ends meet, and people are struggling to live in London, and you really see the pressure for our residents making ends meet. But it's also challenging for our staff and volunteers. We're trying to get people to come and work on sites, but the cost of travel, the cost even for staff who are coming in to work five days a week, it's quite a challenge (edited).

The cost-of-living crisis has had a significant impact to the extent that some service users are unable to access our services, as they cannot afford to travel to our venue and/or pay internet access costs to access online services, or the subsidised rate for certain wellbeing activities such as yoga classes, etc. Staff have at times had to use personal funds to pay for small resources such as refreshments for attendees at our drop-in services.

A lot of trans people (including our staff) are leaving London as they can't afford to live. So support for key workers - including youth workers - would help retain the talent to deliver the services. Our public spaces need to be safe and I think hate crime has gone up in the last few years with the hostility that we've seen in the press and other places. Housing is a massive issue including trans people affected by homelessness due to unsupportive families (edited).

Poor access to NHS mental health services, long waits for trans healthcare, cost of living crisis, hostile media and government - trans folk are disproportionately affected by economic injustice and trans people with additional marginalized identities face exacerbated challenges (edited).

Mental health is a concern due to the current political climate for trans and non-binary people, especially for young people concerned about what support they will be able to receive. Also for those seeking asylum and facing inappropriate government policies (edited).

Severe lack of specific housing for LGBTQ+ people and a massive data gap on the needs of LGBTQ+ people in a housing context.

This is a simplified account of the political and systemic context London's LGBT+ organisations operate in, and different organisations have different experiences depending on which communities they belong to and work within.

London LGBT+ organisations are by no means a monolith, but what they all have in common is this political and systemic context, a general lack of funding, increased demand on services and activities, and close proximity to burnout.

This report serves as an overview of the knowledge and expertise LGBT+ organisations across London hold, and it has two main purposes:

1. To contribute to the evidence base on the challenges and visions of LGBT+ organisations, groups and projects, so that they in turn can use it to build cases of support; and

2. To outline clear actions that key organisations within LGBT+ sectors and beyond can take to support the sustainability, resources and resilience of London's LGBT+ organisations, groups and projects.

The numbers

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations, NCVO's 2022 Almanac reveals that micro and small organisations are declining across the UK, and many LGBT+ organisations in London are continuously fighting to not be part of this trend.

The resilience of small LGBT+ organisations is remarkable, but they still require and deserve financial stability to sustain themselves. In this section we will take a deep dive into the financial and organisational challenges of LGBT+ organisations in London.

Beneficiaries

172,000 LGBT+ Londoners benefit directly from the work of the LGBT+ organisations who participated in our survey. Factoring in indirect beneficiaries (i.e. through engaging with a campaign or website material), this number increases to 1,230,750 million.

Geographical distribution

We asked respondents in which borough(s) they deliver their work:

- Central London boroughs such as Camden (5), Lambeth (7), Tower Hamlets (4) and Westminster (5) have the highest count of LGBT+ organisations.
- 7 respondents told us that they deliver their work online only.
- 27 (36.5%) respondents answered that they have a Pan-London reach.

This confirms two trends. First it affirms that there is an uneven distribution of LGBT+ services and activities across the Greater London area, with a majority of services located in inner London boroughs. Secondly it confirms that nearly 36.5% of LGBT+ services and activities are delivered at a Pan-London level.

More than half of respondents (52.7%) reported an annual income of £10,000 or less.

Income

According to NCVO’s 2022 Almanac, 44.79% of organisations in the UK voluntary sector have an annual income of less than £10,000. Among surveyed London LGBT+ organisations this number is even higher, with over half (52.7%) in this sample reporting an annual income of £10,000 or less.

Zero	9.5%
Up to £1,000	18.9%
£1,001 - £10,000	24.3%
£10,001 - £20,000	2.7%
£20,001 - £50,000	10.8%
£50,001 - £100,000	8.1%
£100,001 - £500,000	6.8%
£500,000 - £1M	8.1%
Above £1M	10.8%

The top sources of income reported are grants (67.2%); donations (64.2%); individual giving (38.8%); event tickets (20.9%); trading (19.4%) and local authority funding (16.4%).

Changes to income

Interested in mapping changes in income in the last year, we learned that 45% of LGBT+ organisations in our sample have seen a change to their income in the last year. 29% report a decrease in funding.

We asked our respondents if they or anyone else in their group have used their own money to run their group in the last year. 8.8% answered that this has happened once, 33.8% answered that this happens often, and 57.4% answered no.

