

A NEW QUEER LONDON: LGBTQ+ Communities and Spaces beyond Covid-19

Research by the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre

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FOREWORD

Foreword from Jay
Crosbie, Co-founder
of the London LGBTQ+
Community Centre

The London LGBTQ+ Community Centre is a sober, intersectional community centre and café where all LGBTQ+ people are welcomed, supported, can build connections and can flourish. The project started in 2017, not long after I'd moved alone to London.

Beyond the physical space we have now created, this project provided me with a community that was essential for my physical and mental wellbeing. I've often wondered what my experiences in London would have been like without the solid foundation of the LGBTQ+ community I have found through this project. Those thoughts, and the feelings of many LGBTQ+ people, were the inception for this research.

Loneliness is commonplace within our community. Statistics consistently - and worryingly - show that LGBTQ+ people are vulnerable to feelings of alienation or isolation. The pandemic has exacerbated and accelerated this reality. This research seeks to identify what the true impact of the pandemic has been on London's LGBTQ+ community and how our space, and others like it, can begin to help rectify some of those issues.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the incredible research team for their time, dedication, and patience. I specifically want to thank Rowan Douglas, Nick Downes, Rebecca Elson-Watkins and Rodrigo Peroni. They've been a consistent source of knowledge and inspiration throughout this research and it would not have been completed without them.

I also want to thank PJ Annand, Anastasia Frolova, Stef Garasto, Lauren Harding, Anaïs Laubal, Karoline Lippert, Kirsty Lohman and Nieves Noha for their invaluable contributions to this work.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Research Objectives

Methods

Opened in December 2021 on Bankside, the Centre offers a sober, intersectional community centre and café where all LGBTQ+ people are welcomed, supported, can build connections and can flourish.

This research aimed to help those at the Centre better understand the community it seeks to serve. In particular it aimed to:

- Understand more about the experiences and needs of LGBTQ+ people in London.
 - And develop a clear understanding of how these needs have evolved as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Identify priorities and recommendations for designing a centre that caters to as broad a range of people as possible, making sure it is genuinely accessible and welcoming for all.
- Examine the experiences of those that have visited the Centre, and understand what these can tell us about how the Centre can, and should, evolve in the future.

This research comprised:

- **ONLINE SURVEY:** A self-completion, open-link online survey. This survey took place between August 2021 and November 2021. The results from this survey comprise responses from 502 LGBTQ+ Londoners.
- **QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS:** We conducted 10 semi-structured qualitative interviews, and multiple focus groups. Interviews took place between November 2021 and February 2022, both before and after the opening of the LGBTQ+ Community Centre.
- **FEEDBACK FORMS:** We analysed 486 feedback forms from those who had attended the LGBTQ+ Community Centre. These included both paper forms, and forms that were completed online.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key findings

This research revealed that, while most people did feel that there is some form of LGBTQ+ community in London, the feeling of being strongly connected to it is far from widespread. And that, while many people want to have a strong LGBTQ+ community in their lives, many struggle to find it.

- Half (51%) of survey respondents said that outside of Pride and nightlife, there isn't much of an LGBTQ+ community in London at all.
- 29% said that they do not have a network of LGBTQ+ support in their life.

Our research points to a strong desire for more LGBTQ+ spaces in London. Current spaces are seen as too few and far between, too focused on nightlife, and not inclusive for large parts of the community.

- 85% said that there are too few LGBTQ+ spaces in London, and 94% said that there are too few spaces that aren't orientated around nightlife.
- Those spaces that aren't orientated around nightlife are seen as among the most important, with 77% of people saying it was very important to have these spaces, compared to only 43% who said the same about nightlife venues.
- The vast majority indicated that there were not enough LGBTQ+ spaces for people like them (89%) and were welcoming to people from all backgrounds (87%).

Alongside identifying a clear lack of spaces for LGBTQ+ people, this research also pointed to a clear vision of what people wanted to see.

- 61% said that they want to visit an LGBTQ+ space not orientated around nightlife once a month or more frequently. 67% of respondents wanted to visit a space for people 'like them' more than once a month.
- The community wanted this space to be inclusive, affordable, accessible, sober, welcoming and centrally located.
- In addition, as well as being a place where the whole LGBTQ+ community can come together, there is also a demand for events and activities that cater for specific groups within the community.
- The community consistently told us that we must continue our ongoing research so we can best meet the needs of London's LGBTQ+ population.

So far, the community's response to the Centre has been overwhelmingly positive. We have also taken efforts to address any issues raised in feedback.

- 86% of visitors felt extremely safe.
- 74% of visitors had an excellent experience.
- Many people directly requested that the Centre remain open for as long as possible.

INTRODUCTION

Background and Research Objectives

In 2018, long before the establishment of our first pop-up Centre on Bankside, the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre (LGBTQ+CC) commissioned some initial research to better understand the community it was seeking to serve. This research sought to understand what the closure of LGBTQ+ venues in London meant for its LGBTQ+ population, and what the community were looking for in a space.

This initial study found that, above all, LGBTQ+ Londoners wanted to feel like they had a family, or community, where they could be their authentic selves comfortably and not worry about intolerance, or discrimination. They noted that they wanted this to be a space where they could form genuine relationships and where everyone could 'fit in'. On a practical level, this research found that LGBTQ+ Londoners were looking for a sober space, different from the majority of other LGBTQ+ venues currently available in London, and somewhere where they didn't have to spend money to participate.

Since 2018, the landscape in which the LGBTQ+CC team is operating has changed significantly. First, the pandemic shone a light on the need for accessible spaces for LGBTQ+ people. The pandemic disproportionately affected marginalised communities, such as the LGBTQ+ community, and led to rises in homelessness, rent arrears, and debt. Alarmingly, many members of the community were trapped in homes with homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic families or flatmates. Taken together, the various lockdowns have highlighted the need for safe, accessible spaces, free from discrimination and stigma, where LGBTQ+ people can both gather and receive services from providers.

As we emerged from lockdown, the LGBTQ+CC also opened its first pop-up. Opened in December 2021 on Bankside, the Centre offers a sober, intersectional community centre and café where all LGBTQ+ people are welcomed, supported, can build connections and can flourish. The Centre aims to fulfil the needs identified in its original research in 2018; to create a space where all LGBTQ+ Londoners can build real community.

Given the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the opening of the centre, there was a need for a new piece of research with the LGBTQ+ community.

This research aimed to:

- Understand more about the experiences and needs of LGBTQ+ people in London;
 - And develop a clear understanding of how these needs have evolved as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Identify priorities and recommendations for designing a centre that caters to as broad a range of people as possible, making sure it is genuinely accessible and welcoming for all.
- Examine the experiences of those that have visited the Centre, and understand what these can tell us about how the Centre can, and should, evolve in the future.

INTRODUCTION

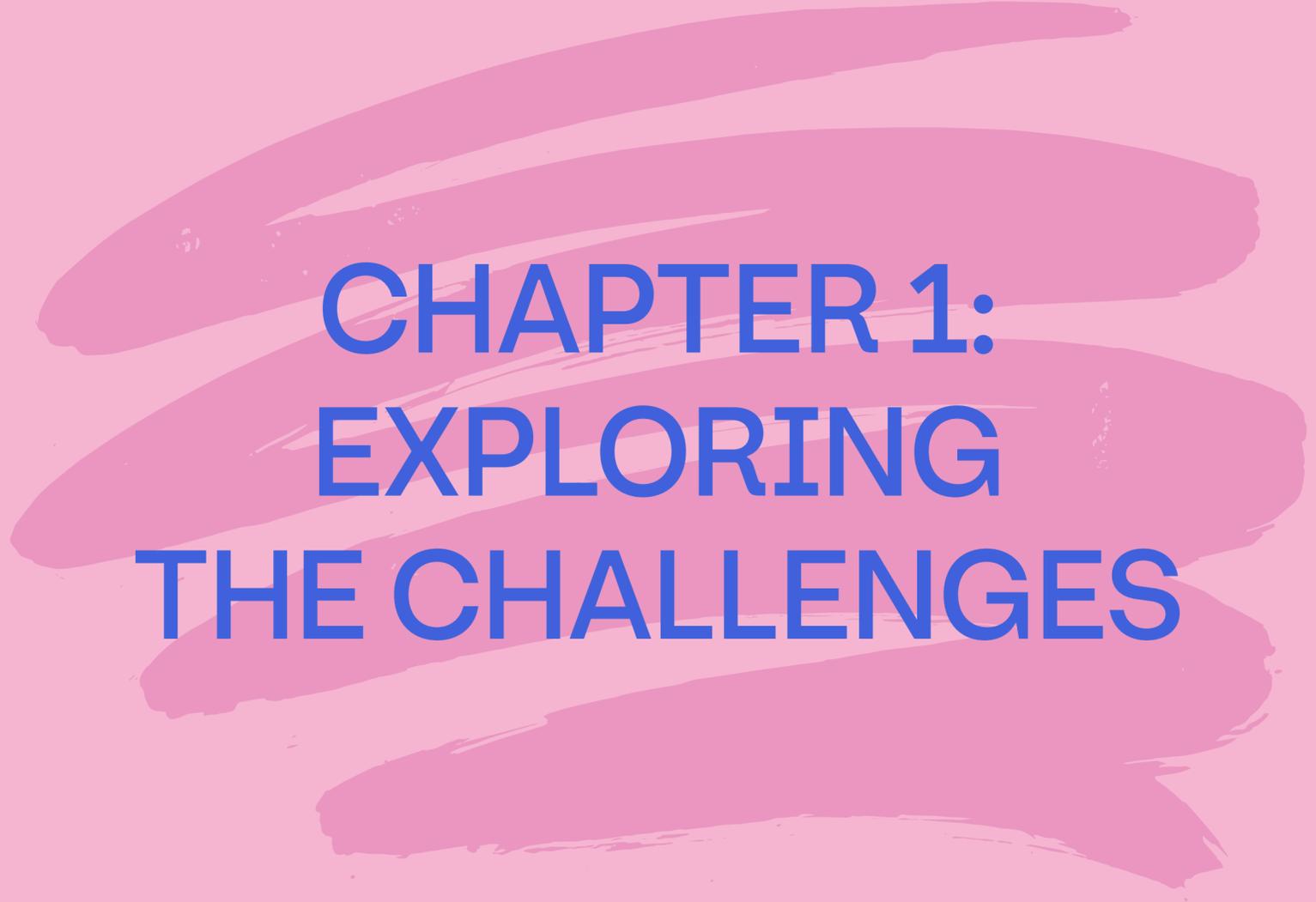
Methods

This research comprised three phases:

