



# switchboard



## Communication & Marketing Strategy 2026-2028



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“As Chief Executive of Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard, I am proud to introduce this Communications & Marketing Strategy, a framework that honours the people who have shaped our organisation for fifty years and will carry us into the next fifty.”

For half a century, Switchboard has listened to and stood alongside LGBTQ+ communities through changing times. Again and again, we hear stories of people carrying hidden burdens, of shame, stigma, isolation, and distress, while trying to keep going in a world that is still not always safe or welcoming.

Communications and marketing play a critical role in responding to these realities. How we speak, how we show up, and how we represent LGBTQ+ lives shapes whether people feel seen, safe, and able to reach out for support. Our communications must be trauma-informed, intersectional, and culturally competent, ensuring that every message, campaign, and interaction reflects dignity, inclusion, and lived experience.

Our ambitions go beyond visibility. We want Switchboard’s communications to shape systems, not just services: influencing how our city, our partners, and our sector understand and respond to LGBTQ+ lives. We will strengthen our brand, amplify community voice, and ensure our communications are strategic, evidence-led, and aligned with our mission.

This strategy is both a commitment and an invitation. A commitment to our communities that we will communicate with integrity, transparency, and care. And an invitation to partners, allies, and supporters to join us in building a communications presence that is as bold, compassionate, and resilient as the people it serves.

***Rob Sainsbury (he/him)***  
**Chief Executive, Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard**





## Why We Exist

LGBTQ+ people experience disproportionate harms driven by minority stress, stigma, discrimination, social isolation, and exclusion from culturally safe support. Communications and marketing must respond to this context by:

- Challenging stigma and misinformation
- Increasing visibility of LGBTQ+ lives and needs
- Ensuring people know Switchboard exists, is safe, and is for them
- Making support accessible, dignified, and culturally competent

Mainstream services and public spaces often feel unwelcoming or unsafe. People describe environments that are “hypermasculine, heteronormative, or simply not built with LGBTQ+ lives in mind.” Our communications must counter this by modelling inclusion, representation, and affirmation.

## What LGBTQ+ communities say

People consistently ask for support that is LGBTQ+-affirming, trauma-informed, and grounded in lived experience. They want to be met by someone who “gets it,” who understands how identity, mental health, disability, racism, migration, and stigma can intertwine.

Our communications must therefore:

- Reflect diverse LGBTQ+ identities
- Use inclusive, non-pathologising language
- Centre lived experience and community voice
- Avoid assumptions, stereotypes, and exclusionary narratives
- Build trust through transparency and authenticity



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## Evidence Base

Research consistently shows that LGBTQ+ people experience higher levels of minority stress, discrimination, and social exclusion than the general population. These disparities are not caused by LGBTQ+ identities themselves, but by persistent exposure to prejudice, structural stigma, and hostile or invalidating environments. Large reviews link this to significantly elevated rates of depression, anxiety, suicidality, and substance use, particularly where people face repeated rejection, invalidation, or erasure.


Minority Stress Theory and subsequent models describe how external stressors (such as discrimination, harassment, and exclusion) and internal stressors (such as concealment, hypervigilance, and internalised stigma) combine over time to harm mental health. These frameworks have been repeatedly validated and updated, showing that LGBTQ+ people are around 1.5 times more likely to experience depression and anxiety and up to twice as likely to attempt suicide as their heterosexual peers.

For many LGBTQ+ people, these pressures are intensified by intersectional experiences of racism, ableism, class inequality, migration status, and gendered violence. Structural stigma—laws, policies, media narratives, and institutional practices that marginalise LGBTQ+ people—has been shown to worsen health outcomes and increase barriers to care. Where structural stigma is higher, mental health outcomes are poorer and help-seeking is delayed or avoided altogether.