Understanding organisational concerns

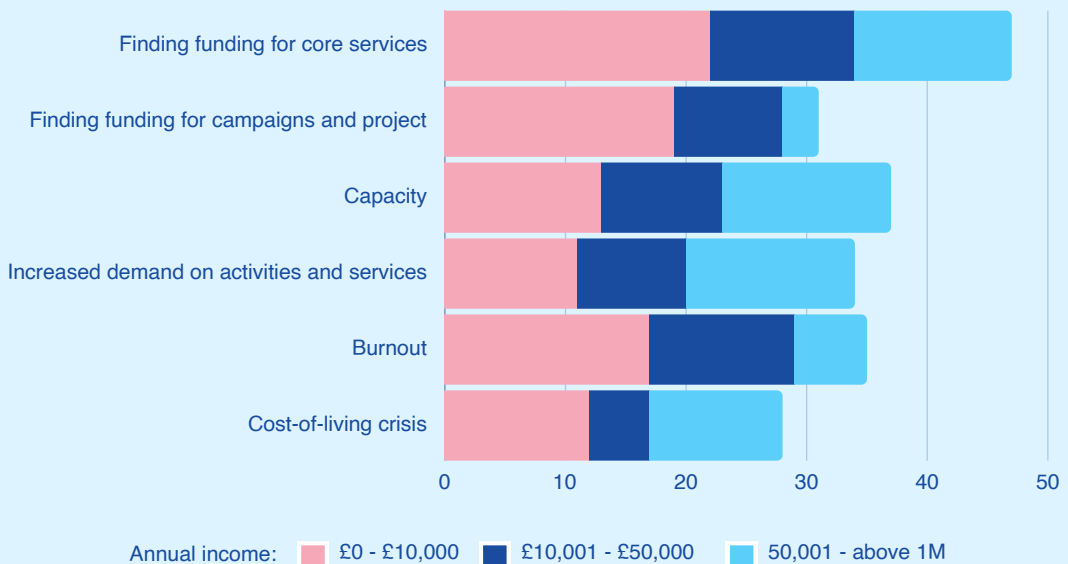
To understand which organisational worries LGBT+ organisations in London face, we asked about their biggest challenges in the last year:

- 63.5% said finding funding for core services.
- 50% said capacity.
- 47.3% said burnout.
- 45.9% said increased demand on activities and services.
- 41.9% said finding funding for campaigns and projects.
- 35.1% said the cost-of-living crisis.
- 28.4% said retaining volunteers.

To paint a more nuanced picture of what differently sized organisations saw as their top three challenges, we split organisations across three income brackets:

Organisations with an annual income of £0 - £10,000 were most concerned by:

- Funding for core services
- Funding for campaigns and projects
- Burnout



Organisations with an annual £10,001 - £50,000 were most concerned by:

- Burnout
- Capacity
- Increased demand on activities and services

Organisations with an annual income £50,001 – above 1£M were most concerned by:

- Increased demand on activities and services
- Capacity
- Finding funding for core services

While operating in similar contexts, organisations have unique challenges that often are dictated by organisational size.

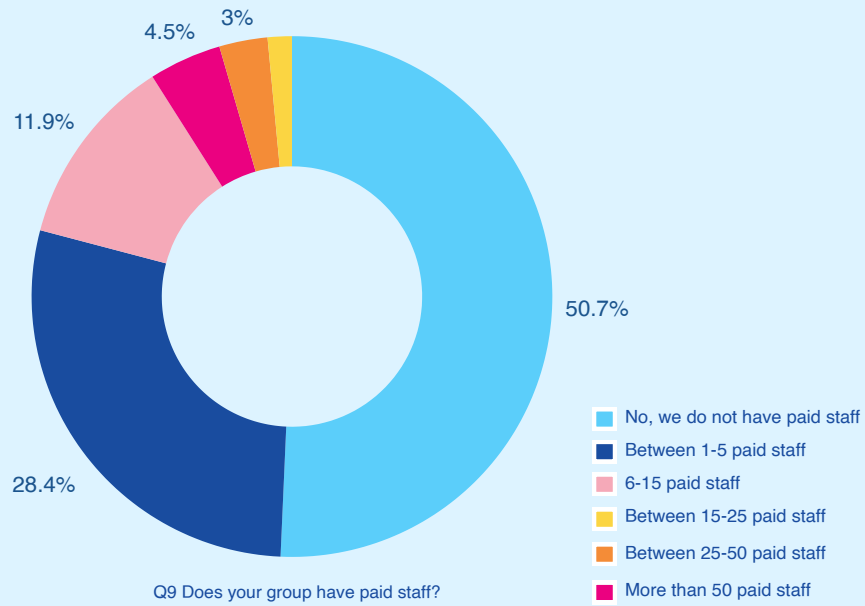
We also asked which organisational challenges organisations think will be most pressing in the coming year:

