

switchboard



Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2025/26



Celebrating 50 Years — 1975–2025

For the year ended 31 March 2026

Our mission, as a charity run by and for LGBTQ+ people, is to work to understand and respond to the needs of all LGBTQ+ communities.

We do this by: listening; informing; developing.

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Co-Chairs Foreword

Fifty years. The first call came through to a single phone at the Open Cafe on Victoria Road in April 1975, answered by a handful of volunteers who called themselves The Lavender Line. They could not have known what they were starting. Half a century on, Switchboard is one of the longest-standing LGBTQ+ organisations in the country, and a national voice on issues much of the sector is still slow to touch.

The objects we set out when we incorporated as a charity in 2000 spoke of relieving the mental and emotional difficulties of lesbian, gay and bisexual people through information, support and counselling. The language feels dated now, and that is the point: the needs of every generation of service users we have supported have changed, and so too has Switchboard. In just the last year we have launched the UK's first dedicated gambling harms programme for LGBTQ+ people; a strengthened response to domestic abuse, bereavement, dementia and isolation; and a volunteer programme rebuilt around wellbeing rather than community engagement. The mission has not changed. The shape of the work always does.

This has not been an easy year for our communities. Public discourse around LGBTQ+ lives, and trans lives in particular, has grown harsher. The cost of living has bitten hardest at the people we exist to serve. Against that backdrop, what the management team and staff have built is genuinely significant. As a board, our job is to hold Switchboard honest to its founding promise of being by and for LGBTQ+ people, listening before informing and informing before acting, while making sure the operation behind it can carry the weight of what the next fifty years will demand.

To the volunteers who give their time, the donors who fund the work, and the partners who walk alongside us: thank you. To the communities we serve, particularly those who trusted us with the hardest parts of their lives this year, we owe you the next fifty.



Andy Brett (He/Him)
Co-Chair



Jeff Howard (He/Him)
Co-Chair

Chief Executive Foreword

As Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard celebrates 50 years of service, this annual impact report provides an opportunity not only to reflect on our history, but also to recognise the continued importance and growth of our work supporting LGBTQ+ communities across Brighton & Hove, Sussex and increasingly at a national level.

Switchboard was founded at a time when LGBTQ+ people faced profound discrimination, stigma and isolation. Over five decades, the charity has evolved from a grassroots helpline into a trusted, multi-service organisation delivering connection, advocacy, wellbeing support and community care. Throughout every period of social change and challenge, Switchboard has remained rooted in compassion, inclusion and community.

This year has seen significant growth and development across a number of our services. We have continued to strengthen and expand our domestic abuse provision, recognising the increasing complexity and visibility of abuse experienced within LGBTQ+ communities. Alongside our established domestic abuse support, we were proud to secure support from the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner for a new sexual violence support worker pilot, helping us further strengthen pathways for LGBTQ+ survivors who often face barriers accessing mainstream provision.

Our BOLD service has continued to grow and evolve, responding to increasing levels of loneliness, bereavement, dementia-related support needs and social isolation amongst older LGBTQ+ people. The Winter Wellness event highlighted both the strength of our community connections and the significant unmet need that continues to exist. This year also marked continued development of our long-term ambitions for BOLD, including strengthening sustainable support pathways for older LGBTQ+ communities and expanding the reach and visibility of the service.

We have maintained a strong focus on social prescribing and preventative wellbeing approaches through our partnerships and wider UOK collaboration work, recognising the value of trusted, community-led support in improving mental health, reducing isolation and helping people access wider services. Through partnership working and integrated approaches, Switchboard continues to play an important role in connecting LGBTQ+ communities into wider health, wellbeing and care systems. Alongside direct service delivery, our inclusion training and consultancy work has continued to broaden both locally and nationally. We know there remains significant need for organisations to better understand LGBTQ+ experiences and deliver more inclusive services. Through training, education and system leadership, Switchboard continues to play an important role in improving inclusion across health, care and wider community settings.

