



**TRANSFORMING  
FUTURES**



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Evaluation Report  
October 2024

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## Acknowledgements

TRANSforming Futures was project managed by Stonewall and LGBT Consortium, in partnership with Be:North, CliniQ, Galop, Gendered Intelligence, GIRES, Mermaids, Sparkle, and UK Black Pride.

The project was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

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# Executive Summary

TRANSforming Futures ran for six years as a trans-led programme aiming to support trans-led organisations, groups or projects to benefit trans people in England. As an initial step, research reports set out evidence around three priority areas and the programme then provided funding and other support to a wide range of related activities operating at a range of scales and scopes.

It is particularly notable how projects responded to needs identified by the trans community and how much some projects delivered with very modest amounts of funding. However, it is important to note and try to mitigate where possible the impact of the trans-hostile external environment on both initiatives and the people involved in delivery.

There are multiple lessons for organisations and initiatives aiming to support trans-led initiatives for the benefit of trans people. There is an ongoing and urgent need to support trans-led work through longer-term funding and other support. This funding and support should be accessible and flexible to a range of trans-led initiatives, including grassroots groups and projects. It is also important that funders provide core funding. There are a number of priority areas for support, but it is also important to ensure funding is available on an open basis to respond to needs as they emerge, as well as to support work aiming to influence public policy.

Funding-plus models should support capacity-building and skills development for trans-led organisations, groups, and projects. Given the capacity challenges of small and grass-roots organisations, it is important to ensure that learning and development opportunities are as accessible as possible.

Programmes supporting trans-led initiatives should maximise opportunities to take a trans-led approach across all aspects of their work, including within programme design, research, funding criteria and processes, application assessments and peer-to-peer support. Programmes are strengthened by partnership working, so it is important to proactively consider how partners with different levels of capacity can be meaningfully involved in initiatives.

Two specific practical issues also emerged during the evaluation. Firstly, it can be very hard to access affordable and trans-inclusive venues. Secondly, groups can experience a range of banking-related difficulties, especially where they are more grassroots. It is important to support such groups and projects to overcome these challenges.

There is a vibrant and ambitious network of trans-led organisations, groups and projects across the country responding in varied ways to trans people's needs. Reliable funding and support can enable these powerful initiatives to support trans people in what remains a very difficult environment.

# Introduction

**TRANSforming Futures**  
Evaluation Report  
October 2024

TRANSforming Futures was established by a group of trans equality focused organisations working together as a six-year project from 2018 to 2024. The partner organisations were Be:North, CliniQ, Galop, Gendered Intelligence, GIRES, LGBT Consortium, Mermaids, Sparkle, Stonewall and UK Black Pride. The programme was funded and supported by the National Lottery Community Fund.

The TRANSforming Futures project came from a need to create space for, and make a record of, trans communities' ideas, experiences and voices. The programme aimed to create lasting change for trans communities in the healthcare and criminal justice systems.

The programme first supported three reports on healthcare, criminal justice and young people. Drawing on a survey, community workshops and contributions from health, criminal justice and community experts, the research details trans people's experiences of problems. They highlight participants' proposed solutions to some of these problems.

The programme then awarded £260,000 of funding to trans-led projects over two rounds of applications to support work linked to needs and/or recommendations identified in the three reports. The first round had 22 applications and the second round had 101. Some applicants applied to both rounds where they had been unsuccessful in round one. Applications were assessed by panels of partners and community assessors. The programme was able to support 18 projects with the available funding. These projects ran from spring/summer 2023 to spring/ summer 2024.

The evaluation of the programme ran from late 2023 to autumn 2024. A short film was also made to document some of the work delivered during the programme.



# ACHE (Alliance for Care & Health Empowerment

Researching and creating a report on informed consent and a healthcare resource pack

*based:* Brighton | *reach:* national | *theme:* health  
[ache-together.org](https://ache-together.org)

The programme supported ACHE to deliver an informed consent report and a trans health resource. The informed consent report is aimed at healthcare professionals and academics, demonstrating the wealth of knowledge available regarding the practice of Informed Consent as a model for delivering trans healthcare, and arguing for the significant benefits of its implementation over pre-existing pathologising models.

Additionally, ACHE analysed variations in models of informed consent delivery in order to produce Best Practice Guidelines for Informed Consent Trans Healthcare. The second output is a resource on all-things trans health: by trans people, for trans people. ACHE collated some of the vast, incredible wisdom shared by trans people that's already out there, scattered across the web, and in zines and in conversations.

The information is particularly focused on giving trans people more information to make truly informed choices wherever possible, or at least to be more informed about their experiences right now, in an effort to bring informed consent to the people as much as we can.

## Black Trans Foundation

Providing accessible therapy for black trans people

*based:* London | *reach:* national | *theme:* health  
[instagram.com/blacktransfoundation](https://instagram.com/blacktransfoundation)

The programme supported the Black Trans Foundation to provide six months of free therapy to Black trans and non-binary people. This helps to address the financial gap which often makes therapy inaccessible to the Black trans community by funding these sessions. They also reduce the emotional labour that is involved in finding a therapist as they find the therapists and deal with all the admin. All of their therapists share partial or whole lived experience with our clients.

From late 2020 they supported 57 Black trans people to access 4-6 months of therapy, so the support from TRANSforming Futures in 2023-24 contributed to this. Unfortunately, the Black Trans Foundation will close in Spring 2025 once the current service users have finished their course of therapy.

# Canterbury Trans Network

Providing targeted support and attending local events

based: Kent | reach: local | theme: health

[canterburytransnetwork.co.uk](http://canterburytransnetwork.co.uk)

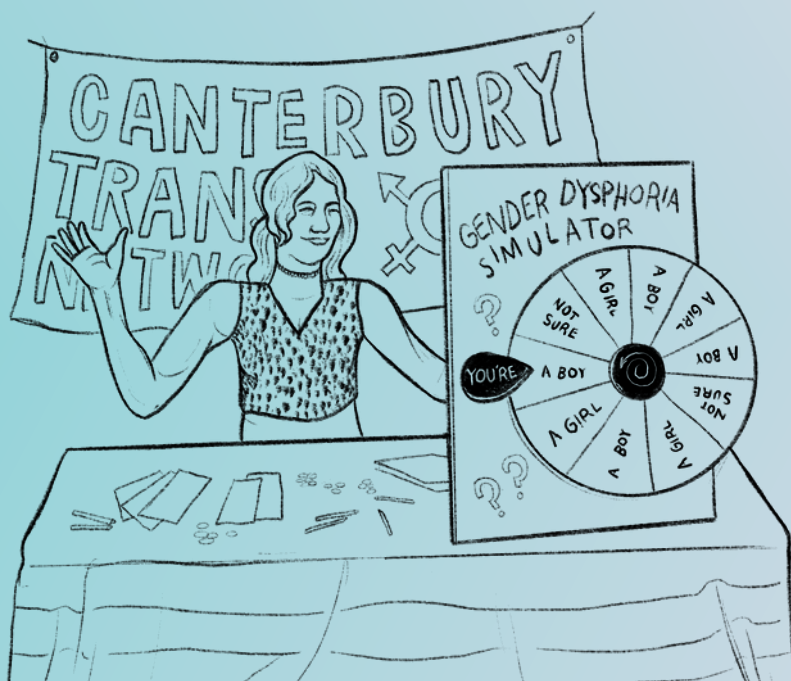
Canterbury Trans Network is a mutual aid network and social community open to transgender, non-binary, and intersex adults or adults who are questioning their gender identity. With support from the programme the network offered financial assistance to local people through a Consultation Aid Fund and Gender Affirming Fund, as well as purchased resources for attendance at Canterbury Pride and other local events. The network also organised a minibus to enable members with limited means of transport or mobility issues to attend Brighton Trans Pride.

A good proportion of the network's members are still at university or recent graduates so their access to funds can be very limited while their mental health issues can be acute. The two funds aimed to address this issue in very practical ways. The Consultation Aid Fund provided individual grants for people to access a medical consultation to be able to start their transition. Given the extremely long waiting list for these appointments, this direct support helped people overcome a first hurdle and for example to then access hormone treatment. People reported back that they had improved mental health and felt like they were starting their process.

The Gender Affirming Fund provided individual grants for people to spend on anything reasonable to support their transition, including clothing, make-up or haircuts. Again, these grants have supported people in very tangible ways to live as their authentic selves.

The group is keen to share and celebrate the steps people are taking. This kind of celebration can be very important in the current climate. This also applies to people who have not taken up any funding themselves.

The Network intends to reopen the mutual aid grants in the future. The Network would also like to take action to better connect the trans+ groups in Kent, for example in Folkestone, Herne Bay and Margate.



*"I had started saving up prior to receiving the money, but after receiving the money I've been able to sign up to GenderGP and have now been on HRT for 3 months!"*

Service user

# Dandelion DIY

## Harm reduction info centre and needle exchange for self-medicating HRT

based: Bristol | reach: local | theme: health

dandeliondiy.com

Dandelion DIY is a Bristol-based harm reduction group for trans+ people who are self-medicating with HRT (also known as DIY). They provide support at drop-ins and DIY harm reduction training to other groups. While they had identified the need for the initiative beforehand, the programme funding enable the group to actually start running the drops-ins and providing exchange kits. The programme also gave access to mentoring support from a contact at the Bridge Project who provided advice on injections support and reviewing the draft of Dandelion's guides.