- Finding funding for core services: 68.9%
- Capacity: 51.4%
- Increased demand on activities and services: 50%
- Finding funding for campaigns and projects: 40.5%
- Burnout: 37.8%
- The cost-of-living crisis: 37.8%

Paid staff

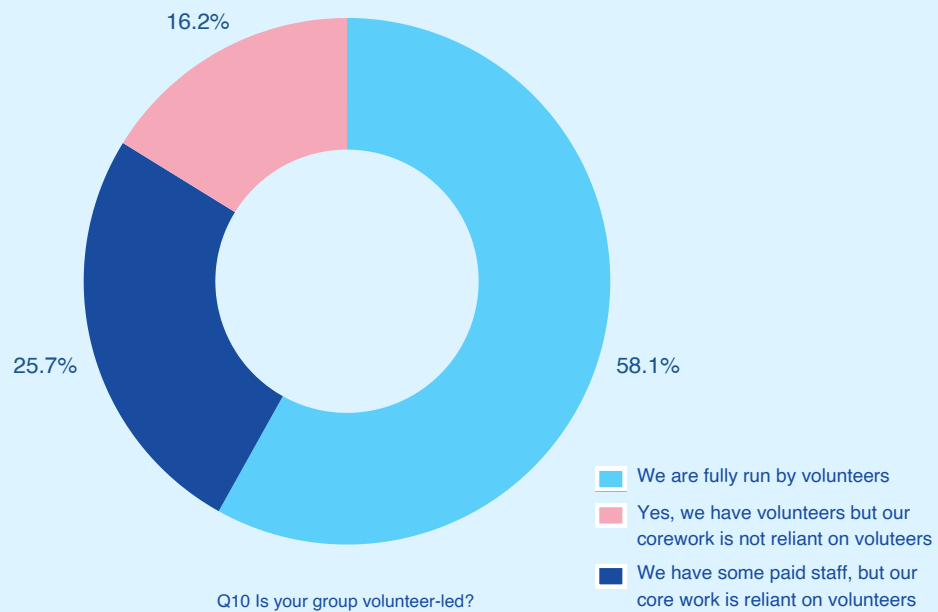
Asking our respondents if they have paid staff, we learned that over half (50.7%) of our sample do not. Nearly 1 in 3 (28.4%) have between 1-5 paid staff and 11.9% have between 6-15 paid staff. In total, only 9% of respondent organisations have more than 15 paid staff.

Over half (50.7%) of respondents do not have paid staff members, and only 9% report having more than 15 paid staff members.



Volunteers

Asking organisations to which extent they are volunteer-led or not, we learned that nearly 2 in 3 organisations (58.1%) are fully run by volunteers, and that 25.7% of the organisations have some paid staff, but their core work is still reliant on volunteers.



Sector snapshot: Volunteer-led LGBT+ organisations in London

- Nearly 2 in 3 (58.1%) responding organisations are fully led by volunteers.
- 21 out of 43 (48.8%) of volunteer-led organisations have an annual income of £1,000 or less.
- 67% of volunteer-led organisations have used personal funds at least once to run an activity or service at their organisation.

We're all volunteers, people are genuinely using their own money. There's such a need for the stuff that we do and it's really well received, but to be able to get that kind of core funding that will enable us to be here for another 10 years you're really dependent on the enthusiasm of individuals. Then you can really end up with burnout, and it just makes it difficult for people who've got things to do. Even if they would want to be involved, they don't have the time or resources.

The cost-of-living crisis has severely affected our volunteers' ability to participate. As a volunteer led project this makes things extremely difficult. Equally, finding funding has got more difficult in recent years.

We have the same challenges this year but are approaching it more systematically to avoid burnout and hope to remove any reliance on volunteers to use their own funds.

LGBT+ sectors in London have always been powered by volunteers and would not be the same without them. Organisations rely on volunteers now more than ever before to meet increased service and activity demand, especially considering our present systemic and political contexts.

LGBT+ organisations in London

We asked respondents to elaborate on their organisational challenges and their visions on how London can be a better home to its LGBT+ communities. These visions are essential strategic building blocks for improving outcomes for LGBT+ Londoners, and to achieve them we must actively work together across LGBT+ sectors, and beyond. This section will outline the six most common themes across our survey and roundtables, and their corresponding visions.

1. Funding

Funding is the biggest issue we faced, due to high cost of living, it made it difficult for elaborate on the foundation we have already built. Causing burnout and apathy amongst our team who were working hard to inspire and empower our transgender sisters from mostly ethnic minority backgrounds.