Chief Executive Foreword

This year has also seen important progress in delivering our multi-year commitments linked to Recover with Pride, the UK's first LGBTQ+ gambling harms recovery programme. Supported through national partnership working and funding arrangements, the programme represents an important opportunity to develop specialist pathways for LGBTQ+ people experiencing gambling-related harms, whilst strengthening evidence, learning and national influence around inclusive recovery approaches.

We have also continued our support for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers and refugees through partnership working and community support initiatives, recognising the additional barriers, trauma and isolation many people experience when seeking safety, belonging and acceptance.

Across all of this work, resilience has remained a defining theme for both our communities and our organisation. The social and political landscape for LGBTQ+ people continues to shift rapidly, and in some areas has become increasingly challenging. Recent international concerns highlighted through ILGA-Europe reporting, alongside growing challenges to trans and non-binary inclusion and rights, remind us that progress cannot be taken for granted. Switchboard remains committed to standing alongside and advocating for all LGBTQ+ communities, particularly TNBI communities who continue to experience increasing hostility, inequality and uncertainty.

As an organisation, we continue to listen carefully to emerging need and adapt our services accordingly. The strength of Switchboard has always been its ability to remain community-rooted whilst evolving alongside the people it supports.

Our 50th anniversary year has also provided an important opportunity to celebrate our history, honour those who built Switchboard and reconnect with the communities that have shaped the charity over five decades. It was also the year we completed the transition of our helpline to Switchboard, the National LGBTQIA+ Support Line — a significant change of shape for an organisation that began as a single phone line, and one we explain more fully later in this report. The theme of "Still Switched On" has become an important part of this anniversary year: whilst we no longer operate that original telephone helpline ourselves, the phrase reflects something deeper about the organisation. For 50 years, Switchboard has listened to LGBTQ+ communities, responded to emerging need and created spaces where people feel heard, supported and connected. That commitment remains unchanged.

Alongside service development, we remain focused on strengthening our governance, organisational resilience and medium- to long-term financial planning. As the charity grows, it is important that we continue building strong foundations that support sustainability, accountability and quality. This includes strengthening relationships with funders, corporate sponsors, partners and supporters whose belief in our work enables us to continue delivering and developing services.

Chief Executive Foreword

I also want to recognise the incredible contribution of our volunteers and community fundraisers. Volunteers have always been at the heart of Switchboard's identity and success, and we are ambitious about broadening volunteering opportunities across the organisation in ways that are inclusive, meaningful and community-led. Equally, our fundraisers, donors and supporters continue to play a vital role in helping sustain the charity and extend our reach.

Across everything we do, I continue to be inspired by the commitment of our staff, volunteers, trustees and partners. Their professionalism, compassion and determination ensure that Switchboard remains a safe and trusted space for so many people. I also want to recognise the communities we serve, whose experiences, voices and resilience continue to shape and strengthen our work.

Our 50th anniversary is not simply about looking back. It is about recognising the responsibility we hold for the future. As we look ahead, our ambition is to continue developing Switchboard as a sustainable, inclusive and influential charity, locally rooted, community-led and increasingly recognised for innovation, collaboration and impact.

Thank you to everyone who has supported Switchboard throughout this milestone year. Your belief in our mission enables us to continue listening, learning and standing alongside LGBTQ+ communities with compassion, courage and pride.



Rob Sainsbury (He/Him)
Chief Executive Officer

Switchboard at 50

For 50 years, Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard has been a constant source of support, connection and community for LGBTQ+ people across Sussex and beyond.

Founded in 1975 by local volunteers responding to isolation and discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ people, Switchboard began as a grassroots listening service and has grown into a multi-service charity supporting thousands of people every year.

Turning 50 is not only a moment to celebrate our history but also to recognise the generations of volunteers, staff, activists, donors and community members who have shaped Switchboard into what it is today. For many people over the last five decades, Switchboard has been a first point of contact, a safe space, a source of information, or simply a reminder that they were not alone.

We began marking our 50th anniversary with a supporter celebration event at The Projects in November 2025, bringing together supporters, partners, volunteers and community members to reflect on Switchboard's work, with a particular focus on our IRIS service supporting LGBTQ+ migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

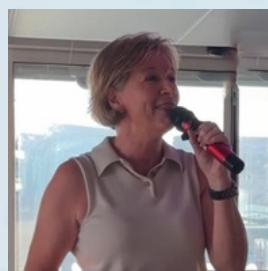
Anniversary celebrations continue on into 2026, including further community events and a fundraising gala planned to support the future sustainability and growth of our services, we'll report on these fully as part of next year's celebrations.

