

LGBTQIA+ and Mental Health

Pride doesn't have to just be a month, it can be everyday.



Introduction

Across the world, June is known as the month of Pride. A whole month dedicated to celebrating the LGBTQI+ communities, and raising awareness towards the difficulties and experiences of people within those communities. Through celebrating Pride it is a wonderful opportunity for us all to come together and promote acceptance but also educate.

Throughout the months of June and July you may see many places across the country hosting parades, concerts and marches.

We'll share some information about our local events later on too!

However, at Burton and District Mind it is important for us to recognise that whilst the month of Pride is so important, that it is just as important to support and empower LGBTQ+ people all throughout the year. We take our role as an ally to LGBTQIA+ seriously.

As such, we have put together this short booklet talking all about our work with the LGBTQI+ communities over the past few years, and how they have helped to shape our mental health services to ensure that they are more accommodating towards everyone.

Lets get started...



Mental Health and being LGBTQIA+

Being a part of the LGBTQIA+ community can mean many things, such as you may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex or asexual. There are so many different ways that someone may identify or define their sexuality.

Being able to embrace being LGBTQIA+ can also have a positive impact on someone's mental health and well-being. It can help them to accept who they are, have more confidence, and also belong to a truly wonderful community.

However,

It has been shown that people who identify as LGBTQIA+ are more likely to experience a mental health problem than the wider population. This occurs because LGBTQIA+ people often experience bullying, rejection, stigma and discrimination which can lead to low self-esteem, depression, anxiety and isolation.

Here are some statistics around the LGBTQIA+ community that it is so important that we reflect on, and really shows why we as a society need to do more. These statistics come from a study done by Stonewall.

- Half of LGBTQIA+ people had experienced depression, and 3 in 5 had experienced anxiety.
- 1 in 8 LGBTQIA+ people aged 18 to 24 had attempted to take their own life.
- Almost 50% of trans people had thought about taking their own life.

In the same study it was also revealed many LGBTQIA+ people have received unequal treatment from healthcare staff because they are LGBTQIA+

Our Initial Findings

Whilst we always aim for our services and support projects to be as inclusive as possible, through research we realised that we were not reaching as many people from different communities as initially hoped.

For example;

- **Only 4% non-clinical participants identify as LGBTQIA+**
- **Only 5% of our counselling participants identify as LGBTQIA+**
- **Only 3% of our workforce (paid and unpaid) indentify as LGBTQIA+**

Which compares to;

- **6.1% of the population of Staffordshire identifying as LGBTQIA+**

From these statistics we set our self an impact target of increasing the proportions to at least 6-7%

So what did we do?

Expression!

Our LGBTQIA+ Steering Group

With our goal of reaching more people within the LGBTQIA+ Community now set, we needed to work out how best to get there.

To do so, we felt it best that we communicate and work with LGBTQIA+ people, and listen to them about their experiences and needs

And so we formed Expression!

A Steering Group with 9 sessions taking place across May 2024 up to January 2025.

The group itself was made up of the following...

The Team



Expression!

Throughout the 9 sessions lots of important discussions were had, giving us the opportunity to learn more about the following

- Their experiences and the differences that came with varying circumstances such as age.
- The challenges they face in every day life
- What access to mental health support involves for LGBTQIA+ people
- What they need
- The things we can do to help them feel comfortable in asking for support

Here are some of our main findings for the voluntary sector.

Intersectionality & Representation in Mental Health

- Intersectionality was a major topic, recognising how race, gender, and class impact individual experiences.
- Lack of LGBTQIA+ representation in mental health teams makes it difficult for individuals to relate to providers.
- Greater diversity in staff can encourage more diverse participation in mental health services.

Representation and Inclusivity

- Poor experiences with individual staff members can be a major barrier even if the organisation as a whole is supportive.
- Staff should acknowledge their knowledge gaps and blind spots when working with LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- Need for targeted services without relying on stereotypes - “LGBTQIA+ people are ordinary people who happen to be gay”
- The importance of how Burton and District Mind should present itself to the LGBTQIA+ community - ensuring visibility as an ally driven organisation.

Expression!

Here are some of the challenges faced;

Identity, Labels and Social Norms

- “Coming out” remains a significant and difficult experience, with discussions about how straight people do not have to “come out”
- Cisgendered heterosexual norms still dominate power structures, placing LGBTQIA+ individuals in a lower social hierarchy.
- Mental health support should not only focus on those struggling with identity but also those who are comfortable in their identity.

Discrimination, Education and Media Representation

- Gender nonconformity is often seen as a violation of societal norms.
- LGBTQIA+ representation in media remains narrow and inadequate
- Fear of the unknown leads to a lack of education and greater discrimination in areas with less exposure to LGBTQIA+ people.
- Recognised the need for LGBTQIA+ mental health education in workplaces, colleges, universities, and upper school years.