The first challenge most community-led organisations identify when asked, is funding. 63.5% of LGBT+ organisations reported that in the last year, their main concern has been to find funding for core services. 68.9% share the same concern for the next 12 months.

The challenge is finding and or securing funding for staff and our core activities, which includes holistic therapy for Black LGBTQ+ people.

Many respondents tell us they are seeing significant decreases in funding options, and that they are finding it difficult to secure grants and cultivate multiple income sources.

A repeated consequence of limited unrestricted core funding is a reduction of services, as well as difficulty for long-term planning and sustainability of projects. The limitations to project funding puts an additional strain on organisations:

Things come and go all the time - a trustee leaves, the forum falls apart, or work stops. This happens over and over, partly due to the lack of continuity of funding. This constant having to apply for more funding for this or that, where this funding only covers this section, and doesn't cover that. It puts us in competition against each other when we should be working together so that the work can continue.

Sector snapshot: The cost-of-living crisis

35.1% of respondents said that one of their most prevalent challenges in the last year has been the cost-of-living crisis. The increase in cost of living not only negatively impacts all aspects of how organisations are run, but also the service users they exist to support. One respondent explains:

The cost-of-living crisis has had a significant impact to the extent that some service users are unable to access our services as they cannot afford to travel to our venue and/or pay internet access costs to access online services, or the subsidised rate for certain wellbeing activities such as yoga classes, etc. Staff have at times had to use personal funds to pay for small resources such as refreshments for attendees at our drop-in services.

Respondents note the connection between rising costs and negative mental health outcomes for service users, staff and volunteers. Increasing costs also impact vital service and activity delivery:

Cost of living and energy prices which impact massively our safe housing scheme.

It's really hard to make ends meet, and people are struggling to live in London, and you really see the pressure for our residents making ends meet. But it's also for our staff and volunteers. You know, we're trying to get people to come and work on sites, but the cost of travel, the cost of even for staff are coming in to work five days a week, it's quite a challenge.

LGBT+ sectors are less financially resilient with less access to funding than other third sectors. Existing in a period of unprecedented economic pressure is exhausting, and without extended long-term support many LGBT+ organisations face reduction of services and risk of closure.

It also affects the way staff see their roles and the ability for long-term planning:

There seems to be quite a lot of short-term provisions that might be free, but I don't want to start building something that I can't sustain and the real challenge is short term funding, when contracts are year to year it can be difficult to engage staff in long term thinking.

The lack of funding and support available to LGBT+ organisations have undoubtedly been affected by the increasing cost of living, which in turn impacts people's ability to donate their funds and/or time:

The cost-of-living crisis has severely affected our volunteers' ability to participate. As a volunteer-led project this makes things extremely difficult.

Our evidence tells us that 58.1% of respondent organisations are fully run by volunteers and rely fully on volunteers to sustain their services and activities. This is nearly 2 in 3 organisations. The reduction of volunteer contributions has a significant impact on organisational capacity, while it also puts existing volunteers at risk of overworking and burnout.

Our evidence demonstrates that there is a clear need for more funding to ensure not only the survival, but also future development of London LGBT+ organisations. These are our visions:

- More options for LGBT+ organisations to access unrestricted funding sources.
- Better financial support for small grassroots LGBT+ organisations that support structurally disadvantaged communities that often are targeted by both LGBT+ and mainstream public.
- Provide multiyear core grants to small LGBT+ organisations, through for example a dedicated London LGBT+ fund.
- Funding to develop and sustain LGBT+ forums across the 12 boroughs that currently do not have a LGBT+ forum.

Sector snapshot: Supporting LGBT+ people over 50

There are very few LGBT+ organisations, groups and projects supporting LGBT+ people over 50 in London. At the time of writing, the only national charity dedicated to support LGBT+ people over 50, Opening Doors, have announced their closure due to ongoing financial challenges. This is a tremendous loss for LGBT+ people over 50, as well as LGBT+ sectors across the UK.

Across our roundtable almost all participants reflected on ageing without being prompted to do so, expressing interest in working together with other groups to support LGBT+ Londoners over 50. One group reflects on Older Black LGBT+ Londoners:

Older Black, LGBT+ people are literally being erased as we speak. Any Black LGBT+ person over the age of 50, what spaces do we have for them? What programmes that we have for them? How are we preparing people for retirement, because not everybody is going to be able to have the same kind of, you know, income or wealth capacity, you know, as they get older?

Older LGBT+ people need more housing options and choices of who will be providing their care and support. (..) LGBT older people should also be able to shape the support and community services on offer to them, which should involve bringing people together, especially across intersectional and intergenerational groups so that the older generations can become truly integrated into the wider LGBT communities.