Our celebrations are not only about looking back, but also looking forward. As LGBTQ+ communities continue to face health inequalities, discrimination, isolation and barriers to support, the need for inclusive, trauma-informed and community-led services remains more important than ever.

To every volunteer, supporter, partner, donor, staff member and community member who has been part of our journey over the last 50 years, thank you. Your support has helped ensure that for five decades, someone was there to listen.



LEFT TO RIGHT: RICHARD MCCANCE, MICHAEL ANSTRUTHER, DAVID MAPLESDEN. IMAGE CIRCA 1975/76 COURTESY OF DAVID MAPLESDEN



Transitioning Our Helpline

During the year, we successfully completed the transition of our historic Brighton & Hove LGBTQ+ helpline to Switchboard, the National LGBTQIA+ Support Line. This marked an important milestone in the charity's 50-year history, ensuring that local people continue to receive trusted, high-quality support through a sustainable national service, available seven days a week. The transition was carefully planned in partnership with the national organisation, with a strong focus on continuity, safeguarding and supporting our dedicated volunteers throughout the process.

By transferring responsibility for the helpline, we have been able to strengthen our focus on delivering specialist local services across domestic abuse, health and wellbeing, social prescribing, older people's support, advocacy and inclusion, whilst remaining committed to our founding mission of supporting LGBTQ+ communities in Brighton & Hove. This transition reflects not an ending, but an evolution of our role, continuing to provide life-changing local support whilst contributing to a stronger, more connected national LGBTQ+ support system.

2025/26 at a Glance

These figures reflect the scale of our activity this year the services we delivered and the people we reached. They are one part of the picture; you'll find what this support meant to the people behind these numbers in "Voices of Impact" later in this report.

- 110 LGBTQ+ victim/survivors of domestic abuse supported (33 via our Brighton & Hove housing IDVA; 77 via our Sussex-wide IDVA provision)
- 2 rounds of the Polari domestic abuse recovery programme completed
- 8 training sessions delivered to statutory and voluntary agencies on LGBTQ+ experiences of domestic abuse
- Over 200 people trained in gambling harms awareness within LGBTQ+ communities, and over 500 professionals trained through our wider gambling harms training offer
- 15+ referral pathways established for Recover with Pride, our gambling harms recovery programme
- First LGBTQ+ charity in the UK to join the Coalition to End Gambling Ads Campaign
- 50 wellbeing care packages distributed at our Winter Wellness Day, alongside free HIV testing, health checks and holistic therapies
- 50 years of Switchboard, marked throughout the year with community celebration events
- Successfully completed the transition of our helpline to Switchboard, the National LGBTQIA+ Support Line

Our Services and Achievements

The following pages set out, service by service, what we delivered in 2025/26

Recover with Pride — Gambling Harms Support

In 2025/26, Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard launched the UK's first dedicated support programme for LGBTQ+ people affected by gambling harms.

Recover with Pride is a groundbreaking national programme created to address a long-ignored public health inequality: the disproportionately high rates of gambling harm experienced by LGBTQ+ people, driven by minority stress, discrimination, isolation, financial precarity, and barriers to culturally competent support.

Co-designed and co-delivered with lived experience leaders, and evaluated by the University of Brighton, it is the first service in the UK to offer identity-affirming, trauma-informed, LGBTQ+-specific gambling harm support.