The project has helped connect people who can often be isolated and stigmatised. This means some people also attend the drop-ins when they don't need any equipment and attend for the other benefits of being part of this community.

*"I feel like we've really created a sense of community and the people who come to our drop-ins which has been really nice... There's a stigma, it's a bit lonely, people don't know anyone who does this. There are people who come every single week and they don't really need anything from us every week... People almost always stay for an hour or something."*

Awardee

Dandelion have also reached out to other local harm reduction professionals and initiatives, including the Bristol Drugs Project and Love Tank/ Prepster. As a result of this the Bristol Drugs Project will soon have a specific intake form for people self-medicating HRT and Dandelion and Love Tank will be jointly publishing some resources. Dandelion have found it hard to engage with other professionals in the health sector, including GPs and hope that this can improve in the future.

This harm reduction work can be hard to access funding for. The project can continue for now as costs are manageable. The group will continue to apply for funding where there seems to be a fit with funders and also aims to generate some of its own income through providing training to other organisations and professionals.



# Double Okay

## Accessing welfare training

based: Reading | reach: local | theme: health

[doubleokay.org](http://doubleokay.org)

Double Okay is a grassroots queer and trans artist collective based in Reading that runs a range of events to support and celebrate the local queer and trans community. The collective identified a need to develop their approach to running events for the local community.

The programme supported Double Okay to access welfare training to inform their approach to running their events in an ethical and safe way. The training was delivered by Safe Only. TRANSforming Futures facilitated the connection with Safe Only and allocated budget to fund this training and paid Safe Only directly, reducing the administrative burden on Double Okay.

***"We don't necessarily get the opportunity to talk to other people running events. About how they approach it. So it was a really great space to have that discussion and start trying to create this baseline level of ethics and welfare that can be applied across Reading events... It made us feel more confident in what we were doing and being able to take that on to future events and apply it."***

Awardee

The training provided an opportunity for the Double Okay team to share their previous internal discussions with others with expertise in this area. This provided reassurance that others had had similar discussions and challenges and increased the team's confidence to manage these issues.

This support from the programme was modest but precisely what Double Okay felt they needed and which they would be able to benefit from. Being part of the programme helped them navigate towards finding the support they wanted and make strong connections with other organisations.

Double Okay would like to continue to access training to support their work, including training for protest.



# Forge

Health-based sessions for trans men, transmasculine people and non-binary people assigned female at birth

based: Manchester | reach: local | theme: health

[foragemcr.org.uk](http://foragemcr.org.uk)

Forge is Manchester's adult social and support group for trans men, transmasculine people, and non-binary people assigned female at birth. With support from the programme, Forge ran a series of health-based sessions. All sessions were trans-led and where possible in trans-owned venues. Forge are really proud that all sessions have been trans-led, but this commitment has also been their biggest challenge, especially for the more niche sessions.

Sessions have been diverse and aimed to responses to local people's needs and request. For example, Forge's members can be uncomfortable expressing their fitness goals in gyms, for example their aim to have a more masculine physique. Sessions have included an introduction to fitness in a gym setting, binder relief massage, discussion of top surgery, packing advice, intimacy and queer platonic relationships and crafting. It has been particularly helpful to discuss topics and issues in terms of what occurs in the body, for example what happens within the body when someone experiences stress. This helps people to better understand and manage moments of stress and to feel greater agency in these situations.

Sign up and attendance have been hard to manage. The trans community is more neurodiverse than average and for a number of reasons this can mean people do not attend sessions. Some people have also struggled to afford to travel to activities. This uncertainty can make it hard to find a mutually fair way of booking and paying session leaders and venues. Forge also ran some online sessions to help reach those who may not attend face-to-face sessions. Future work in this area is dependent on funding for session leaders and venues. Forge would like to repeat or build on sessions run to date. They would also like to offer sessions run by health professionals, so that more medical insight and advice can be provided alongside the sharing of experiences by people with lived experience. Forge have also had request to run residential.

*"[The session leader] had a vast array of knowledge on fitness and how it affects recovery in things like top/bottom surgery and it was helpful to have explanations on the whys and how certain things work."*

*Surgery and fitness discussion attendee*

*"Very insightful, nice to have more in depth think about different kinds of relationships I'd never put much thought into before."*

*Queer platonic relationships workshop attendee*

*"I was nervous as heck at first but settled in really quickly and had a really good time"*

*Craft workshop attendee*

# Francis Myerscough

## Developing and delivering a pilot training for creative therapists working with trans young people

*based: Bristol | reach: local | theme: health*

[fmyerscoughmusictherapist.com](http://fmyerscoughmusictherapist.com)

Francis Myerscough is a Music Therapist. Francis collaborated with Molly Holland, a Creative Arts Therapist to develop and deliver of a pilot training for creative therapists working with trans young people. Francis and Molly ran surveys to help develop the training. One survey asked trans people and found family about what they would like therapists to know and ask about. For trans people this included helping therapists to better understand the political and social climate and its impact on trans people. Another survey asked therapists what they would like to learn about working with trans young people.

Nine people attended the pilot training. They were principally art, music and drama therapists. Attendees were mostly local, but some were from other areas. The six-hour training session was delivered for free on condition that participants provided feedback. The course can be counted as part of therapists' continued professional development (CPD).

Feedback was very positive overall and included suggestions to deliver the training in other parts of the country. The training had helped one participant to change how they work within a school environment, while maintaining a good relationship with the school. A cis participant said the course gave them the confidence they could work with trans young people. Another participant said the training would inform how they deliver their own training.

The pilot training session was delivered shortly after the publication of the Cass Report. So the training could include this within the report (the first part of the training explored the impact of the current political and policy context) and also emphasized the importance of the training in terms of supporting trans young people.

There are a number of ways the training and associated activities could be taken forward. The training is now offered on a paid-for basis, this may include an online version and delivery in other parts of the country. Some of the training participants fed back a further need for supervision, so Francis and Molly are exploring how this could be offered, including running some one-off supervision sessions as part of two upcoming conferences. There may be an opportunity to create a version of the training for therapists working in a school setting, but this would require significant development input to adapt it.

# Fumble

**Sex and relationships content for trans+ young people created by trans+ young people**

**based: Sheffield | reach: national | theme: young people**

**fumble.org.uk**

Fumble is a youth charity supporting young people with their mental health, sexual health and relationships in the digital age. With support from the programme, Fumble and young trans+ people have produced a trans+ content series about sex and relationships.

Fumble ran an online survey for trans+ young people to better understand what information they would like and how they would like it to be presented. Over 340 young people responded to this survey, over half of whom described themselves as disabled or neurodivergent. The findings were written up in a Trans+ and non-binary young people's experiences of accessing sex education online report. 100 of these respondents expressed an interest in joining the committee to shape and create content. Following a thorough process, including safeguarding training and managing risks related to the current climate, being trans young, as well as safely operating in online and digital spaces, 12 people were confirmed as committee members.

Using the data gathered from the survey, Fumble worked with the committee to decide on content briefs. Committee members had complete autonomy over the content briefs they chose to write, contribute to, send audio clips in for, and review. Committee members' time was paid for by the project. To manage risks, content was shared via Fumble's existing channels. To protect the young people involved Fumble did not use Instagram ads and comments were turned off. This did limit reach for the content, but the young people's safety was paramount and it meant the launch of the content didn't get any negative publicity or trolling. During the lifetime of the funding this project reached 6,000 young people and the content will reach more young people after the project

***"The content [the young people] went away and wrote was just so personal and insightful. And you know, they are literally young people aged 16 to 24 was the age range we had... We already know that it's important to amplify young people's voices, but I think it just highlighted how important it is, especially for this community and demographic of young people at the moment."***

*Awardee*



The young people themselves have said that they have learnt a lot about collaborative working, time management, organisational skills, communications skills and working remotely. The majority of the young people wanted to continue working with us. Four have joined Fumble's Youth Advisory Board and Fumble is in the process of finding opportunities for the others to stay involved as they want to and have the availability for, including contributing to project evaluation-based videos, presenting at Sex Education Forum's Spring event, and the opportunity to apply for our Summer Placement and Graduate Role.

Fumble benefited from being part of the programme by having easy access to some of the partner organisations, for example Fumble consulted Gendered Intelligence while creating their bespoke safeguarding training, TransActual gave press and media advice and TRANSforming Futures programme staff reviewed their campaign plan and crisis comms strategy. Fumble still has a long list of potential content that trans+ young people expressed needing in the survey data, and will be prioritising creating further content with young people according to needs and available funding.

Despite challenges, Fumble believes that their co-creation model and work is very sustainable both in terms of producing the most relevant content and being able to amplify young people's voices.