LGBT+ Londoners, like all other communities, deserve to age well. Welcoming organisations that support LGBT+ people over 50 into decision-making spaces within local authorities or statutory services is imperative to achieve this.

2. Collaboration across LGBT+ sectors and beyond

To address the lack of funding and reduce competition for it, LGBT+ organisations in London seek more collaborative opportunities. Most of our respondents want to build stronger relationships, share resources and knowledge, but it is not without its challenges:

There needs to be better communications, cooperation and solidarity between LGBT+ organisations. Some bigger funded, staffed charities seem to regard our small group as competition rather than their community.

In trying to build a collaborative way of working some organisations express difficulty in forming relationships with others:

The struggle our organisation faces, it's hard basically to build relationships with other organisations, in the UK and in London... Even if organisations are working with a small group on a specific problem it doesn't mean it's not important. It's very hard to network, socialise and, have people's attention, when you have a small angle you support/help.

Lack of collaboration is a continuous issue throughout the third sector:

Most prison services or charities do not focus on LGBT+ issues and most LGBT+ organisations do not focus on prisoners. As a result, LGBT+ prisoner issues are often an oversight. We aim to address this gap, but we are a very small, completely volunteer run organisation and have limited capacity.

13:27:12 From [redacted] to
Everyone:

Following this call, please consider opportunities to connect and collaborate, whilst Black Groups are necessary, we also need the solidarity with other groups and incredible support. You can find me on social media and

Screen grab from one of the roundtable Zoom chats where a participant from a group encourages collaboration and solidarity. We have removed any identifying details.

As organisations move towards more collaborative approaches, it is important to acknowledge and address power dynamics and different levels of access to opportunities. Some organisations are positioned to receive more resources and funding than others. To develop and sustain truly meaningful collaborations among LGBT+ organisations, by-and-for services must be centered at every stage of the collaboration:

Another key challenge is collective responsibilities – who is able to speak and are they speaking for or over the community rather than passing the mic and the check. There are organisations that seem to have a lot of funding or access to funding, or even access to Parliament. A few years ago, I was contacted by two white gay men who told me that they got funding, through (edited) to do work for the Black community - I was livid. Why haven't they approached the Black community? Due to this it was difficult for us to come to an agreement to work with them, because it seems that they got this opportunity to certain privilege.

LGBT+ organisations working together hold boundless potential to improve outcomes for LGBT+ communities across London. These are our asks:

- Establishing a collective voice or joint London-wide campaigning.
- Mentoring between newer and more established organisations, particularly championing people with structural disadvantages.
- Regular networking and connection opportunities.
- Access to LGBT+ led spaces to connect, co-work, co-host events and workshops.
- Visible support and collaborative initiative from leaders beyond London's LGBT+ sectors.

Sector snapshot: LGBT+ housing

London is in a long-term housing crisis linked with all political and systemic contexts outlined in this report. LGBT+ people are more at risk of insecure housing conditions due to structural barriers, and we know that LGBT+ housing organisations of all sizes experience unprecedented demand of their services.

LGBT+ housing organisations outline a severe lack of LGBT+ specific housing – particularly for older LGBT+ people, lack of social housing and supported accommodation, significant data gaps on the needs of LGBT+ people in a housing context, and safe housing for LGBT+ people who experience homelessness or are in crisis. It is also increasingly challenging to get planning permission to use existing houses to safely house LGBT+ migrants.

Demand for housing and homelessness services is increasing year on year - we must grow to accommodate need.

Better links between housing providers and other organisations to make better use of the properties we have now. Meaningful investment in building more social housing.

I feel like so many gays, queer, trans people are under so much pressure, because they can't be free in their own space and create their own communities... So I think, as a starting point, if we were to, convert spaces, be creative with the many empty homes we already have, and the buildings we already have, we could make sure that everybody's got a roof over their head [and] access to that (edited).

The GLA, local authorities and statutory services must continue to further develop their work with specialist LGBT+ housing organisations, and investment into LGBT+ housing, to ensure that all LGBT+ Londoners have access to adequate and safe housing.

3. Support for LGBT+ intersectional organisations

20% of our respondents are organisations that are led by and for LGBT+ global majority people; or exists to support LGBT+ refugees and people claiming asylum; or other communities that do not benefit from white supremacist structures.

Our evidence tells us that more than half of LGBT+ organisations led by global majority people have an annual income of £10,000 or less. Many report that they do not have access to enough resources nor funding to sustain their work:

The Black trans community also do not get the right support that is needed in terms of organisation and funding, and you name it, and we need to see those change.