- First of its kind in the UK: no other national programme provides LGBTQ+-specific gambling harm support
- Evidence-led and co-produced, shaped by the GambLGBTQ+ study (3,038 participants), photovoice research, and lived experience advisory panels
- Trauma-informed and culturally competent, built around the realities of LGBTQ+ lives, relationships, stigma and safety
- Delivered through a trusted partnership of expertise: Switchboard (LGBTQ+), Reframe Coaching (gambling harm), and the University of Brighton (research & evaluation)

Recover with Pride Offers

- 1:1 Recovery Coaching Sessions
- Group Coaching Support
- Ongoing Health & Wellbeing Aftercare Peer Support
- Gambling Harm & LGBTQ+ Communities Training
- Prevention & Awareness Campaigns & Sessions



Recover with Pride — Gambling Harms Support

Work on this programme began in January 2025, and referrals opened to the LGBTQ+ community on 5 May 2025. Our achievements to date:

- Held a parliamentary launch of the service with the support of Baroness Gerada and John Slinger MP
- Gained national partnerships and traction across both the LGBTQ+ and gambling harm sectors
- Launched a free lunch and learn series, held every two months, bringing theory, lived experience and practical tools to the community and beyond
- Developed a toolkit with tips, advice and support at switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride
- Established over 15 referral pathways, working with public health and local authority teams
- Trained over 200 people in gambling harms in LGBTQ+ communities, helping organisations to screen, identify and refer
- Partnered with Gaydio, Scene Magazine and GamStop Group to launch national campaigns and awareness raising
- Appeared on podcasts, radio and in the media to enhance the message of gambling harm within LGBTQ+ communities
- Developed a national LGBTQ+ venue advice and marketing toolkit
- First LGBTQ+ charity to join the Coalition to End Gambling Ads Campaign
- Provided all staff with gambling harm training and reviewed all policies and the staff handbook to include gambling harms



"This service is vital. As someone from the trans community, I have experienced shame and exclusion in mainstream services, not being allowed in certain groups because of my identity — this was enough to make me relapse. I'm so happy the community have a safe space." — Service user

Domestic Abuse



This year our Domestic Abuse team continued to provide vital support to LGBTQ+ victim/survivors across Sussex. Our team of IDVAs remain dedicated to providing person-centred, trauma-informed and culturally competent support to every individual we support, whatever their identity or experience. Following the Supreme Court's April 2025 ruling on the definition of sex in the Equality Act, we reviewed how our services are organised to ensure that trans and non-binary survivors continue to receive safe, appropriate and affirming support and that commitment remains unchanged.

Key Achievements

- We supported a total of 110 LGBTQ+ victim/survivors of domestic abuse in the past year. 33 of these individuals were supported by our Brighton & Hove LGBTQ+ housing IDVA, and 77 were supported within our Sussex-wide LGBTQ+ IDVA provision
- We completed two rounds of our Polari Programme in Brighton and Hove, our specialist LGBTQ+ domestic abuse recovery programme. Those who completed the programme reported an increased connection to their community, a greater understanding of domestic abuse and how to spot the signs, and felt they had the tools to recover and manage their trauma day to day

"Having directed discussions about different aspects of DA and being able to share and hear other people's experiences helped internalise my understanding and lessen the burden I felt about my experiences".

- We delivered 8 training sessions to local statutory and voluntary agencies on LGBTQ+ experiences of domestic abuse, to raise awareness and improve the experiences of LGBTQ+ victim/survivors accessing local services

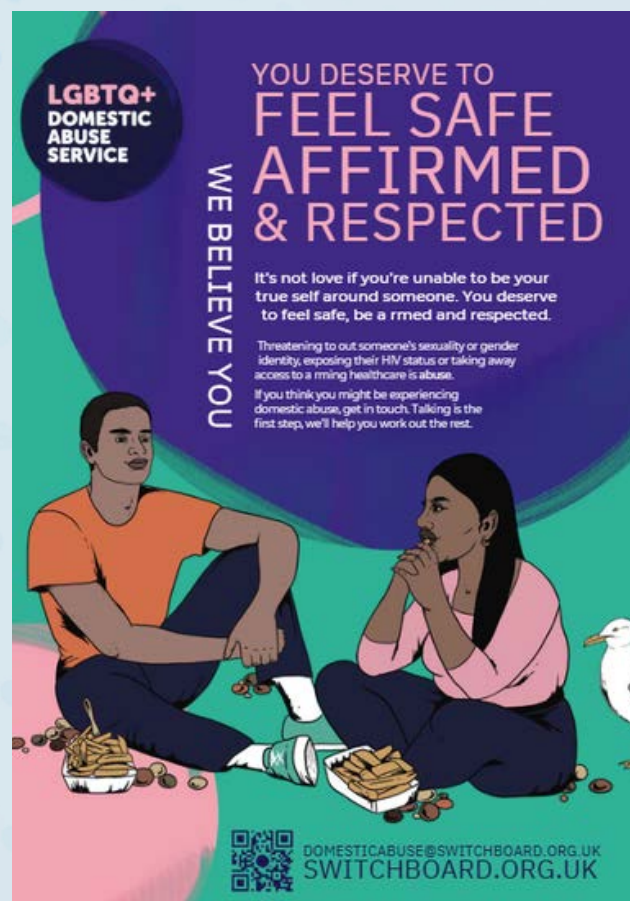
"Such an informative session. I will take lots away with me to put into practice"