*"[It was] a great opportunity and experience to gain knowledge and information on trans topics in a group of people similar to you. You feel safe and included and you gain experience for future work experiences."*

*Committee member*

*"Being part of the committee introduced me to some amazing people and helped me develop my confidence in talking to others in a meeting setting, sharing my ideas, public speaking, and asking for help, setting professional boundaries and requesting reasonable accommodations for my time, emotional tether, and ability."*

*Committee member*



# Generate

## Establishing a support group for trans people in Doncaster

based: Doncaster | reach: local | theme: health

[generate.org.uk](https://generate.org.uk)

Generate works to connect and empower transgender, non-binary and gender diverse people, improving their mental health and wellbeing, self-confidence and resilience. Founded in York, Generate has expanded to support trans people in other areas. The programme supported Generate to establish a support group for trans people in Doncaster as some local trans residents had told Generate that there was no trans-specific support group in the city and that there was a need to establish a support group.

The group meetings face-to-face and online. People attending the groups are at different points in their journey in exploring their gender identity and taking gender-affirming action. This includes people who are just starting to consider their gender identity, to those who have been on hormone treatment for a number of years and have had gender-affirming surgery.

It has taken time to build up the group over the year. There is now a group of almost 20 people attending meet-ups and half a dozen people attend each face-to-face or online meet-up. Strong connections have been formed between members and some members have built the confidence to join Generate's activities in York as well. Consistency and regularity of sessions is important; members of the group have shared how even when they don't attend a particular session, they find it reassuring that the session is taking place and that they can attend a future one.

*"I have lived in Doncaster all my life. I am a confident individual but that doesn't mean I have it all worked out. Generate has given me space to think about the next steps of my transition and a space to meet other people who have taken different directions to me. It is great to be able to relax and have a conversation with someone who you know just gets it and you don't have to try and explain yourself all the time."*

*Service user*

A major challenge for the project has been trans people's fear of presenting as they would like to and going out in the evening in Doncaster. The project has met a good number of people at Doncaster Pride where people feel safety in numbers, but who are then fearful to attend sessions in the city. Some people are happy to travel after dark to attend Generate activities in York, when they would not travel within Doncaster after dark. People have also had difficult experiences using local taxis, so it is not necessarily an option to use taxis to get to sessions. While personal safety concerns apply to all sorts of people perceived to be 'different', but the current trans-hostile media and political climate adds to and amplifies trans people's fears. To try to reduce these concerns, the face-to-face monthly drop-ins start mid to late afternoon on a Sunday. Generate also started more outreach work and running regular online sessions to provide an alternative to face-to-face meet-ups.

Another challenge has been volunteer and staff changes, though changes have also provided opportunities for other volunteers to step up and lead work. Separately to this funding, the project does support parents of trans and non-binary people which Doncaster parents can benefit from, but the project has highlighted the unmet needs of trans young people in Doncaster as there is no trans-specific support for young people in Doncaster (Generate does not work directly with under 18s). Generate would also like to see statutory organisations and partners taking systemic action to reduce local residents' safety concerns.

Generate attended Doncaster Pride again in August 2024 and will run the face-to-face and online sessions in Doncaster until the end of 2024. Being able to run the sessions in 2025 and beyond is subject to funding. Given the support from TRANSforming Futures to deliver the more intense set-up work, the funding required to now continue the support group is modest but much needed.

# The Kite Trust

**Supporting young trans people to have their voices heard**

*based: Ely | reach: local | theme: young people*

**thekitetrust.org.uk**

The Kite Trust supports LGBTQ+ young people aged up to 30 in Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and surrounding areas. The programme funded by TRANSforming Futures supported the co-production with trans young people of workshops delivered to local professionals and policy-makers. It also supported The Kite Trust to continue to develop their networks to influence policy and practice locally, to make improvements to the mental health and wellbeing of trans youth.

A set of workshops were delivered for trans young people, allowing The Kite Trust to create trans-focused spaces centring the needs, voices and priorities of trans young people. This was particularly important given the challenges facing trans young people in recent months, especially relating to healthcare, which have left many trans young people feeling distressed and not heard. Following feedback from young people, rather than immediately launching a Young Trans Advocates Panel, The Kite Trust instead provided numerous standalone workshops in different locations and formats, to maximise interest and accessibility to appeal to young people with busy lives. This allowed a range of topics to be covered, engaging young people with different interests and ensuring young people felt they were being listened to.

***"Although all of our spaces are obviously trans-inclusive and trans elevating, actually having the space that was specifically just for trans people has been really important."***

*Awardee*

In some of the workshops, trans young people co-designed new training for professionals on working sensitively and confidently with trans young people. The co-designed workshops were delivered for free to health and social care professionals across the region. The Kite Trust has found that the training has a particular power as it is coming directly from trans young people. As well as shaping the overall content, direct quotes and messages from these young people are included in the training and in some cases trans young people were involved in delivering the training. Feedback from participants has indicated that knowing that the training is based on the views and priorities of trans young people, and hearing from this group directly, helps them connect to the topic in a different way and aid their empathy and understanding.

***"I've been really pleased to be delivering a training that we know is directly from the needs and the voices of trans young people, rather than something that we as grown-ups have decided."***

*Training attendee*

***"It does hit differently when it's actually coming from trans young people."***

*Training attendee*



The training was delivered in one-hour free sessions to maximise uptake, allowing professionals who were short on time or budget for professional development to benefit from this training. This did mean difficult decisions had to be made about what to include within the limited time. The key change suggested to the training by participants in the post-training survey and through informal feedback was that it needed to be longer. The Kite Trust have therefore developed an extended version of this training, still centring the voices and priorities of trans young people but allowing more space for in-depth exploration of these important topics, and discussion and other activities.

Other workshops provided spaces for trans young people to develop their skills and understanding of local politics and government. Local politicians supported these workshops, giving trans young people space to ask questions and be heard and see trans role models in important roles locally. Following the General Election, trans young people from The Kite Trust wrote to the new health and social care secretary Wes Streeting, to which he responded.

Importantly, this work has been an opportunity to counter the negative narratives about trans young people, something that was highlighted in the co-production workshops as a key priority for the trans young people involved. This connects to the Kite Trust's wider work to amplify and celebrate trans joy, highlighted in their recent [#TransJoyisReal](#) campaign.

***"Actually having stories of hope and success and creativity and getting those messages out there not only for trans people themselves but also for others to disrupt that narrative of trans as bad, I think is really important."***

*Awardee*

The Kite Trust will incorporate this workshop – both the one-hour version and the extended session – into their programme of training delivery, but cannot continue to offer it for free. Young people would like for the training to have a wider reach including professionals with whom they interact in their daily lives, such as hairdressers and other day-to-day service providers, who are unlikely to have access to this training from their employers. The Kite Trust have recently redeveloped their training offer to make the training as accessible as possible to professionals working in a range of different sectors and roles. They are also now running regular 'open access' sessions that aim to be affordable for individuals to sign up to attend.



Learning from this project will inform The Kite Trust's future work on a Young Trans Advocates Panel, which is currently in development. It has also highlighted to The Kite Trust the value and importance of holding spaces specifically for trans, non-binary and gender questioning young people, meaning this remains part of their ongoing work. The Kite Trust will continue to participate in local and national networks and partnership work and to further develop these relationships and projects, focusing on the key aim of improving the lives of trans young people.

# Morecambe Council

## Creating a safe space for trans young people

based: Morecambe | reach: local | theme: young people

Morecambe Council is a district council in Lancashire where there was no local dedicated offer for young trans people. The programme supported the Council to develop a safe space for trans young people in Morecambe Town Hall and to develop resources to share with local school pupils.

The engagement with trans young people started with discussions about their experiences and aspirations and then moved onto to consider the ways the space could be transformed. It was important not to rush these initial sessions to reassure young people and build relationships and trust. Before this project, the room was quite rundown and the Town Hall building itself can be intimidating.

Directed by the group of young people the project has installed new carpets, painted walls, added furniture and transformed a table to celebrate trans people and trans history. The group is still working on the format and content of the resources for schools as this does require care. The group has needed to take its time to discuss the format and content and secure buy-in from local schools and teachers.

The aim is to communicate clear messages that trans young people are first and foremost just people, but that there are some specific issues that they face and support they need. The project has had a ripple effect with meetings with councillors, officers and wider stakeholders increasing understanding of trans people and how to offer support. Council staff are also able to use the room for meetings and this has prompted conversations about trans lives. Conversations with the Public Realm team have helped staff to understand that they should try not to stare at trans people they see around the town as this can make trans people feel very uncomfortable and hyper-sensitive. The project has also developed how the Council thinks about the needs of trans people within the wider LGBTQ+ umbrella; previously there was little consideration of the specific needs of trans people as this was lost within thinking about LGBTQ+ people in general. There is now more effort in parts of the Council to specifically consider the experiences and needs of trans people.

***"I think sometimes there's a trap of looking at LGBT just as one bracket. Throughout this process it's really helped us internally understand that you can't just address equality and diversity issues in one go."***

*Awardee*

Challenges for the project have include the time it can take to work through Council processes, the lack of awareness of trans issues, negative or unpredictable debate and policy making at the national level, a gap in advice for local government advisory bodies.