BAME+ community members are doubly impacted as they also have to deal with racial discrimination that is on the increase including within the LGBTQIA+ community.*

There are a lot of Black led organisations or Black led communities that are disappearing -we're not able to maintain the space or support.

The Black community and people of colour community actually, face more challenges - like capacity... There are certain needs that are very important and need to be supported by the community. For example, migration issues, can best be best understood by people who have been through migration themselves.

Many organisations also highlight the threat of increasing transphobia and the need for educating leadership and workforces, especially in statutory services. The material reality of trans+ Londoners is worsening every day, which is a grave concern to all responding LGBT+ organisations:

The big headlines are around the quality of life for trans Londoners, and that would be housing, health, being free of discrimination, accessing services, education, being safe on the streets, public transport and public spaces. It is all of the big topics really, no surprises. I think we all need to be keeping our eyes on the material reality of, obviously, we focus on trans people (...).

* LGBT+ Consortium does not use the acronym BAME, but some respondents use this term in professional spheres when referring to the communities they support.

Organisations who support d/Deaf and disabled LGBT+ people highlight a lack of attention to disability rights from wider LGBT+ sectors, challenges with accessing benefits, wider health challenges and inclusive services for d/Deaf and disabled people.

By supporting intersectional organisations, marginalised communities can be visibly representing themselves. These are our asks:

- More financial support for community organisations who are creating social spaces for LGBT+ global majority people to share their stories, talent and creativity.
- Co-design culturally sensitive strategies to support the most marginalised members of LGBT+ communities and dedicated financial resources to support organisations working with them for at least 3-5 years.
- Inclusion of LGBT+ Travellers in LGBT+ spaces, and increased commitment to traveller sites and stopping places.
- Increased awareness about intersectional LGBT+ communities, including LGBT+ global majority people of faith, LGBT+ refugees and asylum seekers.
- Collective action against the politicisation of trans and non-binary identities and increasing anti-LGBT+ sentiments.

4. LGBT+ spaces

Another headline among respondents is the lack of LGBT+ spaces across London, particularly accessible, safe, inclusive and sober spaces. While we celebrate the LGBT+ community and cultural spaces that have emerged during recent years, we need more spaces to meet demand of LGBT+ communities across London.

[There are] significantly reduced safe spaces for activities for black LGBTQ+ folks, the absence of funding for holistic therapies, no safe space for Black Queer men living with HIV (edited).

[There is a] lack of representation or inclusion in spaces, the hidden nature of our group (edited).

LGBT+ organisers who work on improving inclusion and combating isolation amongst LGBT+ communities tell us that the rising cost to hire venues is an emerging challenge.

Welcoming, accessible and affordable venues are few and far between, and many event organisers and LGBT+ organisations alike tell us that the absence of such spaces makes continuity a significant challenge, as they do not have regular spaces to run events, meetings, co-work or store organisational resources.

We run creative & performance events (...). Our main specific challenge at the moment is a severe lack of an accessible, welcoming space to run regular events - without costing us, or our community members an unaffordable amount of money.

I think that what we need is safe spaces, a drop-in centre so that people can access spaces to socialise, spaces just to be themselves (...). We need spaces people can drop in for sexual health, or mental health – a kind of hub. We need activities beyond the clubs.

London has a clear need for more accessible, affordable, inclusive and safe LGBT+ spaces. These are our asks:

- More LGBT+ led accessible and affordable spaces across the Greater London area. Accessible meaning among other wheelchair access, accommodating neurodiversity and close proximity to public transport and parking.
- More spaces run by and for LGBT+ global majority people, migrants and LGBT+ people of faith.
- More sober spaces for LGBT+ events and activities that do not centre alcohol.
- Business rate discounts for LGBT+ venues and organisations.
- Better protection for LGBT+ venues and spaces.

5. LGBT+ specialist services

Our evidence confirms what we and LGBT+ organisations across the Greater London area already know: there are not enough LGBT+ specialist services to support London's LGBT+ communities. LGBT+ organisations often fill the gaps in service provision left by statutory services and local authorities, but this is becoming increasingly challenging due to a lack of core funding, capacity, burnout and rising demand for services.

As outlined in our 'numbers' section (page 11), we know that half of our respondents (50%) worry about increased demand on services and activities in the next year. One organisation that supports families tell us that they have had a 200% increase in service demand, another tells us they are experiencing a higher demand for their specialist LGBT+ mental health services.

Another organisation highlights rainbow racism and lack of Black and Brown LGBT+ specialist services as a key issue, while another notes that there are no or few specialist services for older LGBT+ people in housing or social support.