PROJECT ELEMENT	DETAILS
ONLINE SURVEY	<p>We conducted an online survey between August 2021 and November 2021. Fieldwork took place before the opening of the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre.</p> <p>The results from this survey comprise responses from 502 LGBTQ+ Londoners.</p> <p>This was a self-completion, open-link survey. The survey was advertised through social media, as well as being advertised by various partners and LGBTQ+ groups. We provided the link to organisations and charities that we work closely with to ensure we reached out to members of the community whose voices aren't often heard.</p> <p>The full questionnaire for the survey can be found in the appendix of this report.</p>
QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS	<p>We conducted 10 semi-structured qualitative interviews, and multiple focus groups</p> <p>Interviews took place between November 2021 and February 2022, both before and after the opening of the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre.</p> <p>Interviewees were recruited from those who had taken part in the online survey, or those who had attended the LGBTQ+ Community Centre.</p> <p>Interviews lasted approximately 30-60 minutes.</p> <p>Copies of the interview schedule and sample structure can be found in the appendix of this report.</p>
FEEDBACK FORMS	<p>We analysed 486 feedback forms from those who had attended the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre. These included both paper forms, and forms that were completed online. A copy of the feedback form can be found in the appendix of this report.</p>

We adopted a mixed-methods approach to this research for a variety of reasons. The combination of a short, online, quantitative survey with in-depth interviews meant that we were able to both broaden and deepen our analysis of the issues currently facing LGBTQ+ Londoners. The survey method allowed us to reach a much greater number of people (n=502) than we would have been able to had we focused solely on a qualitative, interview-based approach. It also enabled us to collate clear benchmarking data that can be used to assess the Centre's impact going forward. The qualitative interviews gave us a chance to explore the issues in much greater depth, and to give our sample of Londoners the space to explain who they are, how they feel, and what an LGBTQ+ Community Centre would mean to them. While neither of these approaches can be considered fully representative, they are nonetheless reflective of the issues currently facing LGBTQ+ Londoners, and shed light on what actions and facilities are needed to address them.

The analysis of data from the feedback forms means that we can address how the Centre has been received thus far, and what works well and less well. This approach helps us to stay accountable to the community we serve, while grounding our research in the practical elements of what the Centre is offering to its users on a daily basis.



CHAPTER 1: EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

Summary

This research revealed that, while most people did feel that there is some form of LGBTQ+ community in London, the feeling of being strongly connected to it is far from widespread. And that, while many people want to have a strong LGBTQ+ community in their lives, many struggle to find it.

- Half (51%) of survey respondents said that outside of Pride and nightlife, there isn't much of an LGBTQ+ community in London at all.
- 29% said that they do not have a network of LGBTQ+ support in their life.

Our research points to a strong desire for more LGBTQ+ spaces in London. Current spaces are seen as too few and far between, too focused on nightlife, and not inclusive for large parts of the community.

- 85% said that there are too few LGBTQ+ spaces in London, and 94% said that there are too few spaces that aren't orientated around nightlife.
- Those spaces that aren't orientated around nightlife are seen as among the most important, with 77% of people saying it was very important to have these spaces, compared to only 43% who said the same about nightlife venues.
- The vast majority indicated that there were not enough LGBTQ+ spaces for people like them (89%) and ones which were welcoming to people from all backgrounds (87%).

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

Sense of connection to the LGBTQ+ 'community'

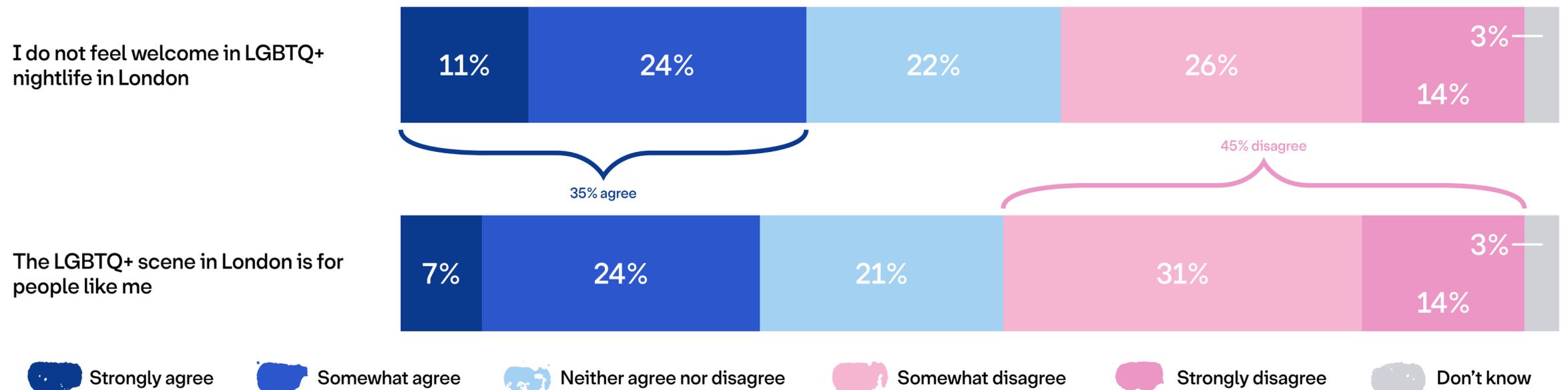
Sense of connection to the LGBTQ+ 'community'

Approaching this research, we were conscious of the learnings from our previous study, in which the need for a true LGBTQ+ 'community' was one of the primary findings. As a result, we wanted to understand what sense of LGBTQ+ community our respondents already had in London, and, what they actually meant by 'community'. While the term is widely used, the meaning isn't immediately clear. Is it simply a useful catch-all term to describe all LGBTQ+ people? Or does it denote a sense of connection to LGBTQ+ people, events, and spaces?

This research revealed that, while most people did feel that there is some form of LGBTQ+ community in London, the feeling of being strongly connected to it is far from widespread. And that, while many people want to have a strong LGBTQ+ community in their lives, many struggle to find it.

Overall, our findings suggest that, if there is an LGBTQ+ community in London, it is not accessible to all, nor is it straightforward for people to find where they 'fit in'. Around a third (35%) of respondents said that they do not feel welcome in LGBTQ+ nightlife in London, and more than 2 in 5 (45%) did not agree that the LGBTQ+ scene is for people like them.

Fig. 1: Feeling welcome in the London LGBTQ+ scene



Q3: How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: all respondents (n = 502)

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

Sense of connection
to the LGBTQ+
'community'

It is clear that not everyone feels welcomed into the community that exists in London:

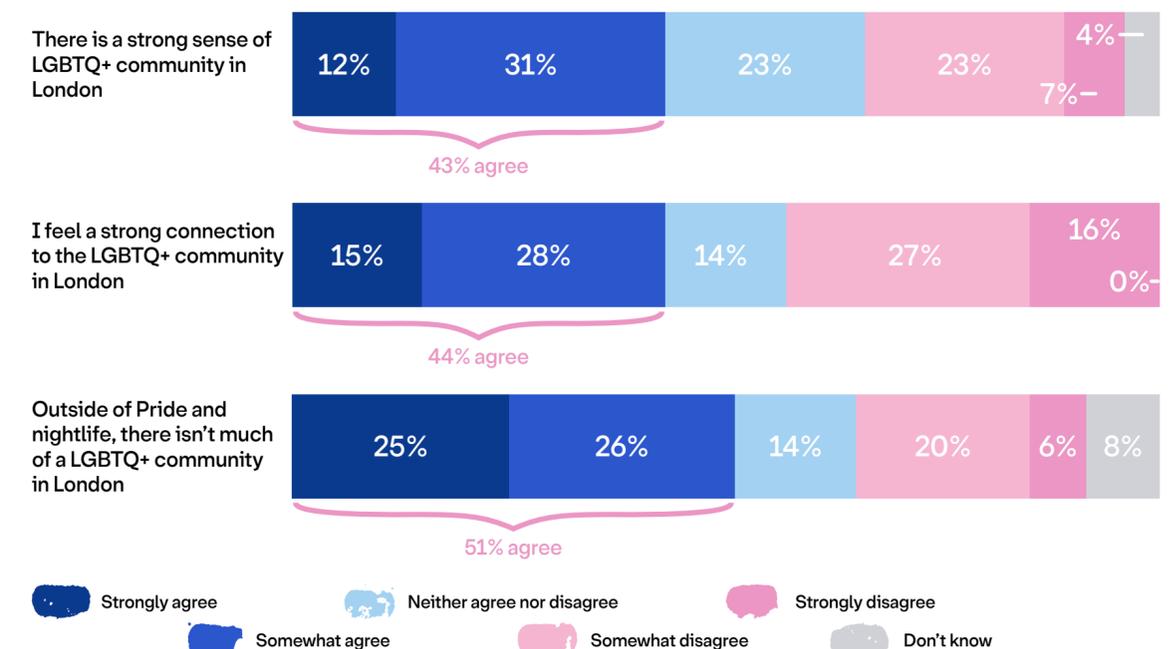
“At times it’s very difficult to live here, because, especially in the LGBTQ+ scene, it can be very standoff-ish. It’s very much full of in-crowds, and it’s often difficult to get into these kinds of crowds.”