Communications and marketing sit directly within this landscape. Evidence from public health, health communication, and stigma-reduction research shows that how organisations communicate can either reinforce harm or actively reduce it. Inclusive, affirming, and accurate communications can:

- **Reduce perceived stigma and increase safety:** When LGBTQ+ people see themselves represented respectfully in language and imagery, they are more likely to view services as safe and relevant, and more willing to seek support earlier.
- **Counter internalised stigma and shame:** Narratives that normalise LGBTQ+ identities and validate lived experience help challenge the idea that distress is a personal failing, instead locating it in hostile environments and structural inequality.
- **Build trust and engagement:** Transparent, trauma-informed messaging that avoids sensationalism and pathologising language increases trust in services and institutions, particularly among communities who have experienced previous harm or dismissal.

Research on social exclusion and LGBTQ+ mental health highlights that community-based, identity-affirming spaces are protective: they reduce distress, improve coping, and strengthen resilience. Communications and marketing are key mechanisms for making these spaces visible and accessible—signposting support, explaining what to expect, and reassuring people that they will be respected, believed, and affirmed when they reach out.



There is also growing evidence that lack of representation itself is a form of minority stress. Systematic reviews identify “lack of representation” and “navigation” as core themes in LGBTQ+ people’s accounts of stress: not seeing themselves reflected in services, campaigns, or public narratives contributes to vigilance, depersonalisation, and feelings of not belonging. Communications strategies that centre representation—across age, race, disability, gender identity, neurodivergence, and class—therefore directly address a documented stressor.

Finally, evidence shows that trauma-informed approaches improve engagement and reduce harm in mental health and community settings. Applied to communications, this means:

- Prioritising emotional safety and avoiding triggering or voyeuristic content
- Offering choice and control (e.g. content warnings, clear signposting, opt-in engagement)
- Using non-blaming, non-pathologising language
- Recognising the cumulative impact of discrimination and exclusion

By grounding our communications and marketing in this evidence base, Switchboard’s external voice becomes more than informational—it becomes an active intervention in reducing minority stress, increasing safety and belonging, and improving pathways into support for LGBTQ+ people who might otherwise remain unseen or unheard.





## Communications & Marketing Overview

Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard's communications and marketing function is central to how we show up for LGBTQ+ communities, how people find us, and how our mission is understood. Our communications are not simply informational – they are relational, cultural, and strategic. They shape how people perceive safety, belonging, and trust. They influence whether someone feels able to reach out for support, whether partners recognise our expertise, and whether funders understand the impact of our work.

Our communications ecosystem spans digital platforms, campaigns, community engagement, brand identity, media relations, and storytelling. Each element plays a vital role in ensuring that LGBTQ+ people can access safe, inclusive, culturally competent support when they need it most. Communications must reflect lived experience, compassion, and cultural insight, strengthening our services and deepening our connection to the communities we serve.

Communications and marketing activity supports Switchboard across a wide range of functions. Operational communications ensure our services are visible, accessible, and clearly signposted, helping people navigate support with confidence. Digital communications, including our website, social media, newsletters, and online campaign, extend our reach across Sussex and beyond, ensuring that people who may feel isolated, unseen, or unsure where to turn can find us easily and safely. Strategic communications underpin fundraising, partnership development, and advocacy, ensuring that our work is understood, valued, and championed by stakeholders.

We embed community insight throughout our communications practice. Feedback from service users, volunteers, partners, and LGBTQ+ communities informs how our messages land, how our imagery represents people, and how our language reflects the realities of those most affected by inequality, discrimination, and exclusion. This ongoing dialogue strengthens our cultural competence and ensures our communications remain genuinely community-rooted.

Communications play a vital role across all our specialist programmes. In bereavement services, sensitive and trauma-informed messaging helps people understand that grief support is available without judgement. In our older LGBTQ+ and dementia services, communications reduce isolation by promoting safe, affirming spaces where people can connect. In our TNBI social prescribing and gambling harms work, clear, identity-affirming communications help people feel understood, respected, and able to access the help they need. Across all services, communications ensure that people know what we offer, who it is for, and how to reach us safely.