LGBT+ organisations of all sizes are struggling with a lack of funding and balancing capacity and demand. Larger organisations tell us that they do not have capacity to meet the current demand for their respective services, and even though some of the larger organisations comparatively access more funding, they still have ongoing challenges with getting enough to sustain their services that many have come to rely on.

We know that LGBT+ organisations, groups and projects are best placed to deliver LGBT+ specialist services, and that specialist services result in better outcomes for LGBT+ people. Accessing specialist by and for services is essential for any community of identity, and statutory services, local authorities and the GLA are in key positions to support further development of these much needed specialist services. These are our asks:

- Funding for specialist LGBT+ services, in particular mental health, crisis/safe housing and high support services.
- Funding for global majority LGBT+ specialist services that support people who have experienced domestic abuse, sexual violence, racism, stop and search, the Hostile environment and other systemic violence.
- Better and safer access to specialist services without fear of criminalisation or surveillance.
- All public services to implement procedures that meaningfully consider the needs of LGBT+ people.

Sector snapshot: LGBT+ healthcare

LGBT+ organisations who work within a health context or are addressing health inequalities navigate particularly challenging environments. They also face additional scepticism and sometimes hostility in their work improving health outcomes for LGBT+ people – especially in work supporting trans, non-binary and gender diverse people.

Our respondents tell us they are seriously concerned about

Inequalities in screening and patient care, lack of use of SOGI (SOGI = sexual orientation and gender identity) monitoring, resistance to update services in line with its own recommendations, (edited) blocking trans work.

Lack of trans affirming care, discrimination and prejudice on the streets.

Health problems, and difficulties in getting entitled benefits.

Drug and alcohol services [that are] properly funded, more attention [should be given] to preventative healthcare (edited).

The lack of specialist and affirming care available to LGBT+ communities is a systemic issue, and it is worsening daily within the current political contexts we find ourselves in.

Our evidence demonstrates that LGBT+ organisations want to work with service providers such as the NHS, and we know that their expertise will save lives. Our challenge to healthcare service providers is to build relationships with LGBT+ organisations, invite them to the table, and most importantly – absorb and implement their feedback.

6. Working with local authorities and statutory services

To improve the conditions in which London LGBT+ organisations operate, it is essential to understand the relationships between LGBT+ organisations and local authorities and statutory services. Our evidence makes it clear that most responding organisations want to engage with local authorities and statutory services but they do not always know how to. Most also have limited capacity and resources to effectively participate:

The main issue is that we are unable to commit the time these collaborations deserve due to everything being done on a voluntary basis a lot of the time, fitting around other jobs etc. If our organisation had funding for a full time position we could get far more involved.

We could do so much to support trans people in boroughs if we had local authority support but their budgets have not been there since austerity - 2009.

Because of limited resources and capacity, many organisations struggle with navigating the complexity of particularly local authorities:

Our biggest challenge is we are not sure who to approach and who or which departments to help. We support members from all London boroughs and beyond London, different cities and towns. Finding right people who can guide us to correct departments who will be willing to help us is not easy.

Another barrier for engagement is a lack of LGBT+ awareness within local authorities and statutory services. Some respondents say working with them can often feel like a tick box exercise and not as meaningful as it has potential to be.

Prejudice and discrimination goes without saying, as it is not always overt and it is very difficult to always know whether a negative decision taken by a council administrator or by a venue can also be based on their own personal prejudice.

Often being met with lack of awareness or prejudice, LGBT+ organisations often depend on the support LGBT+ community members in positions of influence to progress their work. One organisation points out this well-known dynamic and how fast it can change:

We often get traction when there are those who are community members in position of influence, but this can change quite quickly especially if the political makeup of the LA changes.

Local authorities and statutory services have underutilised power and a responsibility to support LGBT+ organisations to improve outcomes for LGBT+ communities. These are our asks:

- Funding for local and Pan-London LGBT+ specialist services – nearly 40% of LGBT+ organisations (36.5%) deliver services and activities at a Pan-London level.
- Decision-makers to recognise LGBTQ+ people in their own context when creating policies and reimagining engagement practices with LGBT+ organisations to ensure that they are included at all stages of service planning and delivery.
- Local authorities, statutory service providers and regional governments to commission LGBT+ organisations to provide intersectional LGBT+ awareness training to all staff.
- Local authorities and statutory services to build sustainable relationships with LGBT+ organisations in their borough.

Sector snapshot: LGBT+ faith organisations

Many LGBT+ faith groups find it challenging to access funding for their work, and most feel that they feel entirely excluded from LGBT+ spaces. LGBT+ faith groups tell us that there is still a lot to be done in LGBT+ communities at large to improve faith literacy, stop Islamophobia and other forms of prejudice against LGBT+ people of faith.