"Very interesting . Main take away for me were the different presentations that da can take for lgbt people and how power dynamics and vulnerabilities can lead into domestic abuse"

Domestic Abuse

Achievements Continued

- Completed a successful first year of co-location with Brighton & Hove City Council's housing team, allowing our IDVAs to support LGBTQ+ people experiencing domestic abuse when they present as homeless to find accessible and safe accommodation
- Continued to strengthen relationships and referral pathways with local organisations to improve support for victim/survivors, including Hersana, Agal Wellbeing, Victim Support, Survivors' Network, University of Sussex, University of Brighton, Hourglass, Galop, The Clare Project, and many others
- Provided a monthly drop-in service at The Clare Project to ensure TNBI victim/survivors were able to access support in a safe space
- Completed a successful '16 Days of Activism' campaign for domestic abuse, including a social media campaign highlighting the nuances of LGBTQ+ domestic abuse, a coffee morning learning session for professionals, and attendance at multiple awareness events across Sussex
- Were successful in bidding for funding in both East and West Sussex to expand our offer of the Polari Programme and Survivors' Spaces support groups



"The support Switchboard have provided has had a massive impact on me feeling understood. Not many people understand the specific emotional abuse I experienced being in a lesbian relationship, and I didn't have to explain myself — you just got it."

"You have been my angel throughout this really difficult time. I can't thank you enough"

"Thank you for all of the support you have provided me over the past year, I genuinely feel that I would not be here today without you"

TNBI Social Prescribing

Our Trans, Non-Binary and Intersex Social Prescribing service has continued to deliver meaningful, person-centred support to LGBTQ+ people across Brighton & Hove. Despite operating within tight funding and staffing constraints, the team has achieved significant outcomes and provided vital connection, guidance and stability for those accessing the service.

The service remains a crucial lifeline for people navigating complex challenges. While current resources limit the depth and scale of what we could ideally offer, the support provided has been consistently compassionate, practical and empowering. Staff have maintained high-quality engagement even under pressure, ensuring service users feel heard, supported and connected.

Key Achievements

- Supporting a service user to successfully obtain their Gender Recognition Certificate, a milestone that had profound personal significance and was met with heartfelt thanks
- Delivering clear, compassionate information and guidance, including follow-up emails praised for their quality and usefulness
- Helping a service user navigate multiple major life changes, including securing employment and moving into safe accommodation, achieved through steady, relational support
- Acting as community connectors, linking individuals to specialist services, peer groups, and wellbeing pathways that strengthen their resilience and reduce isolation
- Providing trauma-informed, person-centred support that adapts to each individual's needs, even when time and capacity are stretched

"The best part of my role is the human connection, especially helping people feel heard and supported when they're not sure where to turn."

Switchboard staff member



Working in Partnership through UOK

Switchboard is a proud partner in UOK, a Southdown-led partnership of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations working together to support good mental health and wellbeing across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex. Funded by NHS Sussex and local authorities, the partnership brings together specialist organisations to provide accessible, inclusive and person-centred support, helping people access the right information, advice and services at the right time.

Through collaboration across the partnership, UOK aims to improve mental wellbeing, promote prevention and early intervention, reduce health inequalities, and ensure support is shaped around the diverse needs of local communities. As the specialist LGBTQ+ partner, Switchboard contributes its expertise to help ensure mental health support is inclusive, culturally competent and responsive to the needs of LGBTQ+ people.