The Council will continue to provide this safe space in the Town Hall and run sessions with trans young people. In the future the project hopes to create public-facing educational activities, work with Lancashire County Council to foster support for trans young people across the county and share experiences and learning with national advisory bodies to increase the information available for local councils wanting to take action in support of trans young people.

# Oestrogenation

**Amplifying the voices of transfeminine writers**

*based: London | reach: national | theme: criminal justice*

[oestrogenation.org](http://oestrogenation.org)

Oestrogenation is a magazine platform highlighting the voices of trans women and transfeminine writers in the UK and intervening positively in the transphobic landscape. They regularly publish regular non-fiction articles ranging from essays to opinion pieces to first-person narratives, to arts content, to pop culture reviews – as well as covering current affairs relating to trans politics. The programme funded Oestrogenation to send 130 copies of their magazine to incarcerated transfeminine people and to create content.

Sending magazines in this way helped Oestrogenation to make links and share its outputs with some of the most marginalised people from trans communities. Working with Beyond Bars (no longer active) and Bent Bars, this work also fostered ongoing one-to-one connections between individual incarcerated people and pen pals, supporting Oestrogenation's mission to connect a mix of trans women from around the country and across the 'borders' of the criminal justice system.

The content produced focused on the case of Sarah Jane Baker who was imprisoned following her speech at Trans Pride in summer 2023. She was imprisoned in a men's prison where she did not have access to her hormone replacement therapy and was released from prison in May 2024.

This work helped to build relationships between Oestrogenation, Beyond Bars, Bent Bars, the Free Sarah Jane Baker Campaign and AKA Books (who publish Sarah Jane's poetry). The Oestrogenation team are pleased to have been able to support the campaign and it was also helpful for them to make more a link and share skills and experiences with another publisher.

***"I'm really happy with the article we wrote, and the kind of connections that were formed through it."***

*Awardee*

It is challenging to overcome multiple barriers, including logistical and legal ones, to commission content from incarcerated people. The work therefore focused on creating one longer article with multiple authors, rather than rushing to produce multiple articles. This measured approach has helped to create a strong foundation for future commissioning of articles.

Oestrogenation will continue to commission articles and further develop the joint work with Bent Bars. They are also in the very early stages of thinking about how they could run a monthly meet-up programme that would foster connection and conversation between trans women and transfeminine people. Dealing with grief is a particular area they would like to offer support around as this is an area of need that has emerged through their conversations with people.

# Star Support

Creating dedicated space and support for trans survivors of domestic violence

based: London | reach: local | theme: criminal justice

[www.starsupport.org.uk](http://www.starsupport.org.uk)

Star Support is a London-based LGBTIQ+ domestic abuse refuge and community support service, working in partnership with The Outside Project. They support London's queer community by providing safe accommodation, community-centred support and advice. Mainstream services can be unsafe spaces for trans people, so this requires dedicated spaces.

The programme supported them to develop and start delivering a dedicated floor for trans survivors in an LGBTIQ+ refuge, as well as trans-specific support through a dedicated support worker. Being able to offer this specific support has meant that Star Support have been able to support people effectively and help people to make progress.

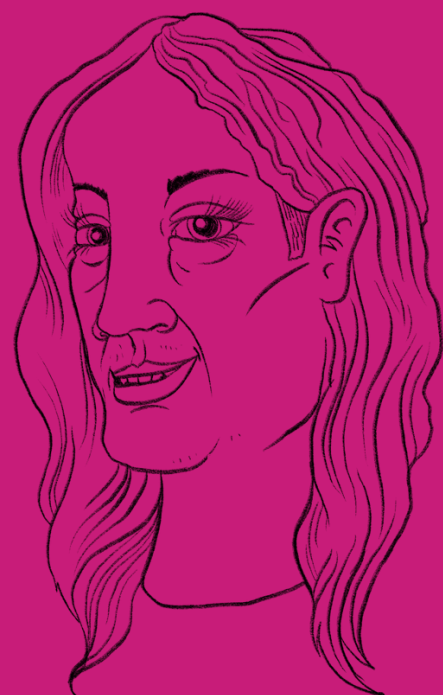
*"We changed four people's names on a day -we just did a day where we just changed everyone's name and everyone just had new names by the end of the day. So those sort of things that help people with their social and medical transition that we were able to do have been very positive."*

*Awardee*

Star Support have also been engaging with a mix of national, regional, statutory and local services and organisations in the domestic violence, violence against women and girls and homelessness sectors to foster trans inclusion within their services and support. This work has seen dividends but it does require considerable investment of time and emotional energy and it can take time to make progress. In particular, there is a lot of misunderstanding of how to work within the Equality Act and Gender Recognition Act which Star Support has helped organisations to work through.

They have also trialled 'Fem Thursdays' a monthly evening groups for trans feminine and non-binary people who want to be in trans feminine space. The group is well-attended and has provided a safe and supportive space for people to share their experiences (including where people's experiences and backgrounds can vary greatly), discuss issues, offer mutual support and develop friendships.

The 'Fem Thursdays' group will hopefully be funded for another year by another funder and Star Support would also like to develop a group specifically for people from the global majority.



# Stephen Davidson

Providing online voice training resources

based: London | reach: national | theme: health  
[notaphase.org/trans-voice-academy](https://notaphase.org/trans-voice-academy)



The programme supported Stephen Davidson to create the Trans Voice Academy series of free online voice training resources. The aim was to address the gap in focus on voice training and high-quality resources for trans people in the UK. Despite voice being a really important part of people's everyday lives and identity, trans people usually have to wait for up to two years for speech therapy provide by the NHS and the amount provided is very limited; transmasculine people will usually have access to two two-hour sessions and trans feminine people will usually have access to four one-hour sessions. There are also issues with this being delivered via speech therapy as this is usually provided where something is wrong with someone's voice, so this unnecessarily pathologises trans people's needs in this area.

Furthermore, most English language videos available online are also North American so of limited value for British people. There is a significant amount of poor information available online. Unfortunately people are also motivated to change their voice out of fear for their own safety; this can result in people pushing themselves too hard and damaging their voice or not talking or limiting how much they speak in public.

*"The thing that's definitely on the rise is people are less concerned about vocal health and taking their time and finding it really suits them, we are getting a lot more "I need to sound convincing so I don't get beaten up."*

Awardee

The funding allowed Stephen to produce high quality videos that are snappy, well-edited, with good sound quality and visuals to help to maintain people's engagement. As part of the programme Stephen met and developed a great working relationship with Not a Phase who offered to host and help publicise the videos. This connection would probably not have happened without the programme.

The most viewed videos have been viewed almost 500 times, with the number steadily increasing; Stephen does not give medical advice so the videos should have longevity. Some speech and language therapists have also fed back that they found the resources useful as working with trans people is not currently covered in their training.

Some speech and language therapists have also fed back that they found the resources useful as working with trans people is not currently covered in their training.

***"I was surprised by how many speech language therapists and speech language pathologists, as we call them, were also interested in the videos. As to my mind it's quite a basic level of information, because their training doesn't really include it."***

*Awardee*

There is scope for a lot more work in the area. Stephen hopes to expand the work by taking on apprentices and would particularly like to work with an apprentice of colour given that there are no UK-focused resources for trans people of colour, so this would be a step towards provided more targeted support. A longer-term goal is to formally establish a school for voice training that would mean voice training for trans people is provided much more community-based rather than needlessly pathologising speech therapy.

***"[It has given me] hope and has eased my anxiety about my voice changing"***

***Service user***

***"It is always validating to learn about the way that other trans people are using their voices in ways which affirm their gender, and how I can implement this in my own life"***

***Service user***

# TransActual

## Research, resources and webinar programme

based: Wiltshire | reach: national | theme: health

[transactual.org.uk](https://transactual.org.uk)

TransActual shares facts about trans rights, UK law, NHS healthcare and transphobia. information for trans men, trans women and non-binary people, as well as information for allies, journalists and professionals. With support from the programme, TransActual has researched and delivered a series of resources and a programme of four Trans Health webinars for health professionals.

The resources include completing and launching Trans inclusive healthcare? Trans people's experiences accessing healthcare in the UK research report, Trans Inclusive Hospital Care and What do I need to know about surgery? resources. TransActual will also publish the 'What Do I Need To Know About Medical Transition?' resource in autumn 2024.

The resources are rooted in trans people's experiences and needs and designed to provide people with clear information in accessible formats. Indeed over 300 people responded to a community survey asking them what they would have like to have known before surgery (where relevant) or would like to know.

The resources are longer than originally planned due to demand from trans people. Thanks to existing relationships with health professionals, TransActual was able to test draft resources with health professionals who were less familiar with trans inclusion. Website analytics show that people do not tend to read the resource in its entirety, instead choosing the parts that are relevant to them at that time. For example, for the surgery resource, the private care section is by far the most popular. The TransActual website also now includes an audio plug in so that people can listen to, rather than read, content; this has also been welcomed.