And intersecting factors, such as age and gender, may further impact people’s ability to connect with others in the community:

“I find it really hard at my age and at my stage of life to feel that I can access the community. I’ve done a few meet-up group meetings, but that seems to be the biggest space where women can come to connect from what I can see. And it takes somebody to organise something, so it’s not like a bar or a club that’s always there.”

This research demonstrates that many LGBTQ+ Londoners are dissatisfied with the perceived lack of a strong LGBTQ+ community in London. Fewer than half said that there is a strong sense of LGBTQ+ community in London or that they feel strongly connected to the community that does exist (43% and 44% respectively). Half of our sample (51%) indicated that they feel that, outside of Pride and nightlife, there isn’t much of an LGBTQ+ community in London at all.

Fig. 2: Sense of LGBTQ+ community in London



Q3: How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: all respondents (n = 502)
*N.B. Some figures may be different to those expected due to aggregates being calculated prior to figures being 'rounded' for readability

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

Sense of connection
to the LGBTQ+
'community'

The perceived dominance of Pride and LGBTQ+ nightlife was reflected strongly in our qualitative interviews. When asked what the LGBTQ+ community in London looked like, Pride and nightlife (particularly around Soho and Vauxhall) were dominant themes, with little else being associated with the LGBTQ+ community as it exists in London.

“There’s lots of nightclubs, and nightlife. People think there’s lots of night clubs that LGBTQ+ people can go too, although I do think they tend to focus on gay men.”

[When thinking of the LGBTQ+ community in London] “I mean my brain just goes to like clubbing and bars. Basically, whether that’s soho or just general clubbing...and I think of the Pride march in London, which in my mind is now highly commercialised and it doesn’t actually feel like it belongs to me any more.”

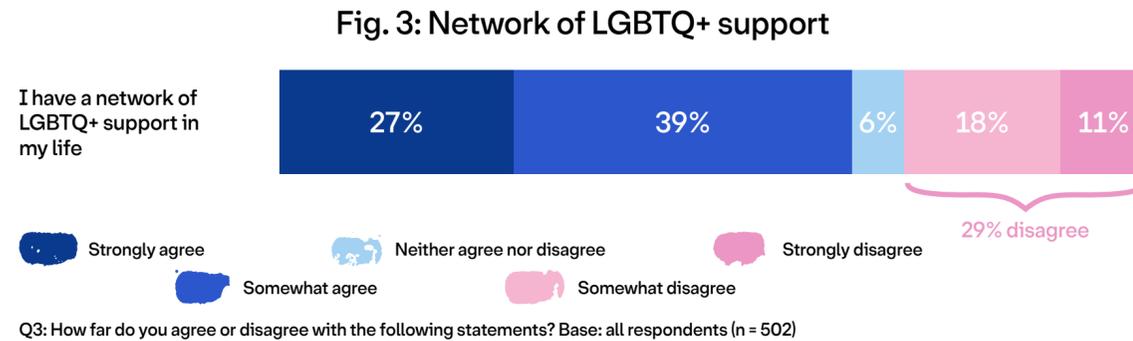
Critically, the dominance of nightlife as the key focus point of the LGBTQ+ community is a problem for a sizable proportion of those in our sample. For many that we interviewed, the current LGBTQ+ community is perceived to largely serve only those who want to enjoy nightlife venues and drinking culture, and within this, predominantly young, white, affluent, gay men. Ultimately this means that many people who fell outside of these groups struggled to find or feel connected to an LGBTQ+ community in London. They want something different.

“I have been out for 18 years and have longed for a community space in London throughout that time – instead, I have slowly seen spaces disappear, just as I was beginning to feel more comfortable in my own sexuality.”

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

Sense of connection
to the LGBTQ+
'community'

Outside of specific venues, 3 in 10 people (29%) said that they do not have a network of LGBTQ+ support in their life.



Our qualitative interviews showed that for many, this lack of support is not for want of trying. Many of those we spoke to described how important it was for them to have supportive groups of LGBTQ+ people in their lives. And those that didn't have the same network described how they would like to develop it, as well as describing the effort.

These networks of LGBTQ+ people are felt to give people a depth of personal support, and people with whom they can have shared experiences. They are seen as invaluable to those that have them, and sorely missed by many of those who don't.

“It would be nice to have a coffee place where you can sit down and see that the LGBTQ community isn't just Pride. It's also writers and intellectuals who brought a lot to society across the centuries.”

“In many places it's either gay or lesbian, not many people like me. That's how I feel. I feel like I still have to explain myself and it's not a perfect fit... no one's going to ask you to leave... But it's not the same.”

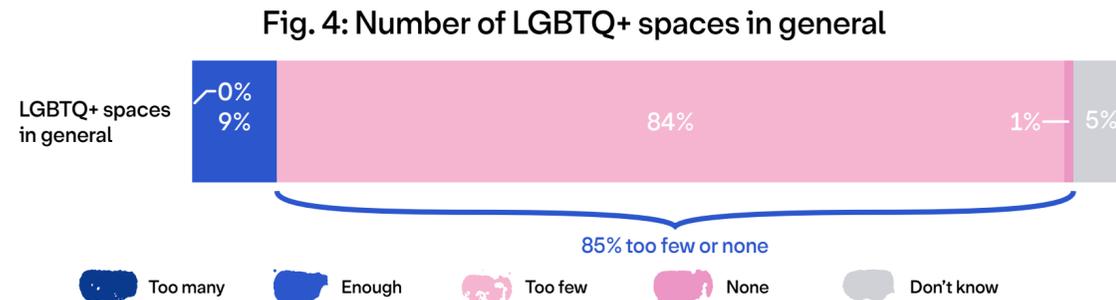
Ultimately, these findings paint a picture of many LGBTQ+ people in London struggling to develop the sense of community that they crave.

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

The need for more LGBTQ+ community spaces

The need for more LGBTQ+ community spaces

Our survey pointed to a clear appetite for more spaces dedicated to the LGBTQ+ community in London, with more than 4 in 5 of those surveyed saying that there are too few LGBTQ+ spaces in London.



Q5a. To what extent, if at all, do you think that London has the following types of spaces: [LGBTQ+ spaces in general] Base: all respondents (n = 502)

“I still think there’s a need for spaces where LGBTQ+ people can be amongst themselves, without too many straight people kind of interfering.”

In our interviews, we were able to explore why a physical space was seen as so valuable. Many respondents said that these physical spaces are vital in building a sense of community. They noted that the lack of sufficient LGBTQ+ specific spaces is a key barrier in attempts to build a network of LGBTQ+ friends and support.

“In terms of feeling a sense of community, having something like the LGBTQ+ centre, it does help. You begin to see the same people. And even if it’s only the person who’s serving your coffee, or there’s somebody who’s there on a Friday lunchtime because they can go from work. It does help and it’s because it gives you a physical place where things are happening. It starts a community.”

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

The need for more
LGBTQ+ community
spaces

One participant compared her experience of London to the days she lived in Sydney. She remembered how much the presence of specific LGBTQ+ spaces helped her to feel connected to her community.

“I was just reflecting on Sydney and what I used to really enjoy there. They had a group that used to meet on a Friday night once a month which was really nice. In theory, it was meant to be a professional, gay women networking thing. Actually it was just a party, but it was regular...and it was targeted to me as a professional gay woman. What made it work is that it was regular, it had a physical space, and it had a target population that I could relate to... so those three things made the difference: it helped me to find community because it was for me, it was regular, and it had a physical space.”

This experience of having events and spaces that were ‘for her’ compares to her experience of trying to find new connections through using ‘meet-up’ groups in London. She described how these groups had helped her meet people, but without a specific space to go to regularly, she had struggled to find a group she felt she belonged to.

“You kind of start to meet the same people after a little while when you’ve been to three or four or five events. In a way that’s quite nice...but I can’t put my finger on it. I can’t say that I belong to any of those groups. And that’s probably really important. That would tell me I was connected. I think, if I could say ‘I belong there, I found my place’, I’d be really happy, but I don’t feel [that way].”

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

The need for more
LGBTQ+ community
spaces

When thinking about the spaces that currently existed in London, most thought of nightlife venues in Soho and Vauxhall as being the most abundant, but even these were seen to be under threat. Many felt that these venues were at risk of closing down, and that precious few nightlife venues exist for groups other than gay men.