BOLD — Supporting Older LGBTQ+ People

This year has been one of significant growth, visibility and consolidation for BOLD, with a clear focus on reducing social isolation, strengthening community belonging, and embedding trauma-informed, LGBTQ+-affirming practice across all areas of work. The programme has become more confident, more connected, and more visible across the city, with older LGBTQ+ people increasingly recognising BOLD as a trusted, welcoming and life-enhancing space.

We expanded our partnership network with organisations such as East Sussex Vision Support, Age UK (LGBTQ+ Champions), Marie Curie, and My Care Matters, enabling specialist advice, home visits, and volunteer support for those with complex needs. Our collaboration with My Care Matters, including the donation of ten Handbooks and a feature in their national newsletter, amplified our reach and highlighted BOLD as a model of inclusive ageing support.

Behind the scenes, we strengthened our infrastructure through a new online registration form, standardising safeguarding, GDPR compliance and membership processes across the older people's remit. Scoping exercises with BOLD members provided invaluable insight into what older LGBTQ+ people want and need, directly shaping future planning and service design.

Connection and communication were further enhanced through two BOLD WhatsApp groups and the continued development of the BOLD Newsletter, now co-produced following training from New Writing South/Queer Heritage. Our presence across major citywide campaigns, including the Age & Dementia Friendly BHCC Award, Ageing Well Festival, Dementia Action Week, and Age Without Limits, ensured that LGBTQ+ ageing remained visible, celebrated and understood.

Scoping also began this year for Rainbow Neighbours, a new befriending pathway for isolated and housebound older LGBTQ+ people.



BOLD — Supporting Older LGBTQ+ People

BOLD groups and community activities

BOLD delivered a vibrant and varied programme of community activities designed to bring people together, celebrate identity, and create joyful shared experiences, including visits to Preston Manor, Charleston Art Gallery to view the AIDS/HIV Quilt, two nature-based trips to Plashett Woods, two Winter/Xmas lunches, a nostalgic journey on the Volks Electric Railway, and a dedicated BOLD photo shoot. Regular coffee meet-ups at The Fitzherbert, Breakfast Club, and The Hop50 provided informal spaces for connection, with guest professionals invited to share expertise and support new members to integrate into the community.

This year also saw major developments across our dementia, bereavement and carers support pathways. We successfully re-opened the Torgate dementia peer-support group and re-launched the Lancing Beehive Dementia Café, restoring vital, identity-affirming spaces for LGBTQ+ people living with dementia and their carers. Our contribution to national conversations on inclusive dementia care was recognised through the SPIN-D Network conference in London, where our work was spotlighted and filmed.

A significant achievement was the launch of the four-month Mémoire Brain Health pilot, delivering eleven sessions that blended practical support with creative and wellbeing-focused activities, including help completing wills, Lasting Powers of Attorney, Letters of Wishes and advance statements. Following the pilot, we undertook a full re-programming of Mémoire, shaping the new Mémoire on Mondays programme.

Our bereavement pathway was strengthened through the re-establishment of Grief Encounters/Meets and the launch of Talk & Listen 1-1 sessions. The LGBTQ+ Carers Group, meeting monthly in the Switchboard office, continued to provide a safe, consistent and supportive space for carers to connect, share experiences and access emotional and practical support. Our involvement with the DETERMIND Advisory Group and collaborations with BSMS, and the Universities of Nottingham, London, Cardiff and Kent, Alzheimer's UK, and Dementia UK ensured that LGBTQ+ lived experience continues to shape national research and future dementia care.



Winter Wellness

Our Winter Wellness Day was one of the most warmly received and widely appreciated events of the year, offering a full day of holistic, practical and community-focused wellbeing support for LGBTQ+ older people. The event saw a steady flow of participants throughout the day, with many staying far longer than planned due to the welcoming atmosphere and breadth of activities on offer.