Here are some of the solutions;

LGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces

- Parents and friends adjusting language to be more inclusive was highlighted as a helpful practise.
- Attendees noted that being around people of similar experiences provides comfort and security.
- The importance of how Burton and District Mind should present itself to the LGBTQIA+ Community - ensuring visibility as an ally-driven organisation.

Advertising & Outreach

- LGBTQIA+ outreach should not rely on visual assumptions; targeted advertising should cater to different age groups. Particularly under 30s, and over 50s. LGBTQIA+ representation in media remains narrow and inadequate.
- Mental health materials should balance imagery - too positive or too negative can both be negative.
- Word of mouth recommendations play a crucial role in encouraging people to seek support.

Expression!

So what is our Plan now?

- **Expression Creative Space**

A 4 week Pilot Activity Designed and Delivered by our Expression members. The aim of the group being to promote self expression through the arts and facilitates mental health conversations.

- **Training Opportunities**

Staff will be provided training in line with the advice, given by our Expression members. This will begin with Hate Crime Training.

- **Seeking LGBTQIA+ Certification**

We are currently pursuing LGBTQIA+ certification for our projects and wider charity activities, one such accreditor includes Queerify - www.queerify.co.uk

- **LGBTQIA+ Ambassador**

We are in the process of recruiting an LGBTQIA+ Ambassador who is well-known and trusted in our operating areas. This ambassador will serve as a named point of contact.

- **Branding**

Differentiating our branding going forward, the importance of finding a balance between being “loud and proud” and “Subtle”. The signs are there but only if you’re looking for them.

Real Life Stories

Alex

I'm Alex, I was a participant in the Expression focus group and now I'm a participant in the Expression creative spaces group. I've been a mental health service user before and I'm now a volunteer for Burton & District Mind.



Being a queer from the local Lichfield area, I've long felt that services, specifically mental health services for LGBTQ+ people to be scarily lacking.

Expression! Has been a highlight and a great start to supporting the West Midlands' underrepresented LGBTQ+ community.

I've long felt like there is nothing in this city for me and Expression has changed this for the better. A creative space for marginalised groups is so important and helping to create a sense of community that is sorely lacking

The creative space has already provided improvements in the overall wellbeing of the attending participants. This includes myself, having suffered from depression and anxiety for years and feeling alienated in my own city since my school days.

Real Life Stories

Lauren



I joined the group for myself partly as a service user and also to gain experience as a facilitator. I've joined in by participating and leading in creative activities. I set out to link my personal experiences dealing with my mental health issues with my creative background.

I have a background dealing with my own depression and anxiety in general in life. I was interested in bringing my experiences into linking with creative ideas, and felt that would help support other service users on their own mental health journey.

Why has this been good?

As a result of Burton and District Mind's Expression! focus group, we have significantly expanded our reach into LGBTQIA+ spaces, strengthening our connections with local support networks and advocacy groups. Through ongoing discussions, collaborations, and targeted outreach, we have not only increased our visibility but have also begun to establish ourselves as a trusted and inclusive mental health provider within the LGBTQIA+ community.

By actively engaging with existing LGBTQIA+ organisations, attending Pride events, and integrating feedback from community representatives, we have been able to tailor our approach to better address the unique mental health challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals. Our commitment to fostering safe and affirming spaces, along with our efforts to advocate for greater inclusivity in mental health services, has contributed to growing recognition and trust in our work.

Moving forward, we aim to continue strengthening these relationships, ensuring that our services remain accessible, responsive, and reflective of the diverse needs of those we support.

To support this initiative, three members of the Expression! group have actively joined Burton and District Mind's volunteer programme, bringing their lived experiences and unique perspectives to our ongoing work. Their involvement marks a significant step towards strengthening peer-led support and ensuring that LGBTQIA+ voices remain central to the development of inclusive mental health services.

Useful Contacts

Burton and District Mind

<https://www.burtonmind.co.uk/contact-us>

01283 566696

info@burtonmind.co.uk

National Mind Support

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/lgbtqiaplus-mental-health/>

Other Organisations

Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN)

asexuality.org

Burton Pride

burtonpride.co.uk/

Black Beetle Health

blackbeetlehealth.co.uk

Clare Project

clareproject.org.uk

Hub of Hope

hubofhope.co.uk

Interconnected UK

interconnecteduk.org

LGBT Foundation

0345 3 30 30 30

lgbt.foundation

Mermaids

0808 801 0400

mermaidsuk.org.uk

MindLine Trans+

0300 330 5468

mindinsomerset.org.uk/our-services/adult-one-to-one-support/mindline-trans/

Samaritans

116 123 (freephone)

jo@samaritans.org

Freepost SAMARITANS LETTERS

samaritans.org

Pride Events 2025!

Burton Pride 2025!

<https://www.burtonpride.co.uk/events>



Lichfield Pride 2025

https://www.facebook.com/Lichfieldpride/?locale=en_GB



Tamworth Pride

tamworthpride.org/