“There used to be spaces for gay men and not a lot for other people (and predominantly around nightlife). So already a large proportion of the community felt underserved. Now even the places that were there for gay men are under threat.”

“I’m aware of, I think it still exists, one predominantly lesbian bar in Soho...I went there a few years ago with my partner and two other female friends and we were probably the oldest women there by about 20 or 30 years. Where do you go if you’re in your 50s and you want to meet someone in the real world?”

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

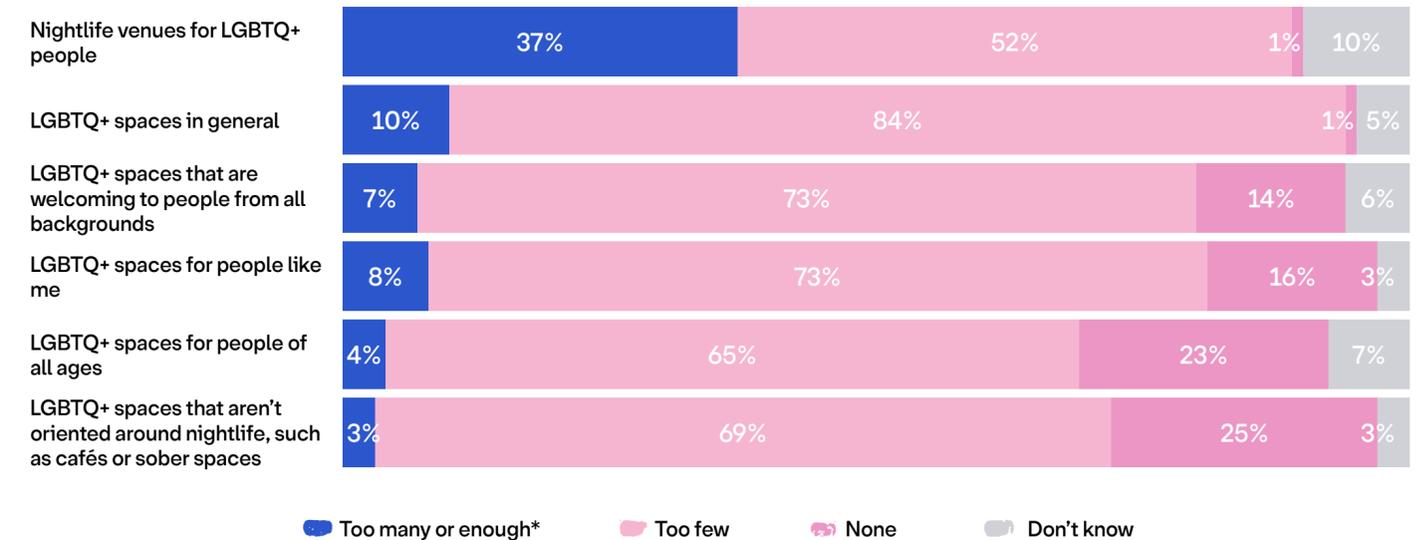
The need for more LGBTQ+ community spaces

There is definite concern about the lack of nightlife venues for LGBTQ+ people in London, with half of the sample saying that they felt there were too few. Nevertheless, there were greater levels of concern about the lack of other types of spaces for LGBTQ+ people. The vast majority of respondents said that there were too few LGBTQ+ spaces in general (85%) and an even greater proportion (94%) said that there were too few spaces that weren't orientated around nightlife, such as cafes or sober spaces.



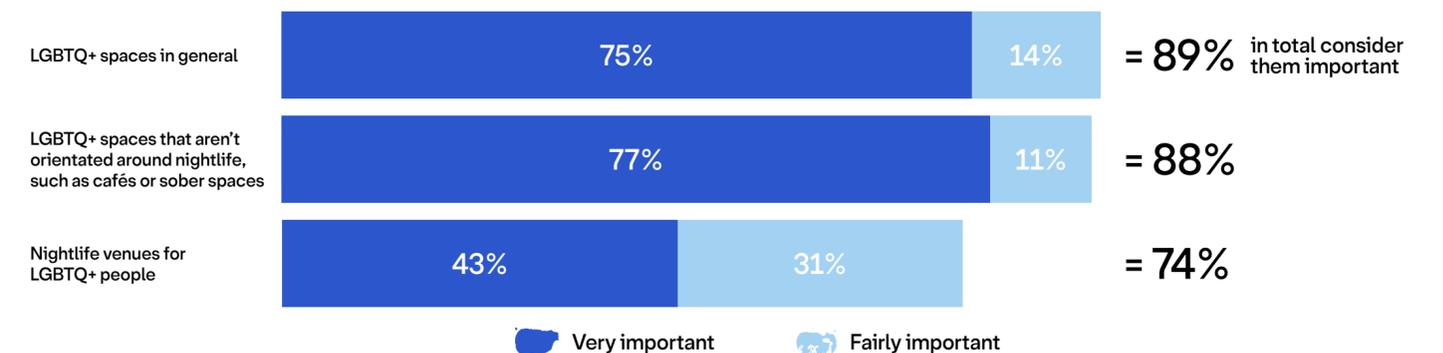
Notably, those spaces that aren't orientated around nightlife are seen as among the most important, with 77% of people saying it was very important to have these spaces, compared to only 43% who said the same about nightlife venues.

Fig. 5: Perceptions around number of LGBTQ+ spaces in London



Q5: To what extent, if at all, do you think that London has the following types of spaces? Base: all respondents (n = 502)
N.B. Responses for 'Too many' and 'enough' have been aggregated for readability due to the very small proportion of 'Too many' responses (0-2%)

Fig. 6: Relative importance of different LGBTQ+ spaces in London



Q6: How important or unimportant is it to you that London has the following types of spaces? Base: all respondents (n = 502)

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

The need for more LGBTQ+ community spaces

The importance of those venues not orientated around nightlife was a strong theme in our interviews. There was a sense from many that nightlife venues were not ‘for them’, as they didn’t enjoy drinking or clubbing. For some, intersecting factors such as health conditions, mean that going to existing nightlife venues is impossible. Even those who did enjoy nightlife venues commented that they would really value an alternative to the available options, which were felt to largely revolve around drinking and clubbing.

“I get tired very easily, especially in the evenings due to a health condition, so I don’t really go to clubs... I don’t really enjoy going to super loud places with very loud music when you cannot really talk to the other person ‘cause you can’t hear each other.”

Sober spaces were seen as offering a location where people could build more meaningful connections with other LGBTQ+ people, and the community as a whole. This could be through attending events and finding people with similar interests, being able to talk to others more easily, and finding companionship in a space that wasn’t focused on sex, drugs or alcohol.

“If I just want to have a drink, yes, there are enough spaces. If I want to have sex, yes, there are enough spaces but what I do miss... are spaces for, let’s call it, in inverted commas, ‘companionship’. Where you just simply interact, chat. Without any pressure to end up having sex together or something of that sort.”

“I’d love anything open during the day, that’s more like a cafe type of vibe, not like a nightclub type of vibe. I’d also like it if the place had some events happening from time to time. So basically what the Centre is doing.”

“I’d like a space where everyone is welcome and everyone can just be themselves and come with their boyfriend, girlfriend, [or partner] and just be themselves and be free and be accepted in this place.”

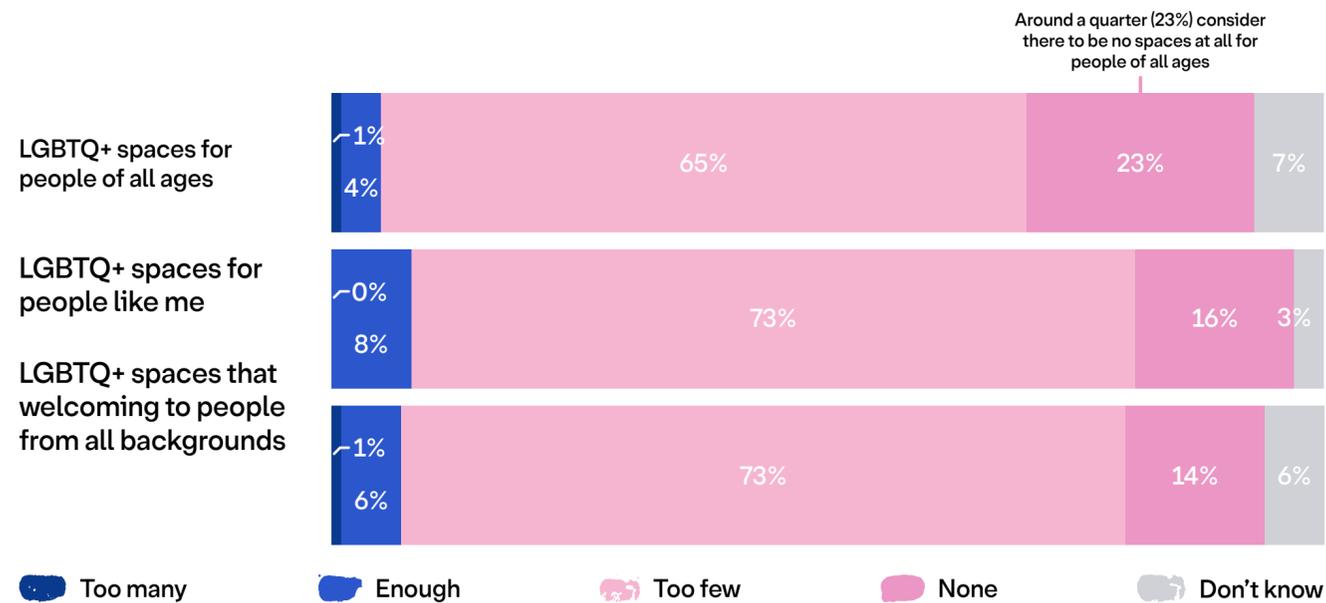
CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

The need for more LGBTQ+ community spaces

Beyond the need for a space for LGBTQ+ people that is not orientated around nightlife, this research also points to the clear need for more spaces that feel accessible and inclusive to people from a wide range of backgrounds.