The programme brought together a rich mix of health, wellbeing and creative activities, including the BeachBox sauna, blood pressure checks, ear-wax checks and audiology advice, haircuts, HIV testing, tarot readings, massage, mindful crafting, and a dedicated quiet space for rest and reflection, delivered alongside continuous refreshments.

A total of 50 care packages were distributed, each containing high-quality items such as organic hand lotion, Himalayan soap bars, bamboo toothbrushes, nail clippers, organic lip balm, cracked-heel treatments, Korean face masks, hot water bottles, and Switchboard information. A "condom fruit bowl" added a light-hearted but important sexual-health element, reinforcing our commitment to whole-person wellbeing.

"I didn't expect to stay for long and ended up staying all day! Really great atmosphere, thank you."

Winter Wellness attendee

"Thank you for taking my blood pressure. I was worried about it until you told me it was ok — you took time to make me relaxed before you did the machine."

Winter Wellness attendee



Training

This year marked a pivotal moment for Switchboard as we developed our training offer spanning both LGBTQ+ inclusion training and our specialist Gambling Harms training into a more structured, income-generating arm of the organisation. We built the infrastructure needed to deliver high-quality, scalable training while staying grounded in our mission of improving inclusion, safety and understanding for LGBTQ+ people.

During the year, we secured our first paid training bookings, signalling a new phase of sustainability, visibility and national reach. Alongside our established inclusion training, we strengthened our specialist Gambling Harms training, positioning Switchboard as a national leader in LGBTQ+-inclusive gambling harm awareness and workforce development.



Key Highlights

- Training menu developed across inclusion and gambling harms topics (60-min, 90-min, half-day, full-day; online and in-person)
- End-to-end enquiry-to-delivery process implemented, including order form and finance handover
- Training governance documents created: Terms & Conditions, Complaints Procedure, Associate Agreement
- Learning outcomes and evaluation framework introduced to ensure quality and measurable impact
- Enquiry pipeline and tracking system built and actively maintained
- Refreshed training menu and marketing assets, including updated web copy and campaign plan
- Inclusion and Gambling Harms training delivered to a range of public and private sector organisations, and our VCSE partners
- Gambling Harms training offer expanded and delivered to over 500 professionals



You can view the training we offer for your organisation at www.switchboard.org.uk/hub/our-training

Volunteering

Volunteers have been at the heart of Switchboard since the very first phone line was staffed by volunteers back in 1975, and that remains just as true fifty years on. This year, we strengthened our volunteering programme further, refreshing our induction and training and deepening our focus on volunteer wellbeing, so that every volunteer continues to feel supported, valued and equipped to thrive.

Volunteers receive structured onboarding covering our mission, safeguarding, trauma-informed practice and inclusive communication, backed by continuous learning opportunities that strengthen both personal and professional development.

Wellbeing remains central to how we support our volunteers. We've continued to embed care and reflection into every stage of the volunteer experience, from monthly supervision and debriefs to wellbeing meetings and personal development planning.



Key Highlights

- Induction refreshed to reflect our trauma-informed ethos and inclusive values
- Ongoing training, covering safeguarding, lone working, conflict management and wellbeing
- Volunteer wellbeing framework: monthly supervision, debriefs, and health & wellbeing meetings
- Personal development planning, helping volunteers set goals, identify learning needs and celebrate growth
- Professional development pathways, supporting progression into leadership, peer support and community advocacy roles



We would like to thank each and every volunteer who has given their time to support our services and the LGBTQ+ community. If you or someone you know would like to volunteer with us, please visit

www.switchboard.org.uk/volunteering-with-us

Communications & Marketing

This year, Switchboard strengthened its communications and marketing activity, with a clear focus on increasing visibility, improving consistency, and helping more people understand the support available across our services.

During the year, we developed a more coordinated approach to social media, website content, campaigns, events and printed materials, creating a clearer public voice with stronger visual consistency and more regular communication. From autumn 2025, this more structured approach began to show a noticeable impact: reporting shows positive movement in engagement and follower growth, reflecting more consistent planning, stronger campaign delivery and a clearer rhythm of communication.

A major focus was supporting the launch and visibility of Recover with Pride. Communications work helped shape clear messaging around the service, introducing it to communities, professionals and partners in a way that felt accessible, stigma-aware and rooted in LGBTQ+ lived experience.