Across these areas, communications help build resilience, reduce isolation, and create the kind of community-led visibility that research consistently shows is essential for LGBTQ+ wellbeing. Our communications are not simply operational – they are transformational. They shape narratives, challenge stigma, and ensure that LGBTQ+ people across Sussex and beyond are recognised, supported, and never left behind.



## Alignment to Switchboard Strategy

Communications and marketing are not standalone functions; they are embedded across Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard's broader organisational strategy. As Switchboard approaches its 50th anniversary, the charity has set out five strategic themes: Financial Resilience, Governance Maturity, Service Impact & Growth, Partnership Leverage, and Risk Assurance. Communications and marketing directly contribute to each of these objectives, strengthening our visibility, credibility, and long-term sustainability.

### Financial Resilience

Strategic communications strengthen Switchboard's financial sustainability by increasing visibility, trust, and engagement across donors, funders, and supporters.

- **Income for impact:** Clear, compelling storytelling and impact reporting enhance fundraising campaigns, grant applications, and donor stewardship, generating unrestricted income that supports Switchboard's wider services.
- **Brand visibility:** Strong, consistent branding increases public recognition, making Switchboard more visible to potential supporters, partners, and funders.
- **Cost-effective reach:** Digital communications provide high-impact, low-cost ways to reach communities across Sussex, reducing reliance on paid advertising and increasing return on investment.
- **Supporter engagement:** Regular newsletters, campaigns, and social content deepen supporter relationships, improving donor retention and long-term giving.

### Governance Maturity

Communications underpin transparency, accountability, and organisational integrity, core components of governance maturity.

- **Transparent communication:** Clear, accessible messaging about our services, impact, and decision-making strengthens accountability to trustees, funders, and communities.
- **Safeguarding excellence:** Trauma-informed communications ensure that public-facing content aligns with Switchboard's safeguarding framework, avoiding harm and modelling best practice.
- **Consistent standards:** A communications governance framework, including brand guidelines, language guidance, and approval processes, ensures accuracy, consistency, and compliance across all platforms.
- **Evidence-led practice:** Communications draw on research, evaluation, and community insight, ensuring our public voice reflects lived realities and organisational learning.



## Service Impact & Growth

Communications are essential to ensuring LGBTQ+ people know our services exist, understand what we offer, and feel safe to access support.

- **Expanding reach:** Strategic marketing increases awareness of Switchboard's services – from bereavement and older LGBTQ+ support to TNBI social prescribing and gambling harms work, ensuring people can find help when they need it.
- **Enhancing quality:** Trauma-informed, culturally competent messaging ensures services are communicated in ways that feel safe, inclusive, and accessible.
- **Reducing barriers:** Clear, non-clinical, identity-affirming language reduces fear, shame, and uncertainty, encouraging earlier help-seeking.
- **National visibility:** High-quality campaigns, media engagement, and digital storytelling amplify Switchboard's profile, helping the organisation reach new audiences and influence national conversations on LGBTQ+ wellbeing.

## Partnership Leverage

Communications strengthen Switchboard's role as a connector, collaborator, and influencer across sectors.


- **Cross-sector engagement:** Strategic messaging supports collaboration with NHS partners, local authorities, universities, and LGBTQ+ organisations by clearly articulating our offer, expertise, and impact.
- **Community convening:** Communications promote events, campaigns, and shared initiatives that bring together communities, partners, and stakeholders.
- **Advocacy and influence:** Evidence-led communications amplify LGBTQ+ voices and highlight systemic inequalities, strengthening Switchboard's credibility in local and national advocacy.
- **Referral pathways:** Clear, accessible information supports partners to refer people into Switchboard's services confidently and appropriately.

## Risk Assurance

Communications play a critical role in safeguarding reputation, ensuring accuracy, and maintaining public trust.