There were over 300 attendees across the four webinars. The later webinars had more attendees, likely due in part to at least more warning. Almost two thirds of people attended two of the webinars. Two thirds of those signing up for a webinar were disabled. This is higher than might have been expected and is encouraging in relation to the steps TransActual have taken to make our webinars accessible. Due to lower attendance figures, the team acknowledge there is further work to do in reducing barriers for Asian/British Asian, Black professionals and professionals of other heritage in attending their webinars. As of September 2024, the webinar recordings have also been viewed 247 times.

***"It was really informative and useful to hear perspectives from people with lived experiences. Their thoughts and opinions are really valuable and helped me reflect a lot on mine and my service's practice."***

*Webinar attendee*

Surveys conducted before and after the webinars showed increased confidence in attendees in understanding the barriers that trans people can face accessing non-transition related healthcare, understanding how different parts of a trans person's identity (such as race, age and disability) can impact their healthcare needs and knowing what they could do to reduce health inequalities for trans people.

***"The information was accessible, engaging, with practical applications as to how I can bring it into my occupation. The time management was really useful with time to address the questions. All speakers were really knowledgeable and friendly. I feel like I've gained a much deeper understanding that I feel inspired and empowered to use"***

*Webinar attendee*

This work has helped TransActual raise their profile with health professionals and foster more ongoing relationships. In terms of professional and organisational development, managing this award and ensuring delivery of outputs has further developed TransActual's capacity to manage a budget across multiple activities.



# The Trans Gap

Supporting trans inclusion in gender-based scores for medical decisions

based: Brighton | reach: national | theme: health

[transgapproject.wordpress.com](https://transgapproject.wordpress.com)

The Trans Gap project are a group of 25 junior doctors and medical students from across the United Kingdom aiming to address the fact that a number of medical decisions involve gender-based scores to assess risk and treatment. There are limited research or options for the trans community thereby reducing patient autonomy. The project aims for its research to be assimilated into mainstream clinical guidance and avoid unnecessary variability.

The programme supported The Trans Gap project on its research on two priority areas - kidney function (eGFR) and diabetes management - as well as to provide support around academic writing, policy work and media training for people involved in The Trans Gap.

The project worked with a public participation involvement group for trans people, supporting them to learn about research processes, to involve them in a relatively sophisticated way to shape the project and to ensure they are aware of progress being made. An academic researcher has progressed the kidney function workstream and is preparing a paper for publication. The work has had high value interest from key stakeholders, so the project is optimistic that it can be assimilated into mainstream clinical guidance.

A group of Trans Gap members from across the country attended a two-day workshop to develop academic writing, policy work and media skills. The content focusing on engagement aimed to support attendees to navigate the often hostile political and media context.

The project piloted a national event in 2023 and will run another event in 2025 with support from NHS England. The project is working well with key national stakeholders including NHS England and NICE. The project will continue to research around medical decisions involving gender-based scores, including on diabetes and potentially body weight, perioperative care, stopping taking oestrogen before or after operations, and managing heart attacks.

***"There's still plenty of clinical equations and clinical tools for us to work with and adapt and address and review. That could keep us busy for probably for a decade because a lot of the people working on these projects are volunteers."***

*Awardee*

# Trans Health Today

## Fostering trans-inclusive health care in central Liverpool

based: Liverpool | reach: local | theme: health

[spiritlevel.org.uk/trans-health](http://spiritlevel.org.uk/trans-health)

Trans Health Today is a partnership project between Spirit Level, a trans-led support organisation in Liverpool, Sahir House, the Liverpool City Region's largest and oldest continually operating LGBTQ+ charity and the Central Liverpool Primary Care Network. The programme supported this project to deliver on three main elements: A program of training for staff in primary care settings (GPs, nurse practitioners and admin staff) and development of an online training manual; an expanded program of outreach and counselling for TQIA+ people delivered by Sahir House; and engagement with both the trans+ and healthcare communities together with a programme of wellbeing sessions and activities designed to improve the well-being and emotional resilience of trans people in Liverpool.

In Spring 2024 Spirit Level began to deliver a series of trans awareness sessions in local hospitals in partnership with Healthwatch Liverpool which have been very well received. This work will continue through the autumn of 2024. In addition, Spirit Level has engaged itself with TransActual's work, taking part in its quarterly Trans Health Forums and joining the campaign against the Cass Review. The gender diverse information booklet has had more than 1000 views since February 2024, received positive feedback and helps drive traffic to the CLPCN website where there is a range of healthcare information.

Spirit Level also developed a training manual about trans health care for clinical and non-clinical staff working in doctor's surgeries. This was sent to all GP surgeries in Liverpool. It is difficult to know the impact of this activity. While the Guide To Treating Transgender & Non-Binary Patients is well received at engagement and awareness events, no feedback was received or requests for additional copies so one issue may be where doctors go for information on trans healthcare issues and the reliance they place on non-professional sources.

The activities have attracted a diverse range of trans people including people of different ages and gender diverse asylum seekers. Mixing of different generations has enabled people to share different perspectives of their journeys over different time periods.

Having funding has helped the project partners to develop relationships, build trust and deliver some tangible activities. Very early on in the project, the Primary Care Network ran the LGBT clinic in Sahir house which helped to build connections with the community and partners. This very close co-delivery probably wouldn't have happened without the programme's funding. Spirit Level also benefitted from contact with TransActual through the programme.

*"I feel really grateful. I feel seen and validated by hearing the stories, thoughts and ideas of others."*

*Service user*

*"I felt able to share more than expected and some reflections were beautiful and profound"*

*Service user*

*"Very reflective and opening me up to new ideas and ways of articulating how I have felt"*

*Service user*

It has been challenging to ensure trans people access healthcare services when they are experiencing discrimination and/or have historic distrust of those services. As is often the case in similar projects, it has proved challenging to get GPs and practice nurses to attend the training primarily due to time constraints and demand on their time. The pace of change has also been frustrating at times.

There is potential to do much more and some of this work can continue without funding, but some will be harder to continue or develop further without further funding. Future work could expand in multiple ways to offer wellbeing, psychosocial, medical, services, assistance around social transition and other individualised support as well as work around people's skills interests and hobbies and key dates in the year such as IDAHOBIT and Pride. Spirit Level would like to continue engaging with clinical and non-clinical staff in surgeries and hospitals, champion trans-affirming healthcare, hold seminars and round tables about trans healthcare, invite expert speakers and advocates for trans healthcare to build the foundations or a core of committed local actors willing and able to introduce change.

***"Our project had a focus on primary care and 'maintenance' activities (counselling, therapy etc) and didn't initially consider the wider health problems trans people face. The involvement with TransActual has been very educational and we have been encouraged to engage with other areas of healthcare e.g. hospitals, a key issue for trans people who suffer health inequalities and poor health outcomes because of their gender identity."***

*Awardee*

***"There is a growing realisation that affirmative healthcare must be a) local; and b) holistic. Healthcare is too prescriptive and follows rigid protocols and narrow pathways. As a result, there are profound health inequalities and poor health outcomes in the gender-diverse cohort. Trans people do not present at primary or secondary care settings (for fear of being outed, given poor treatment or discriminated against). When they do, they are often denied treatment (access to gender-affirming hormones or referral to a GIC) or treated inappropriately (prescribed anti-depressants and referred to mental health services). We are developing a model for local, affirmative trans healthcare, but how to get it adopted locally is the key issue."***

*Awardee*

# TRUST Project

**Creating a plugin for clinical information systems to help GPs support trans, nonbinary and intersex patients**

*based: London | reach: national | theme: health*

The programme supported a collaboration between a health start-up Oval Health, The Clare Project and WellBN to develop a plug-in for clinical information systems used by GPs to better present information provided by trans, non-binary and intersex patients and to prompt trans affirmative healthcare. GPs use different providers, but most GPs use one of two programmes, so the project developed templates which can be integrated into both SystemOne and EMIS which account for 98% of systems used by UK GPs.

Initial templates were drawn up by medical professionals with experience in trans affirmative healthcare and were then reviewed by the TNBI community through focus groups. The templates were then revised based on these focus groups with particular attention to educating GPs by linking them to more relevant guidelines and information relating to areas that were felt lacking.

The templates went through technical and medical reviews to ensure safety and protect liability. The templates were uploaded to software used by one GP surgery and were then piloted with three GPs and one trainee and 35 appointments from August 2024.

Challenges for the project have included the fall-out from the Cass Review and the withdrawal of national guidance undermining the case for trans-affirmative healthcare and therefore demand from GPs for tools that support this. The team have also had to adapt the templates, as certain guidelines such as the recommendations for prescribing bridging prescriptions has been dropped and we can no longer refer GPs to this information to help improve access to this vital care.

The team will now look at ways to ensure the free templates are available to GPs in a way that they can either just integrate it into their systems or by working with the larger companies to integrate it. Oval Health will reach out to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to encourage demand, but there is currently limited capacity to support uptake, so any support from partners to encourage uptake is very welcome. One of the outcomes of the project was that the time available in a GP appointment is often not enough to provide the necessary care. While some GPs will assign longer slots these can be hard for patients to get, so often multiple visits are required, further the process of referrals, consent and letters to other clinicians get delayed or lost and as such further delays to care are created. As such the team would also like to develop a trans health app to help reduce health inequalities that could pull in existing information from reliable sources to help patients be informed and integrate with clinical information systems so there is a record of any progress to help minimise delays.