Communications also supported a wide range of awareness days and campaign moments, including Black History Month, LGBT+ History Month, Trans Day of Visibility, Lesbian Visibility Week, Dementia Action Week and IDAHOBIT, connecting national and international awareness dates to local support, local voices and practical action.

The launch and ongoing development of the new Switchboard website was also a major step forward: service pages were updated, navigation improved, and new content developed to make information easier to find, supporting a more professional and accessible public presence.

Looking ahead, a key priority will be increasing forward planning across communications and marketing — building stronger campaign calendars, preparing content earlier, and aligning service updates, events and awareness dates more closely.



Voices of Impact — What Changed for People

Much of what follows in this report reflects the scale of what we did this year: services launched, sessions run, people trained, pathways built. Just as important is what that support meant for the people on the other end of it. These are some of their words.

"Thank you for all of the support you have provided me over the past year. I genuinely feel that I would not be here today without you."

Domestic Abuse service user

"The support Switchboard have provided has had a massive impact on me feeling understood. Not many people understand the specific emotional abuse I experienced being in a lesbian relationship, and I didn't have to explain myself — you just got it."

Domestic Abuse service user

"This service is vital. As someone from the trans community, I have experienced shame and exclusion in mainstream services — this was enough to make me relapse. I'm so happy the community have a safe space."

Recover with Pride service user

"Having directed discussions about different aspects of DA and being able to share and hear other people's experiences helped me internalise my understanding and lessen the burden I felt about my experiences."

Polari Programme participant

Supporting a service user to successfully obtain their Gender Recognition Certificate was a milestone that had profound personal significance, and was met with heartfelt thanks — one of many examples this year of our TNBI Social Prescribing service helping someone through a major life change, alongside securing employment and moving into safe accommodation.

Looking Ahead to 2026/27

Sexual Harms Support

In 2025/26, Switchboard secured funding from the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner to develop a new Sexual Harm support offer for LGBTQIA+ people, responding to the Sussex Sexual Violence Needs Assessment and the particular barriers LGBTQIA+ people face in accessing support, including fear of discrimination, lack of inclusive provision, and concerns about being misunderstood. Design and partnership-building work took place through the year, and the service opened to referrals in May 2026. We will report in full on its first year of delivery in our 2026/27 Annual Impact Report.



Rainbow Neighbours

Our TNBI Social Prescribing and BOLD teams spent 2025/26 scoping Rainbow Neighbours, a new befriending pathway that will pair trained volunteers with older LGBTQ+ people who are isolated or housebound, building on what people told us they needed through BOLD. The programme is due to formally launch in Summer 2026, and we'll report on its impact in next year's Annual Impact Report.



Thank You to Our Donors, Commissioners and Supporters

This year, you helped us hold our community with care, dignity and hope.

To every one of our fundraisers, commissioners and donors: thank you. Your belief in our work has been more than financial support, it has been a lifeline.

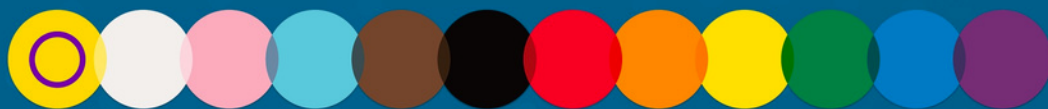
Because of you, LGBTQ+ people across our region have found someone to talk to on their hardest days. They have found safety, affirmation and connection. They have found services shaped by lived experience, delivered with compassion, and grounded in the belief that every person deserves to be seen and supported.

Your generosity has helped us reach people who felt invisible. It has allowed us to stand beside those navigating isolation, identity, grief, joy, transition, trauma and celebration. It has strengthened our ability to respond quickly, hold complexity, and meet people exactly where they are.

As we look to the year ahead, we carry your solidarity with us. We look forward to continuing these vital relationships, building new ones, and working together to create a future where every LGBTQ+ person feels supported, valued and never alone.

Thank you for standing with us. Thank you for believing in this work. Thank you for helping our community thrive.

switchboard



www.switchboard.org.uk