This was demonstrated in the survey responses, where the vast majority indicated that there were not enough LGBTQ+ spaces for people like them (89%) and ones which were welcoming to people from all backgrounds (87%). Indeed, around a quarter (23%) considered there to be no spaces at all for people of all ages.

Fig. 7: Accessibility of space for everyone



Q5: To what extent, if at all, do you think that London has the following types of spaces? Base: all respondents (n = 502)

These findings were strongly echoed in our interviews, where many people spoke about struggling to find spaces that felt inclusive to them. This could be because of their age, gender, ethnicity or because they didn't feel like they 'fit in' with 'the scene'. As discussed above, this can often be exacerbated by most of the spaces that are available seen as catering primarily for gay men who go out drinking or clubbing.

This led to a strong desire for more spaces that were inclusive and catered to people from lots of different backgrounds from within the LGBTQ+ community. This was seen as important not only to make sure that all felt welcome, but also to help create a sense of 'a LGBTQ+ community', instead of a collection of fragmented groups.

“Spaces that we've had up to now have been fairly exclusive – They're really not for everyone.”

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

Lack of services for LGBTQ+ people in London

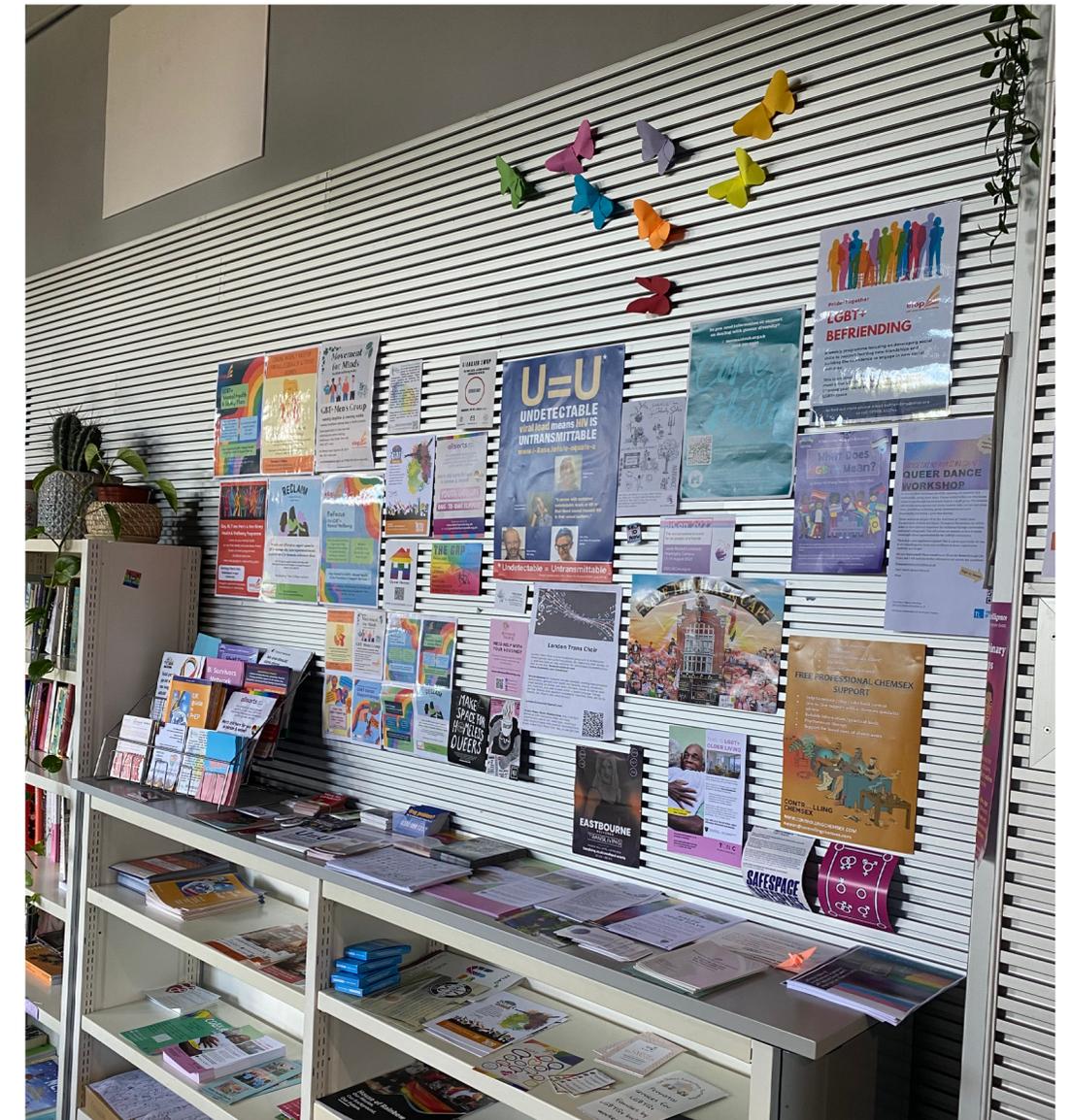
Lack of services for LGBTQ+ people in London

In addition to a concern around a lack of spaces for LGBTQ+ people in London, our quantitative research also pointed to a concern around a lack of services.

Services that are specific for LGBTQ+ people are seen as vitally important. Specifically, respondents said that having a space where people feel safe and comfortable that they won't be judged - either for their sexuality or gender identity - can make all the difference between people seeking the help they need, or going without.

“A space where if you were a victim, or you needed support or there was an emergency, where there is a space on the side where you can go...maybe the person experienced an assault and the last place the person would go is police or a hospital, where if there was that safe space where you know you can go and someone to talk to and signpost you somewhere. I don't know what you would call it, emergency support, a crisis space.”

The services that are seen as particularly important are support-based - mental health, sexual health, youth services, domestic violence support, etc.



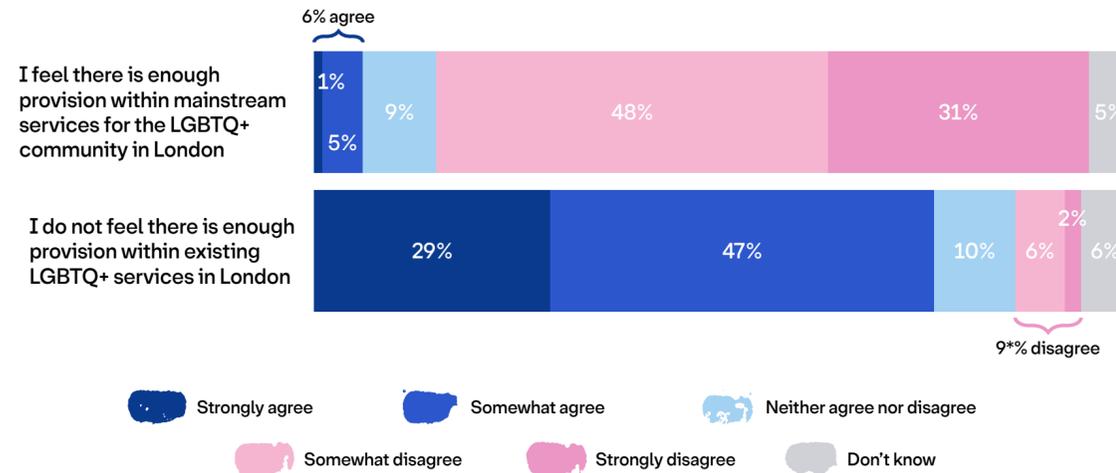
We signpost to organisations offering LGBTQ+ people support, advice and information.

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

Lack of services for LGBTQ+ people in London

However, currently there is seen to be insufficient support services for LGBTQ+ people in London. Only one in twenty (6%) of respondents said that there is enough provision for the LGBTQ+ community within mainstream services in London, and only 1 in 10 (9%) of respondents considered existing LGBTQ+ services in London to be able to offer enough provision for the community.