- **Mitigating engagement risks:** Trauma-informed, inclusive messaging ensures communications remain relevant, respectful, and reflective of community needs, reducing the risk of harm or disengagement.
- **Crisis communications:** Clear protocols ensure Switchboard can respond effectively to misinformation, safeguarding concerns, or reputational risks.
- **Data protection and GDPR:** Communications processes ensure compliance with data protection standards, particularly in digital marketing, photography, and case studies.
- **Operational resilience:** Strong internal communications support continuity during staffing transitions, organisational change, or periods of high demand.





## Our Strategic Fit

Communications and marketing embed Switchboard's values of inclusion, dignity, and community leadership into every layer of the organisation, ensuring our public voice remains a living expression of our mission and ethos.

Communications strengthen Switchboard's national profile as a convenor and influencer by showcasing how community-driven, trauma-informed practice can shape inclusive service models and sector standards.

Communications build organisational resilience by increasing visibility, strengthening supporter engagement, and diversifying income streams, creating a sustainable foundation for long-term impact.

Communications expand service reach and depth, enabling Switchboard to deliver compassionate, identity-affirming support across all programmes, from bereavement and older person services to TNBI social prescribing and community engagement.

Communications reinforce governance maturity by ensuring transparency, accuracy, and accountability, and by embedding inclusive, evidence-led practice across all public-facing work.





# Our Communication & Marketing Vision, Mission & Values

## Vision

A trusted, visible, inclusive communications presence that strengthens Switchboard's impact and ensures every LGBTQ+ person knows they can access safe, affirming support.



## Mission

To deliver strategic, trauma-informed, community-rooted communications that amplify LGBTQ+ voices, strengthen our brand, and support organisational growth, inclusion, and resilience.



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## Values

- **Lived Experience at the Core:** Communications reflect authenticity, insight, and community voice.
- **Trauma-Informed Practice:** Safety, dignity, and respect underpin every message.
- **Cultural Competence & Inclusion:** Communications reflect intersectional LGBTQ+ identities.
- **Evidence-Led & Transparent:** Messaging is grounded in research, learning, and accountability.
- **Collaboration & Partnership:** Communications strengthen community connections and cross-sector pathways.
- **Sustainability & Ethical Growth:** Communications are strategic, responsible, and aligned with organisational capacity.

LIVED  
EXPERIENCES  
AT THE CORE



TRAUMA-  
INFORMED  
PRACTICE



CULTURAL  
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& INCLUSION



EVIDENCE-LED  
& TRANSPARENT



COLLABORATION  
& PARTNERSHIP



SUSTAINABLE  
& ETHICAL  
GROWTH



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# Communication & Marketing Strategic Pillars

## Pillar 1: Brand Excellence



### Objectives

- Strengthen Switchboard's brand identity
- Ensure consistent, inclusive messaging
- Increase visibility across Sussex and nationally

### Key Actions

- Launch a refreshed brand and messaging framework
- Develop a Switchboard Style & Language Guide
- Implement monthly brand monitoring

## Pillar 2: Inclusion, Representation & Lived Experience



### Objectives

- Ensure communications reflect diverse LGBTQ+ identities
- Embed lived experience in content creation
- Use inclusive language and imagery across all platforms

### Key Actions

- Co-produce campaigns with community members
- Provide intersectional inclusion training for staff



### Pillar 3: Governance, Safeguarding & Quality Assurance



#### Objectives

- Align communications with safeguarding, GDPR, and risk frameworks
- Ensure accuracy, transparency, and ethical practice
- Maintain a communications risk register

#### Key Actions

- Quarterly safeguarding and communications audits
- Annual accessibility and inclusion review
- Updated communications handbook aligned with organisational frameworks

### Pillar 4: Sustainability & Growth



#### Objectives

- Strengthen fundraising and donor communications
- Build long-term engagement with communities and partners
- Develop scalable communications models for future partnerships

#### Key Actions

- Build key partnerships nationally and locally
- Develop a whole organisational approach to communications and marketing



# The Overview of Our Two-Year Strategy

Over the next two years, Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard's communications and marketing strategy will move through two distinct but connected phases: Foundations & Re-Launch (2026) and Expansion & Deepening Impact (2027–2028). Together, these phases will strengthen our brand, visibility, and engagement, ensuring that every message we share reflects our values of inclusion, dignity, and community leadership.