***"I found it pretty straightforward to use and I think it covers pretty much everything you need to get someone started"***

*GP Participant*

***"I enjoyed this appointment in a way I did not expect. It felt special to be able to change someone's life in such a positive way, at a time when there is so much ill health and people are struggling. The patient and I both shed a tear"***

*GP Participant*

# Learning

This section includes information gathered during the evaluation process through interviews with awardees, programme partners and community assessors.

## *Working within a transphobic environment*

While projects and organisations supported by the programme have developed great initiatives, worked alongside allies and partners and had a lot of local support, it cannot be underestimated the extent to which they operate in a transphobic and trans hostile environment. Awardees shared how this can often feel relentless and how every time a gender critical policy or position is voiced, this emboldens people to not have to change or engage.

**"We've had a new health policy thing every week." - Awardee**

**"I think there is a realisation out there that trans healthcare must be reformed and reorganised on a more effective and affirmative basis but a small project like this cannot effect that change. People are receptive but are part of a huge machine that changes very slowly." - Awardee**

It often has a profound impact on individuals' wellbeing – both for intended beneficiaries and those delivering work. For staff and volunteers this can lead to them being unwell, temporarily stepping back or more permanently stepping away from work, as well as undermining their wider sense of self, belonging and safety.

**"I guess it does it does take its toll. So you know, being non-binary myself and working in the space, you constantly come against stuff that questions your very existence so it has impact." - Awardee**



In order to minimise hostility, ensure safeguarding and to allow awardees to deliver their projects, the programme did not seek a high profile for the programme and the work it supported. This means that the work supported by the programme is not as well-known as it could be. Importantly, those projects that had not experienced negative reactions felt 'lucky'. Funders may also need to make similar trade-offs about publicity, but they shouldn't shy away from championing the fact that they do support trans-led work, even if they may have to consider how much detail to profile.

Yet a number of projects shared the irony that this situation of hostility also creates many opportunities for organisations and groups to develop initiatives to support trans people and push back against hostility, as well as a powerful sense of solidarity between trans people and their organisations.

**"It's definitely given us some opportunities to do some good. So in relation to the both the work we've done directly with trans young people and our wider work in policy and advocacy, the fact that trans people and particularly trans youth are at the centre of many consultations and discussions and much media nonsense means that there's a lot of space in which as people are talking about trans people and there are things going on in the law, policy and in the media which relate to trans people, which means they are things on which we can have an opinion, have a voice and try to change." - Awardee**

**"Motivation to do this is part of response to the external environment. It's the reason why we're creating space for trans people... Obviously makes you feel more of a community and working towards same goals." - Awardee**

There is a complexity when considering how to approach and manage the trans-hostile environment. It is a major driver of the need to prioritise support for trans people. It is essential to prioritise the wellbeing of trans people both delivering and benefiting from projects. This is likely to mean publicising projects and work in a way that does reach intended beneficiaries, but limits wider publicity to protect projects. However, funders can still play a role championing their support for trans-led work.

## Navigating the funding environment

Awardees highlighted the need for sustainable funding for their work and projects. Some said that they were able to access funding for individual projects, but that it was much harder to access funding to support core costs.

**"Although we all have projects that can be funded more often than not, it's our core overhead that [we] really struggle for." - Awardee**

**"It can sometimes feel a bit like you get secure a bit of funding, you spend it, and then it's completely back to square one." - Awardee**

Some awardees also described a 'polarised' funding environment where funders were either very supportive of trans-focused initiatives or felt it was too risky. There are also instances of very supportive funders changing priorities after a number of years as they feel they need to support new areas. In terms of application processes, awardees shared how the time required to complete some funding applications was not realistic or proportionate. Awardees also described how they can be intimidated or feel excluded by some specific funders, missing out on opportunities to access support, including larger funding amounts.

There are many varied ideas coming up to support trans people, especially grassroots responses. Participants hoped that more funders could be open to hearing about these ideas and reducing barriers to support where grassroots organisations or groups do not meet the expected criteria including those related to minimum income, charity registration or having a back account.

**"I think there's a wealth of grassroots trans organisations that would really benefit from this kind of funding where you quite simply propose something, and then are trusted to deliver it with in a quite light touch basis. So, I think there's a lot of potential for this kind of funding." - Awardee**

**Funders play a critical role in providing long-term support for trans-led initiatives. Funding core costs is a key challenge for trans-led organisation. Trans-led organisations are looking to more funders to continue and increase support, including findings ways to support grassroots initiatives. Funders have the opportunity to confidently provide funding, support and allyship to the trans community.**

## **TRANSforming Futures' trans-led approach**

TRANSforming Futures' trans-led and intersectional approach excited organisations, groups and partners, as well as the commitment to partnership working. It was seen as a relatively unique programme. The trans-led nature of the programme meant that applicants for support didn't feel that they had to over-explain or justify their work, unpack language or nuances or water down their proposal in ways that they would likely need to for a programme that was not trans-led.

**"It is for trans-led projects to improve trans lives that I think that is a really important and really rare thing." - Awardee**

**"The thing that's really helped is that the people deciding are people doing the work themselves and with lived experience. They get why the work's needed. That makes application process more straightforward, we can focus on explaining what we're going to do, how and why." - Awardee**

The partnership approach across a range of organisations strengthened cohesion within the trans third sector and helped to foster increased sharing of knowledge and experiences. Awardees and partners shared how connections built during the programme will continue.

The programme's flexible approach was much appreciated and was credited with the programme's success in supporting a wide range of scales of organisations and projects, especially more grassroots initiatives, as well as including programme partner organisations of diverse sizes. The programme made efforts to account for partners' variable capacities. This inclusive approach also demonstrated good practice to programme participants to reflect on and develop their own practice. Programme partners are of markedly different sizes and had variable capacity. Even where the programme was able to fund partners' involvement in aspects of the project, it wasn't always possible for partners to release time.

**"I think being part of the program has challenged me to think about the I do work slightly differently... I've always been one for participation and involvement, but I am so much more acutely aware of the vital need to not just include the community but to have a working relationship to create and co-design and co-drive work in this space." - Awardee**

**"The general premise of it of having the partnership of nine organisations is a really good way of working... This really felt a shifting moment when this was emerging to bring on other organisations. So the model of that collaboration was really good, with a cross section of organisations, not just the big players." - Partner organisation**



## **TRANSforming Futures' trans-led approach (cont.)**

There was general appreciation for the programme's initial research phase, including publication of the three reports on health, criminal justice and young people. While participants generally knew about most of the issues identified in the report, some thought it was helpful to have this evidence clearly gathered in the reports to shape applications, as well as providing clarity during the community panel assessments of applications. For some the reports did lead to them prioritising work on a specific issue or idea, though in some cases applications might have been more explicit about how they linked to the reports. Some projects did need to look for practice beyond the UK, due to the specific nature of their ideas which focused on under-served, neglected or emerging areas, as there was no UK practice in the reports or that they were aware of. Importantly, projects and organisations are driven by feedback and input from their immediate trans community, so research can help to shore up their work.

**"I think the report triggered our work in that it's really helpful background knowledge of the difficulties that trans people face and, as with all of this sort of work, it legitimises the things that we know within the community already."** -

*Awardee*

**"The other thing that I like specifically about this programme was that it's tied quite nicely into those three reports... It was, I think, an unusual thing for a funder to do to actually tell you their evidence, their priorities and areas, rather than it just being a trend."** - *Community assessor*

**A flexible approach to funding and support can ensure that a wide range of trans-led groups and initiatives access support and reach a wide range of trans people. It is important to understand and navigate organisations and groups' variable capacity, whether they are recipients of funding or involved as partners or community assessors, to ensure they are able to participate.**

**Research reports can provide a clear basis for responding to the needs of trans communities, alongside on the ground feedback and input from trans people and examples of policy and practice from overseas, particularly where there is a gap in UK policy and practice.**

## **TRANSforming Futures' approach to funding**

Awardees generally felt that the programme's application process was relatively easy, while maintaining clear expectations and accountability for awardees. Some awardees picked out the human-level communications as being particularly positive, especially when other application processes can lack this human interaction.

The assessment process for applications was well-run, with lessons learnt from the first round when it came to the second round. The high volume of applications was challenging to work through for some of those involved in the assessment process. Some applications were better quality in terms of how they were written, so there were challenges for assessors to identify strong ideas that had not been presented well within applications. It was felt that it was important to try to explore these applications as they often came from more grassroots organisations with less experience in making funding applications.

**"We cannot expect everybody to perform according to the rules... We need to leave room for those in the margins who will not produce this perfect application according to what they have set up." - Community assessor**

Some awardees who received smaller amounts of funding were keen to express how these smaller amounts were still transformational for them, especially where it was the first significant amount of funding they had received. Offering smaller amounts also helped the programme to reach grassroots level initiatives. For some projects it was very helpful that the programme supported the more expensive start-up costs of an idea, with an understanding that these projects were likely to be sustainable in the long-term once these start-up costs had been covered.