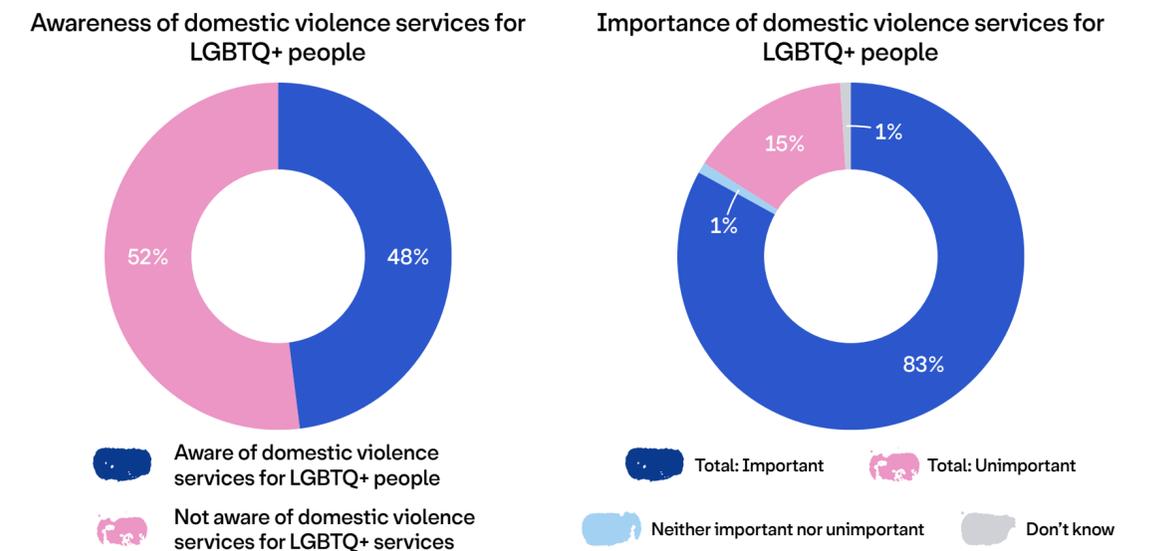
Fig. 8: Perceptions of service provision for LGBTQ+ people in London



Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Base: all respondents (n = 502)
*N.B. Some figures may be different to those expected due to aggregates being calculated prior to figures being 'rounded' for readability

The survey also spoke to a need for better signposting to services that do exist - for instance, only 48% reported being aware of domestic violence services specifically for LGBTQ+ people in London, despite 83% of people considering them to be important.

Fig. 9: Awareness and importance of DV services for LGBTQ+ people



Q9. Are you aware of the following types of services for LGBTQ+ people in London? Base: all respondents (n = 502)
Q10. For each of the following types of services, please indicate how important or unimportant you think it is that there is a specific service available for LGBTQ+ people. Base: all respondents (n = 502)

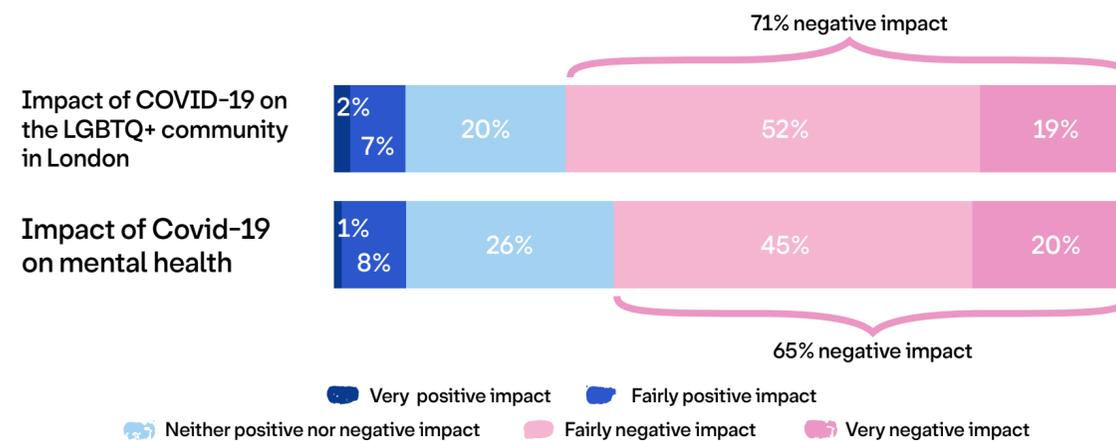
CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

Impact of Covid-19 on the LGBTQ+ community in London

Impact of Covid-19 on the LGBTQ+ community in London

Our research shows that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the issues faced by the LGBTQ+ people in London. Indeed, our research found that people felt that it had taken both a personal toll, and had a negative impact on the community as a whole. Two-thirds (65%) of those surveyed said that the Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health and almost three-quarters (71%) said that it had a negative impact on the LGBTQ+ community in London.

Fig. 10: Impact of Covid-19 on mental health and the wider LGBTQ+ community in London



Q1: To what extent, if at all, do you feel that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on your mental health? Base: all respondents (n = 502)
 Q2: To what extent, if at all, do you feel that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on the LGBTQ+ community in London? Base: all respondents (n = 502)



We opened our doors for the first time in December 2021.

“The lockdown was extremely hard, I felt very lonely because my partner had just died and I ended up with really severe mental health problems. It was a terrible time and I felt so alone.”

CHAPTER 1: Exploring the challenges

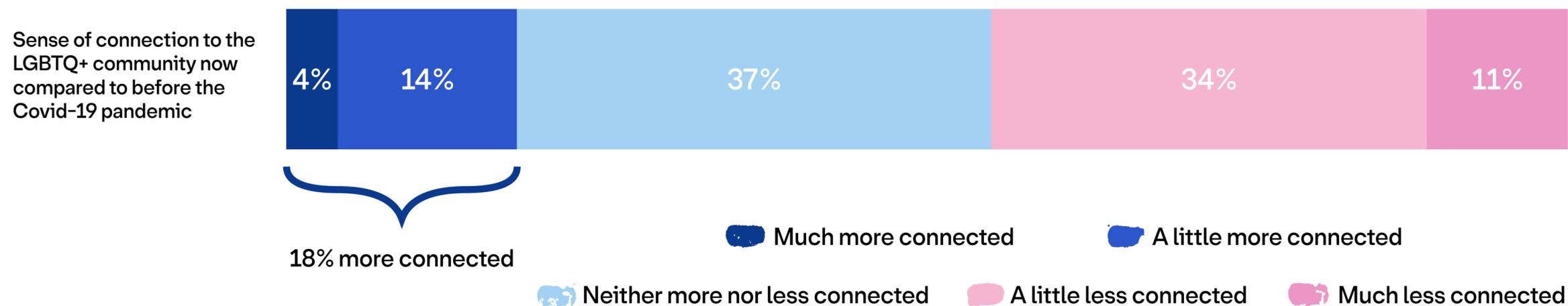
Impact of Covid-19 on the LGBTQ+ community in London

For some there were other ways they stayed connected to the community in the pandemic. In particular, online events were seen as a way for people who had previously struggled to engage with LGBTQ+ events (because of distance or the spaces not feeling inclusive) to feel more connected. Indeed, one in five (18%) of those surveyed said that they felt more connected to the LGBTQ+ community after that pandemic than beforehand.

“Those virtual things could be available to 300 people across the country instead of being available to the 50 people who live within 5 miles in some city.”

However, almost half (45%) said that the pandemic had led to them feeling less connected to the LGBTQ+ community.

Fig. 11: Sense of connection to the LGBTQ+ community now compared to before the Covid-19 pandemic



Q4. Compared to before the Covid-19 pandemic, do you feel more or less connected to the LGBTQ+ community? Base: all respondents (n=502)

**CHAPTER 2:
HOW CAN THE LONDON
LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY CENTRE
MEET THIS CHALLENGE?**

CHAPTER 2: How can the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre meet this challenge?

Summary

Alongside identifying a clear lack of spaces for LGBTQ+ people, this research also pointed to a clear vision of what people wanted to see.

- 61% said that they want to visit an LGBTQ+ space not orientated around nightlife once a month or more frequently. 67% of respondents wanted to visit a space for people 'like them' more than once a month.
- The community wanted this space to be inclusive, affordable, accessible, sober, welcoming and centrally located.
- In addition, as well as being a place where the whole LGBTQ+ community can come together, there is also a demand for events and activities that cater for specific groups within the community.
- The community consistently told us that we must continue our ongoing research so we can best meet the needs of London's LGBTQ+ population.

CHAPTER 2: How can the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre meet this challenge?

Appetite for an LGBTQ+ Community Centre in London

Appetite for an LGBTQ+ Community Centre in London

Our research has pointed to a clear desire for more LGBTQ+ spaces in London. Indeed, less than a third (27%) of those surveyed said that before the pandemic they visited an LGBTQ+ space more than once a month. This compares to almost two-thirds (63%) who said that they would like to do so.

These numbers become even more stark when we directly ask about different types of spaces. In particular, only 1 in 10 (10%) of those surveyed said that they went to an LGBTQ+ space more than once a month that wasn't orientated around nightlife. This compares to 61% of those surveyed who said that they would like to do so.

Similarly, only 19% said that before the pandemic they visited 'LGBTQ+ spaces for people like me' more than once a month. This compares to two-thirds (67%) who said that they would like to do so.