## Phase 1: Foundations & Re-Launch (2026)

Our focus is on building strong foundations for consistent, trauma-informed, and inclusive communications. We will refresh our brand identity and messaging framework to ensure clarity, accessibility, and cultural competence across all channels. A new website and digital content strategy will improve navigation and visibility, while internal communications systems will align teams and strengthen collaboration. We will deliver training for staff and volunteers on inclusive language, trauma-informed storytelling, and safeguarding in communications, embedding best practice across the organisation. Alongside this, we will launch a visibility campaign across Sussex to celebrate Switchboard's 50th anniversary, raise awareness of our services, and reaffirm our role as a trusted voice for LGBTQ+ communities.



## Phase 2: Expansion & Deepening Impact (2027 & 2028)

we will build on these foundations to expand our reach and influence. Communications activity will grow in scale and sophistication, with new campaigns developed across our service areas, including bereavement, older LGBTQ+ and dementia support, domestic abuse, TNBI social prescribing, and gambling harms work. We will introduce specialist content streams that highlight lived experience, research insights, and community stories, positioning Switchboard as a thought leader in inclusive communications. Our national visibility will increase through partnerships, media engagement, and sector collaboration, while fundraising and donor communications will be strengthened through storytelling and impact reporting. Evaluation and analytics will be refined to measure engagement, reach, and sentiment, ensuring continuous improvement and accountability.



# Communication & Marketing Framework

Communications and marketing have always been central to Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard's visibility, credibility, and connection with the communities we serve.

As the organisation approaches its 50th anniversary, the Communications & Marketing Framework provides a clear, strategic foundation for how we communicate our mission, values, and impact across all areas of our work. It recognises communications not simply as promotion, but as a vital part of Switchboard's infrastructure, cultural competence, and long-term sustainability.

The framework sets out a structured approach to messaging, digital engagement, brand management, and public relations, ensuring that all communications are safe, inclusive, and aligned with Switchboard's values of dignity, representation, and community leadership. It reflects our commitment to trauma-informed practice, equitable access, and meaningful participation for LGBTQ+ people across diverse identities and lived experiences.

Communications strengthen every part of Switchboard – from service delivery and fundraising to governance, partnerships, and volunteer engagement. Our messaging and digital presence amplify the voices of those we serve, deepen community connection, and ensure our work remains visible, trusted, and relevant. The framework ensures that this contribution is supported by robust systems, clear accountability, and consistent quality assurance.

For trustees, the Communications & Marketing Framework provides assurance that communications are governed effectively, embedded within organisational strategy, and contributing directly to Switchboard's strategic pillars: Financial Resilience, Governance Maturity, Service Impact & Growth, Partnership Leverage, and Risk Assurance. It outlines how we maintain safeguarding, uphold EDI commitments, evaluate engagement, and continuously improve our communications practice. It also ensures that communications remain a resilient and scalable asset as the organisation grows.

In essence, the Communications & Marketing Framework positions communications as a strategic driver of Switchboard's mission – strengthening our visibility, expanding our reach, and ensuring that our public voice continues to reflect the compassion, integrity, and leadership that define Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard.



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## Key Performance Indicators (Year by Year)

Objective	2026	2027	2028	Total
Campaigns Delivered	6	10	12	28
Website Engagement Increase	+15%	+20%	+25%	+60%
Social Media Reach	+20%	+25%	+30%	+75%
Brand Recognition (Surveyed)	70%	80%	85%	85%
Partner Engagement	10	15	20	45
Community Satisfaction with Communications	85%	90%	90%	90%



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