**"Really fantastic that a lot of this money had gone into projects and organisations that do a lot of grassroots work, very much on the frontline, start-up and very specific issues which can get lost a lot in funding landscapes." - Awardee**

**"It was nice to kind of have that trust too to do it and the understanding that, actually, it's pretty costly to try and get something off the ground. Obviously, once it's going and you've got momentum going, it's not so expensive."  
-Awardee**

The process included proactive action to ensure that funding was awarded to initiatives around England. It was also helpful that the programme kept track of underspend on any of the projects and offered additional funding to projects that were able to build on their work during the lifetime of the programme.

## ***TRANSforming Futures' approach to funding (cont.)***

While all projects delivered good work during the year, the one-year timeline for funding was a challenge for a number of projects. This limited amount of time did present a challenge when projects were trying to influence very large systems, get buy-in from stakeholders or deal with bureaucracy, recruitment and staff or volunteer change. Some awardees did feel there was a tension between this one-year timeframe and the programme's branding around 'TRANSforming Futures'. The timing of the funded projects in the final phase of the programme also meant there was limited time and opportunity to share learning from the projects, though the September 2024 celebration event did aim to do this.

**"I think ideally future programs would be about 3 years long. To allow for something to be gestated, to be born and run and then evaluated all long enough to be able to look back and see and learn." - Awardee**

Partners' involvement in the grant-making process was beneficial for them in a number of ways, including being part of the funding process from 'the other side' and learning about inclusive, accessible and participatory ways of offering funding.

**A flexible approach to funding helps to reach a wide range of projects, including those operating at different scales and at the grassroots. Further multi-year funding would support organisations and groups to build towards transformational change for trans people. Language is also important in ensuring that eligible organisations understand the nature of available funding. Assessing applications, particularly from some grassroots organisations, can involve identifying and advocating for strong ideas that may not be well-presented in a funding application.**

## **TRANSforming Futures' approach to communications and capacity-building**

A programme like TRANSforming Futures does present opportunities to create connections between organisations and projects, to foster solidarity and share ideas and experiences. The programme did foster some connections between awardees and partners. Some awardees felt that they would have liked there to have been more opportunities to connect with others and hear about their work, whereas other awardees found it hard to take up the opportunities that were available. Some awardees shared information about their work with programme partners but weren't always sure if this had been disseminated.

**"I'd have liked an interim, or series of interim, meetings with TRANSforming Futures project managers to ask us hard questions." - Awardee**

Some partners were more engaged during the earlier stages of the programme such as the research and assessment of applications where they had clearer roles. During the delivery of the funded projects, some partners had less of a reason to regularly engage unless they were delivering some capacity-building support to one of the projects. There were challenges for some partners to be as involved as they would like due to severe pressure on capacity and wellbeing.

**"I feel like a lot of the time so many of my peers are also feeling the same thing and running really close to burn-out, or are burnt out. So a lot of the time the people who would have the relevant insights don't have the capacity. So it's not always appropriate." - Partner organisation**

Alongside funding, the programme also offered capacity building support, including training and peer support, much of which was provided by programme partners. A number of awardees accessed this support and reported that it had helped to strengthen their project and/or organisation or group. For some, particularly smaller organisations, it was helpful that the programme could allocate and spend funding to support individual requests without funding needing to be passed onto the beneficiary. Some awardees had less understanding of the kind of support they might have been able to access or said they had less capacity to take up any support. Some programme partners also had limited capacity to offer support, even where there was funding available from the programme to cover their time. This was often due to challenges about demand on their own organisation's work and difficulties about backfilling any time taken out of their workday.

### ***TRANSforming Futures' approach to communications and capacity-building (cont.)***

**"I feel like I haven't taken advantage of quite everything that the group could have. I'm aware that there's so much in the way of support for thinking about impact or thinking about engagement with the community. I think that's partly because different bits of our project just aren't quite there yet and I hope that we could still access that even after the sort of window of the funding."**

**-Awardee**

Programmes are likely to face the challenge of some participants being more able to engage in connecting and learning activities than others. It's important to try to find ways that all projects can participate in some way, with more intense opportunities available for those who would like. During the project delivery phase of programmes, programmes may need to proactively create opportunities for programme partners to maintain their engagement.

A funding-plus approach can help to build the capacity of trans-led organisations, groups and projects. In order to reach as many beneficiaries as possible, it is important to regularly and consistently communicate the capacity building offer. It may also be helpful to consult on and offer a menu of capacity-building training and support as part of a programme that organisations, groups and projects can easily draw down from, rather than waiting for their individual requests to come in. It is important to have open conversations with programme partners about what they are realistically able to offer; having a programme of capacity-building activities may be easier for some partners to help deliver, instead of them trying to respond to ad hoc requests.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Awardees can find monitoring and reporting requirements overly burdensome and stressful, especially where requirements are unclear. Across all its activities, TRANSforming Futures aimed for there to be a low burden on awardees, including in terms of reporting an evaluation; this was generally appreciated by awardees.

The programme evaluator was appointed in late 2023 after funding had been awarded to projects; it would have been helpful to appoint them at least at the start of the grants and/or to have considered having a learning and evaluation partner during the lifetime of the project.

As is normally the case some projects were harder to stay in touch with to monitor progress, mainly due to capacity, challenges or slower project delivery. Some awardees would have liked there to be clear communications about reporting and evaluation requirements at an earlier stage and further reassurance that the aim of the evaluation was primarily to celebrate the programme and capture learning for the future, rather than make judgements on work that had been delivered.

**It is important to set out clear reporting and evaluation requirements and deadlines at the start of a grant. Appointing an evaluation and learning partner in advance of grants being awarded helps to ensure that reporting and evaluation requirements and the purpose of a learning and evaluation process are clear at the start of funded projects. Checking in with grassroots initiatives can be more challenging, but this should not detract from the importance of supporting grassroots work.**

## Practical support for trans people and their organisations: venues and banking

Two specific issues were particularly highlighted during the evaluation process: venues and banking. Awardees reporting variable access to free or low-cost venues which are often a key part of a project's viability and sustainability. Some awardees shared how non-LGBTQ+ spaces can assume that the needs of LGBTQ+ groups are met by LGBTQ+ venues. This is often not the case so awardees felt that mainstream venues could take more action to be trans-inclusive and to proactively offer their spaces to trans-led groups and projects, including on a free or low-cost basis. This includes providing reassurance on access to toilets.

In relation to banking, awardees reported issues around access to banking, especially for smaller or unconstituted groups. In some cases, awardees were not aware of all the challenges charity banking can present. This sometimes related to applicants to be bank signatories having changed their names as part of their transition or their being volunteers rather than staff members. Third party fiscal hosting worked well for some awardees but this was not a well-known option and some awardees reported high fees.

## ***Practical support for trans people and their organisations: venues and banking (cont.)***

**Access to free or low-cost trans-inclusive venues often plays a major part in projects viability and ongoing sustainability. Venues, whether LGBTQ+-focused or not, can offer meaningful support to trans people and their organisations by proactively offering their spaces in an inclusive and affordable way.**

**Trans-focused initiatives are disproportionately grassroots and/or volunteer-led and therefore more likely to encounter banking difficulties, alongside any difficulties related to name changes. Third party hosting of funding may be a better option for them, but this can come with high fees that need to be covered.**

### ***Future Priorities***

**"Do it again!" - Awardee**

TRANSforming Futures set out to support a range of projects across health, criminal justice and young people. The majority of applications and awardees were health-focused. Health remains a major priority for many trans people and their organisations. However, it is important to note that the majority of projects funded by the programme were health focused so it is more likely that they would highlight this as an ongoing priority.