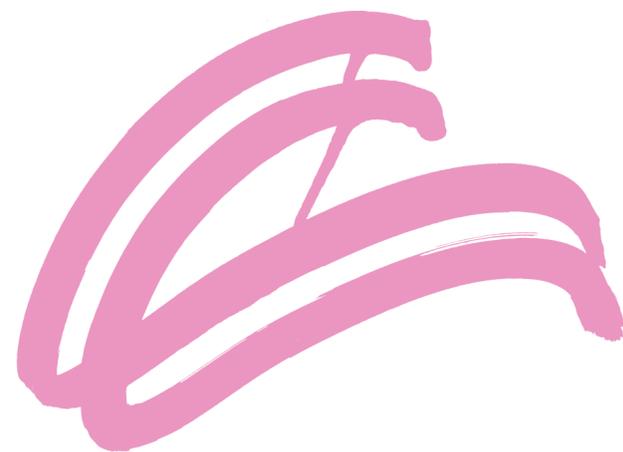
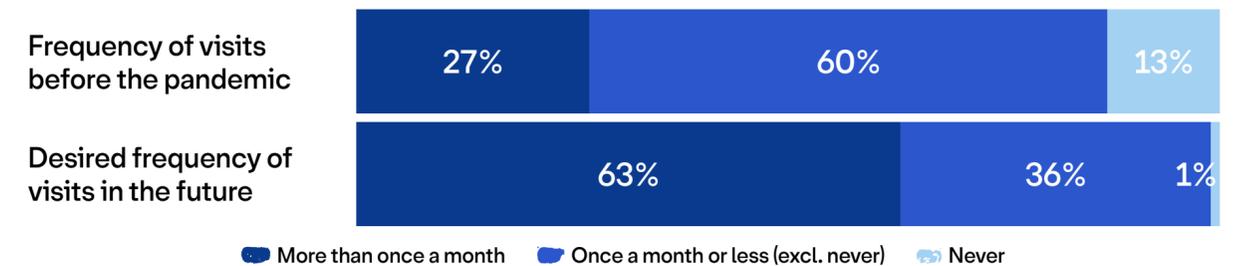
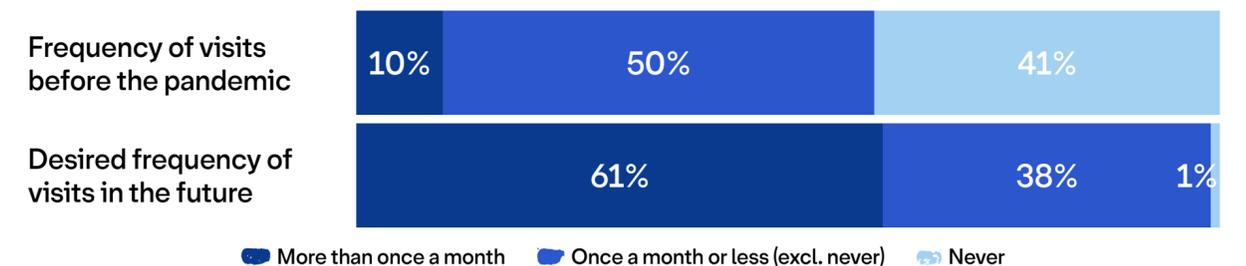


Fig. 12: Visits to LGBTQ+ spaces in general



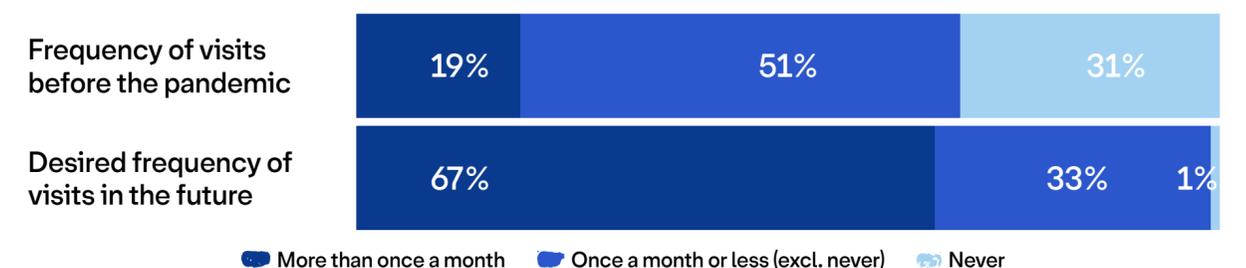
Q7: Before the pandemic, how frequently, if at all, did you go to any of the following types of spaces in London? Base: all respondents (n = 502)
Q8: Looking to the future, how frequently would you like to go to the following types of spaces in London? Base: all respondents (n = 502)

Fig. 13: Visits to LGBTQ+ spaces that aren't orientated around nightlife



Q7: Before the pandemic, how frequently, if at all, did you go to any of the following types of spaces in London? Base: all respondents (n = 502)
Q8: Looking to the future, how frequently would you like to go to the following types of spaces in London? Base: all respondents (n = 502)
*N.B. Some figures may be different to those expected due to aggregates being calculated prior to figures being 'rounded' for readability

Fig. 14: Visits to LGBTQ+ spaces that are 'for people like me'



Q7: Before the pandemic, how frequently, if at all, did you go to any of the following types of spaces in London? Base: all respondents (n = 502)
Q8: Looking to the future, how frequently would you like to go to the following types of spaces in London? Base: all respondents (n = 502)
*N.B. Some figures may be different to those expected due to aggregates being calculated prior to figures being 'rounded' for readability

CHAPTER 2: How can the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre meet this challenge?

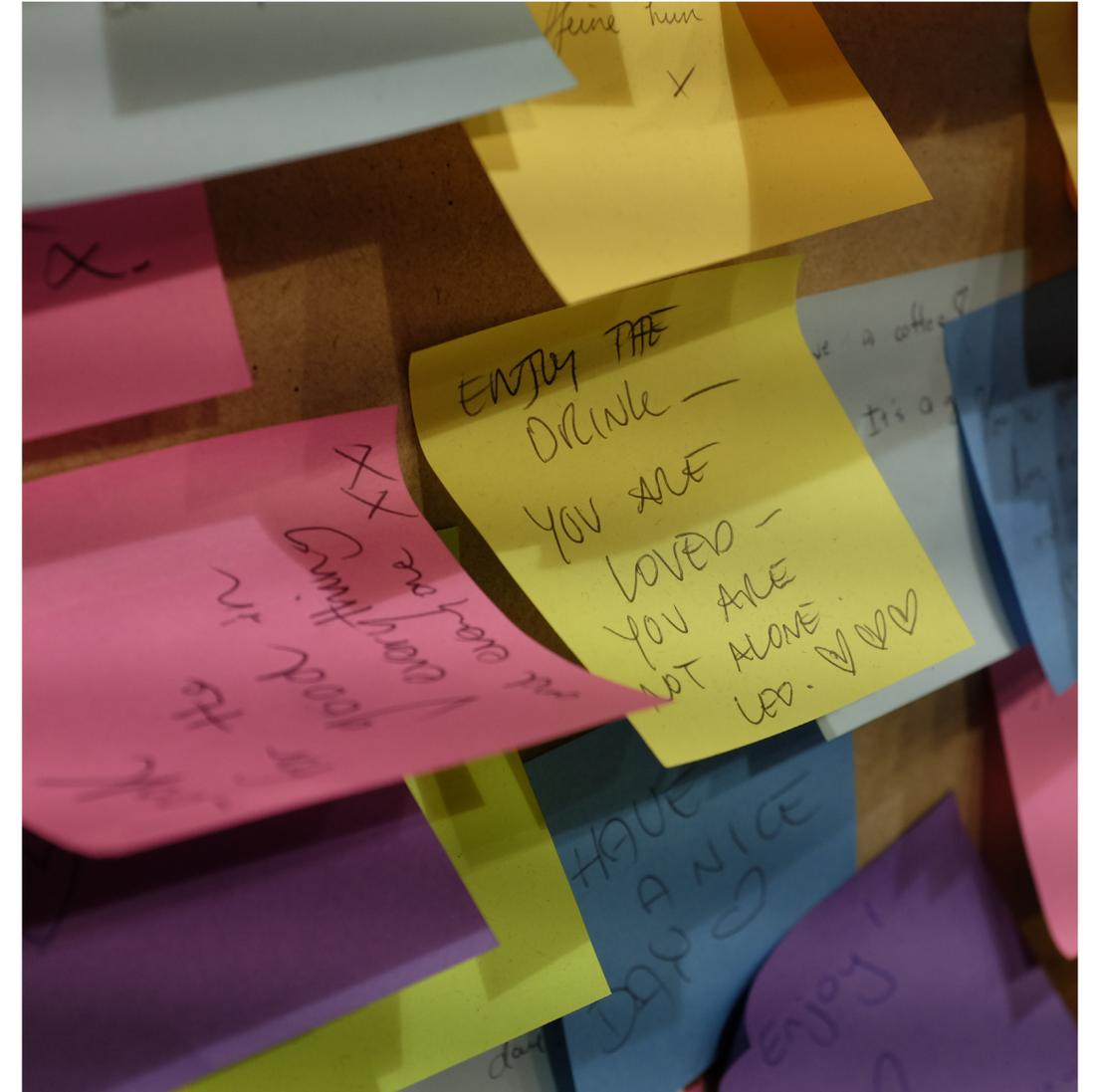
Appetite for an
LGBTQ+ Community
Centre in London

As explored above in our section on LGBTQ+ spaces, much of this disparity between how often people do go to LGBTQ+ spaces, and how often they would like to go, is often down to too many spaces being oriented around nightlife and not more widely inclusive.

Importantly, in interviews, when discussing these barriers to accessing LGBTQ+ spaces, participants spontaneously addressed a desire for an inclusive, welcoming community centre. A place to meet that isn't orientated around nightlife.

“It’s London and it’s one of the biggest cities in the world, but we don’t have [an LGBTQ+ centre] built for purpose like Los Angeles... it would be lovely to have it where you could go to one place and seek some advice if needed ... meet new people, it would be great to have it permanently somewhere...”

In both the survey and interviews, participants were also very clear on the key factors that were most important to them in a community centre.



Heart-warming notes visitors at the Centre have left for others to enjoy a hot tea or coffee.