We don't have really much support for general community as we identify as LGBTQI+ Muslim Support group, people push away. We have tried for example looking for venues in the past when they hear we are LGBTQI group that are Muslim people come with excuses why we can't or say such price that we can't afford. So usually always a reason given that can be justified but not challenged.

[There is] a lack of faith literacy among mainstream LGBT+ organisations and subsequent prejudice. Also, prejudice and discrimination towards refugees and asylum-seekers (edited).

One organisation told us about the challenges that come from a lack of empathy and awareness, especially about the specific intersections of being an LGBT+ person of faith:

In the past I reached out to social services and the person who worked there was a person of the same faith and told me that I should be ashamed of myself to say that I am gay and a person of faith. That ended the conversation and the person hung up (edited).

One respondent reflects on their therapeutic offer to Black African LGBT+ people of faith. Offers like these demonstrates the importance of funding services that are by and for communities that have the lived experience needed to deliver a meaningful and impactful service:

We supported probably about 48 people throughout the process, and we had a waiting list of almost 90 people. A lot of people are struggling with reconciling faith and sexuality, politically liberal and Black, African communities (...) A lot of people that also subscribe to this particular service and projects where people who don't have access to public funds. (...) The outcome was a great impact on their mental health, also people able to navigate and manage their coming out of religious abuses.

Our method

In spring 2023 we did an evidence review and found significant evidence gaps surrounding the experiences of LGBT+ organisations. We decided to address that by conducting a survey and hosting roundtables whose findings are communicated in this report. Below we outline our approach to building an evidence base around the experiences, challenges and visions of London LGBT+ organisations.

The survey

We opened the survey at the end of May 2023 and closed it at the end of July. In total we received responses from 72 organisations, which we consider a robust sample as we estimate there to be 250-300 LGBT+ organisations, groups and projects across the Greater London Area. One organisation submitted three responses, and another organisation submitted two responses. We have compared their submissions to balance their influence in the report.

Respondents

To paint a picture of which LGBT+ communities our survey respondents have direct experience working with, we offered a multiple-choice question. Respondents could choose up to 5 areas:

- All LGBT+ communities (50); people from the global majority (23); trans, non-binary and gender diverse people (20); gay men (16); lesbians/gay women (13); LGBT+ people over 50 (13); LGBT+ young people (9); LGBT+ non-UK residents (9); LGBT+ disabled people (8); bisexual men (8); bisexual women (4).
- The following communities were checked one time each: LGBT+ Travellers, people seeking asylum, LGBT+ people with cancer, LGBT+ people experiencing domestic abuse and or homelessness, LGBT+ people in prison, Black and Brown LGBT+ people, as well as some who focus on parents and families, parents of gender diverse children, families from culturally conservative backgrounds, and those who work in housing.

Out of our pre-determined categories we find that nobody in our sample expressed that they have direct experience working within Ace spectrum communities or intersex people/people with variations in sex characteristics.

Roundtables

In July we hosted five roundtables, attended by 14 LGBT+ organisations working within the following communities and areas:

- LGBT+ people of faith, LGBT+ people from the global majority, LGBT+ older people, LGBT+ refugees, asylum claimants and migrants, bi+ communities, LGBT+ young people, LGBT+ housing, LGBT+ sports, events, as well as two borough specific organisations.
- The roundtable participants were asked to reflect on three questions, which they received in advance to allow for preparation.
- All roundtable participants were remunerated £20 for their contributions.

A note on anonymity

As part of our care to our member organisations and the organisations who have contributed to this work, we decided to anonymise all contributions to keep them safe. There is a list of contributors, but nothing in this report will identify which contribution(s) belong to which organisation(s). Some contributors has requested to be left off the list. We have edited quotes where organisations have named themselves, or partnerships through which their participation can reveal who they are.

Conclusion

In this report we evidence that London LGBT+ organisations are operating in an extremely difficult political and systemic context, navigating increasing anti-LGBT+ sentiments, the hostile environment and criminalisation, the cost-of-living crisis and the worsening material reality impacts LGBT+ Londoners. On top of this, organisations of all sizes balance limited funding and meeting ever-increasing demand on their activities and services.

72 LGBT+ organisations shared their visions which are fully actionable with coordination, funding and support across and beyond LGBT+ sectors. Now is the time for businesses, local authorities, and statutory services to increase their sponsorship of LGBT+ organisations.

This report would not be possible without the organisations that have contributed their time, thoughts and visions in our surveys and roundtables. Our sectors are stronger when we share our experiences, knowledge and dreams, and we hope that this report can serve as a testament to the potential and power we collectively hold.



Get in touch

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