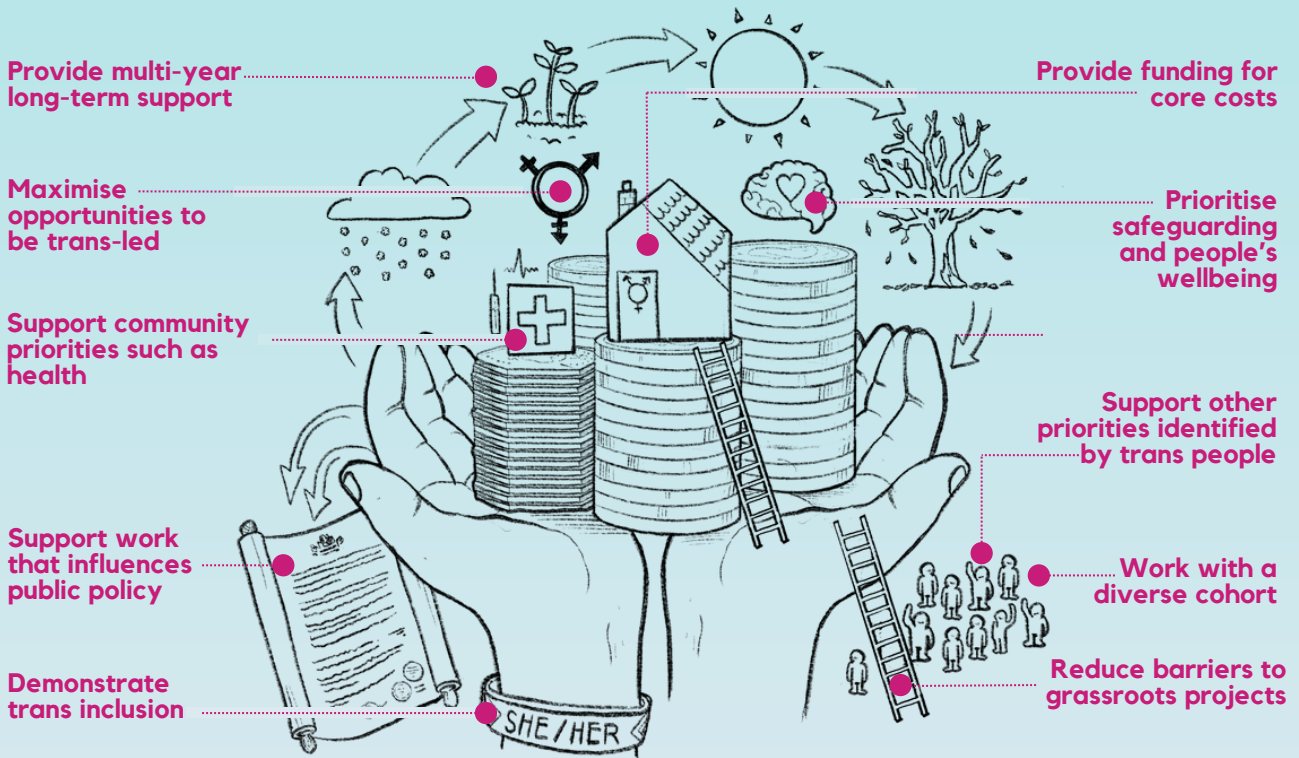
As the evidence base around need, policy and practice grows, so will the demand for projects responding to this evidence. It is also important to explore why there were fewer applications for work under the criminal justice and young people themes. One drive could be misconceptions and apprehension about working in these areas. There is also need and proposed work across a wide range of areas of policy and practice, as well as intersectional work and approaches, including working with trans people who are disabled, young, older and/or people of colour. There is also limited support for work which is primarily focused on influencing public policy.

**There are and will continue to be a wealth of opportunities to support trans-led work. There is therefore demand to support trans-focused initiatives as well as to ensure that trans people are included in other projects supporting a wider cohort of people. Work to influence public policy should also be supported.**

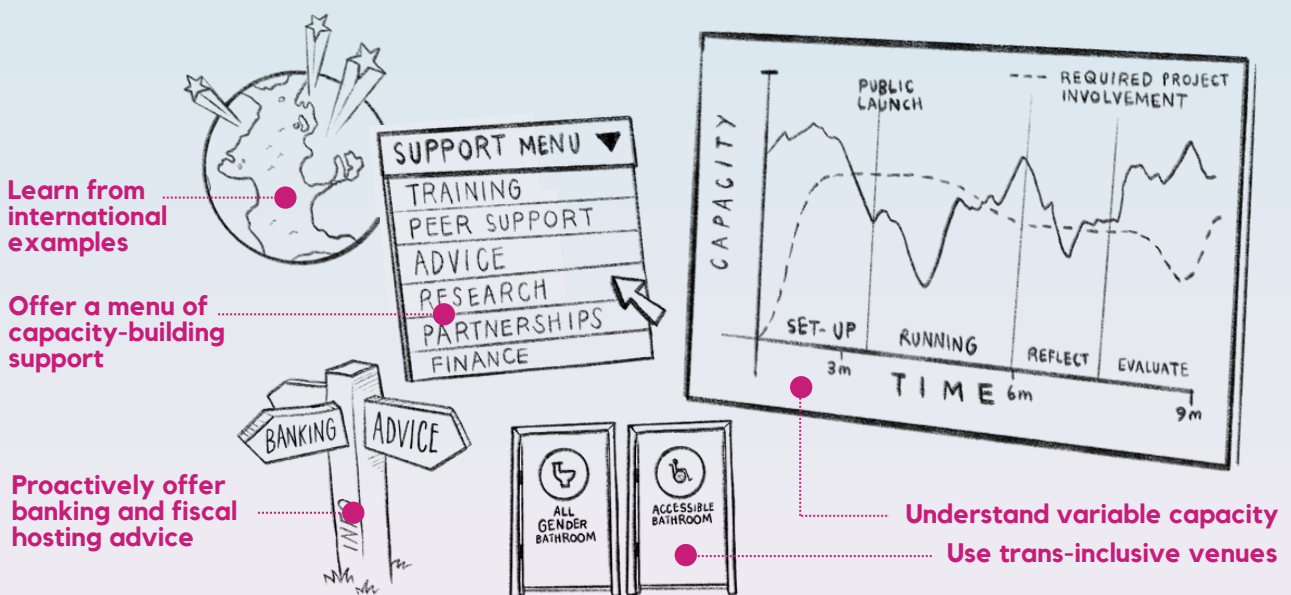
# Recommendations

These recommendations are aimed at any organisation or initiative that aims to support activities for the benefit of trans people and especially the work of trans-led organisations, groups and projects.

## Providing funding to trans-led organisations, groups and projects



## Running programmes to support trans-led organisations, groups and projects





### *Providing funding to trans-led organisations, groups and projects*

Funders should respond to the **ongoing urgent need** to support trans people, trans-led organisations and initiatives across a wide range of areas of policy and practice. **Health** should remain a priority area, but funding should also support **other areas** and be open to addressing needs identified by trans people and their organisations. Funders should help to reassure potential applicants about work in specific areas they may be apprehensive about such as young people or criminal justice. Funders should ensure that projects working with a **wider cohort**, such as young people or people with health conditions are proactively inclusive of trans people. Funders should also fund work aiming to influence **public policy**.

Publicity of trans-focused work should always **prioritise people's wellbeing** and **safeguarding** and take a risk-management approach to wider communications and publicity about specific projects. Despite this, funders should confidently champion their support for trans-led work.

More funders should provide **multi-year long-term support** to trans-led organisations, groups and projects, including **core costs**. Funders should explicitly encourage applications for projects to include meaningful contributions to core costs.

Funders should put out clear messages of **trans inclusion** and proactively reach out to trans-led organisations, groups and projects to invite them to apply for funding, demystify processes and provide application support and guidance as appropriate.

Funders should take a **flexible approach** and **reduce barriers to grassroots projects** accessing support, ensure their application processes are proportionate and reasonable and manage real risks in a way that does not unduly prevent them providing support where it is most needed and enables important work to take place, including in areas that they may have previously perceived as higher risk. This should include training assessors to identify those applications that have strong ideas that may not be well presented in applications due to a lack of experience or skills as well as maximising access to third party fiscal hosts and find ways to ensure they can responsibly open up funding to unincorporated groups.

Funders should take clear steps to ensure programmes supporting the trans community **maximise opportunities to be trans-led**, including through partnerships, staffing and decision-making panels and reassure potential applicants by making sure they are aware of any trans-led element to their work.

Funders should support **specific areas of need** identified by the trans community, as well as allocate a proportion of funding to an **open category** to capture important initiatives that may not fall into strictly defined areas of need.

Funders should ensure applicants, particularly grassroots or unconstituted groups, are aware of the option of **fiscal hosting** and that funding covers the cost of this.

### **Running programmes to support trans-led organisations, groups and projects**

Programmes should understand and navigate **partners, organisations and groups' variable capacity**, whether they are recipients of funding or involved as partners or community assessors, to ensure that they are able to participate in programmes in a way that is manageable for them during the lifetime of the programme even where involvement levels fluctuate.

Involve programme partners in **different aspects of a programme** to assist delivery as well as develop their own understanding, knowledge and skills, including in relation to grant-making, participation and research.

Programmes should consider different ways that participants can **connect and share reporting and learning** including light touch and more intense opportunities according to individual preferences.

Programmes should consider consulting on and offering a **menu of capacity-building support** alongside funding that organisations, groups and projects can draw down from. This may be easier than ad hoc requests for both beneficiaries to access and partners to deliver. Funding for training can also be nominally allocated to an organisation, without the funding having to be actually passed onto the beneficiary.

Research into policy and practice that supports trans people should include **international examples** where there are gaps in UK policy and practice, particularly in under-served or emerging areas.

**Venues** should take steps to ensure they are trans-inclusive and proactively offer their space to trans-led organisations, groups and projects on a free, low-cost or affordable basis and have a clear trans-inclusive toilet policy.

Programmes should proactively **offer advice or signpost to advice on banking** for grassroots or unconstituted groups, helping people to avoid avoidable barriers to banking.





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TRANSforming Futures was project managed by Stonewall and LGBT Consortium, in partnership with Be North, CliniQ, Galop, Gendered Intelligence, GIRES, Mermaids, Sparkle, and UK Black Pride.

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