CHAPTER 2: How can the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre meet this challenge?

Appetite for an
LGBTQ+ Community
Centre in London

Inclusive and accessible

First and foremost, there was a strong directive that the LGBTQ+ centre should aim to be inclusive to people from all different backgrounds. As discussed in the section on LGBTQ+ spaces, many felt that they are excluded from a large proportion of LGBTQ+ venues, which are seen to cater largely for young gay men. The Centre, our participants felt, should aim to make sure that it was a place where people of ages, identities, ethnicities, and backgrounds could feel welcome and included. The Centre should also ensure that it was accessible to those with a disability.

Importantly, many felt that it was something that would require significant work to help people feel comfortable, and that the Centre was for people like them. Indeed, many felt that it would not be enough for the Centre to simply say that it was for everyone, but that it must demonstrate this through its actions - for example, in the language that it used, the content it shared, and by hosting events for different and/or marginalised groups within the community. This proactivity was seen as necessary to overcome some fairly entrenched assumptions among large parts of the community that LGBTQ+ spaces 'aren't for them'.

“The Centre needs to be for everyone. It can't just say that it is either. Actions speak louder than words.”

Finally, many felt that a key part of this inclusivity was to ensure that the community centre was free to access, and any events were free or cheap. Throughout our research, many raised concerns that some spaces had become increasingly commercialised, and that it had become increasingly difficult for some with a lower income to access or feel comfortable in these spaces. Ensuring that the community centre is a place where people can come without needing to spend money was seen as an essential component to ensuring that it is truly inclusive.

“Everything has been extremely commercialised unless you sell a coffee for £3, you just can't survive and that excludes quite a large Section of the LGBTQ+ community because they just can't afford it.”



CHAPTER 2: How can the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre meet this challenge?

Appetite for an LGBTQ+ Community Centre in London

Sense of a whole community and a place to connect with smaller groups

Linked to this sense of inclusivity, some interviewees mentioned that it would be important for the Centre to foster a sense of different parts of the community coming together. Participants described how this sense of a ‘whole’ community is something that was more prominent in the past, particularly during well organised fights for LGBTQ+ rights. However, this sense of the community coming together is now rarely felt outside of annual Pride events. The Centre was seen as a way of addressing this, and offering a space that could bring different parts of the community together.

However, while many acknowledged and welcomed the idea of a space and events that brought together people from all parts of the community, there was still a demand for events and activities that catered to specific groups within the community. Many of those we interviewed expressed the importance of this as a way of connecting and making new relationships with people who share a common experience.

“We, GIN (GAY Indian Network) use the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre every second sunday of the month. [Having this space] has really helped us create a safe environment for our meetups.”

“Sometimes I long for the good old days, when the apps didn’t exist and you actually had to go out.”



LGBTQ+ community groups, like our improv workshop (pictured) hold regular sessions at the Centre.

CHAPTER 2: How can the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre meet this challenge?

Appetite for an LGBTQ+ Community Centre in London

Welcoming and calm

For many, part of the main appeal of the Centre is that it would provide a space that would not be orientated around alcohol, would be friendly and approachable, and offer a space where everyone could feel welcome.

While being able to signpost to services was seen as important, when asked about the key features that would attract them to the Centre, most spoke about the cafe, it being a welcoming place where they could relax, and the opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities and events. Examples of events mentioned included films, book clubs, choirs, and yoga, to name a few.

“I came for the Polari workshop and that was something unique that you couldn’t find anywhere else. It links us to our history and our elders that often get lost in the modern world.”

Areas to consider

Finally, one of the main barriers people saw to accessing the Centre was if it was too far away from where they lived, worked, or studied. It was seen to be essential, therefore, that the Centre was centrally located so all Londoners could access it.

However, our research did turn-up a number of tensions in what people were asking the Centre to be. For example, some described how they would want the Centre to be a political space where people could join around common causes. Others, however, described how they wanted a space where they could escape from politics.

Similarly, some thought that the Centre should aim to provide and host specific support services for LGBTQ+ people, while others thought that this might deter people from coming and using the Centre as a social space or a place to feel closer to the community.

Importantly, there will always be differing points of view to how and what the Centre can and should offer to the community. This, however, should not be something that the Centre should shy away from. On the contrary, it is important that the Centre is constantly listening to all the voices of those who use it, in order to be able to provide a service that aligns with the needs of as many people as possible.

The Centre must commit, therefore, to engage in ongoing research. In particular there must be further research reflecting on which pockets of the community are underserved by the Centre, and making sure that they are invited to participate in this research to help fill this gap.

Similarly, the Centre must be able to acknowledge the limits of what it can offer, and recognise where people’s needs are better met by the other existing, excellent services and spaces for LGBTQ+ people in London.

**CHAPTER 3:
HOW HAS THE LONDON
LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY CENTRE
BEEN RECEIVED SO FAR?**

CHAPTER 3:

How has the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre been received so far?

Summary

So far, the community's response to the Centre has been overwhelmingly positive. We have also taken efforts to address any issues raised in feedback.

- 86% of visitors felt extremely safe.
- 74% of visitors had an excellent experience.
- Many people directly requested that the Centre remain open for as long as possible.

CHAPTER 3: How has the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre been received so far?

Views from the visitors
to the Centre

Those who have been to the Centre generally consider it to be inclusive, well located and accessible.

In particular, 4 in 5 visitors consider the Centre to have been extremely safe and extremely inclusive (86% and 81% respectively). This is a positive response, given that being safe and inclusive were some of our main goals in designing the Centre. The 'informative' metric scored the least highly - although this was still quite high, with 71% scoring the Centre as extremely informative. Accordingly, the Centre will need to put some thought into how to improve this for those who visit going forwards.

This sense of safety was reflected in the comments that people made about their experiences at the Centre.

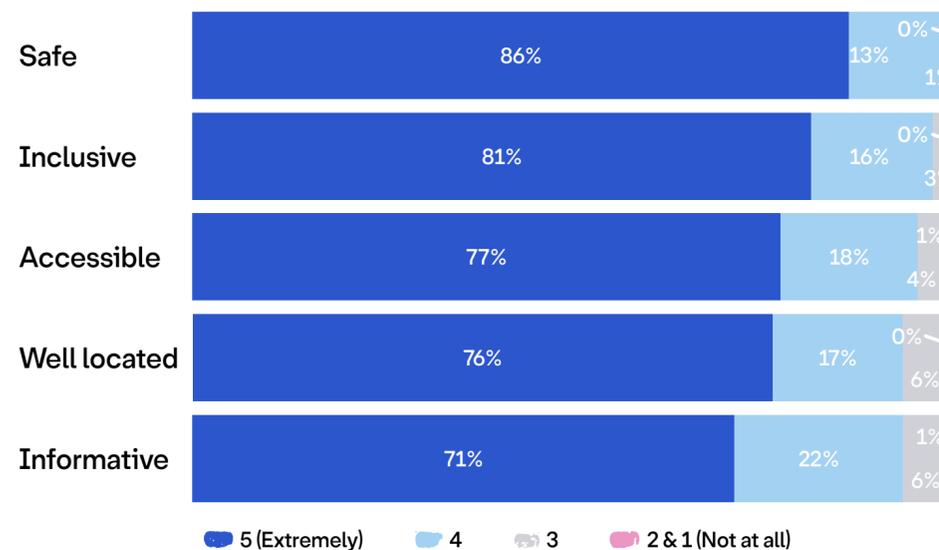
“I have attended a few of the exercise classes...it’s great attending a class led by another queer/trans person. I think it can instantly create a sense of safety in the space.”

“Lovely coffee - and affordable! Nice furniture and layout. Loads of great books and mellow music, not too loud. Variety of people around, feels safe and full of potential.”

“Really kind environment that fees like an important safe space for queers in London.”

“I loved that the Centre feels like a place of safety, respite and a quietly warm community amidst the bustle of central London. The volunteers are very helpful.”

Fig. 15: Rating the Centre by different metrics



Q2: Please rate the Centre in terms of the following... Base: all respondents to each metric (safe, n = 470; Inclusive, n = 473; accessible, n = 468; well located, n = 472; informative, n = 471)
N.B. Responses for '1 (Not at all)' and '2' have been aggregated for readability due to the very small proportion of responses for each (0-1%) & some rows may not total 100% due to percentages being calculated prior to rounding.

CHAPTER 3: How has the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre been received so far?

Views from the visitors
to the Centre

In addition, visitors have valued the Centre's inclusivity, and acceptance of people with all kinds of intersecting identities.

“The presence of a safe inclusive space in a good central London location where LGBTQ+ people can meet is a lifesaver. The service and space that the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre provides is unique and of enormous value... It has improved my wellbeing and it has allowed the Indian and South Asian LGBTQ+ community to get together and have fun and support each other.”

“I love coming to the centre to study. As an autistic person, I often find it difficult to be in community spaces, as they are either slightly too loud for me to focus properly or slightly too quiet to scratch the itch of my brain's constant need for stimulation. The Centre has that perfect balance. There are enough people to never feel alone, but not too many to be overwhelming. Someone there will always be happy to chat to you, but if you need alone time that is always accommodated too.”

“I came to my first Traveller Pride meetup here - I'd been separated from my ethnicity for 10 years. Thank you.”



Our Business Development Manager, Bisila Noha, speaks at our opening day. Photo by Ant Belle.

CHAPTER 3:

How has the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre been received so far?

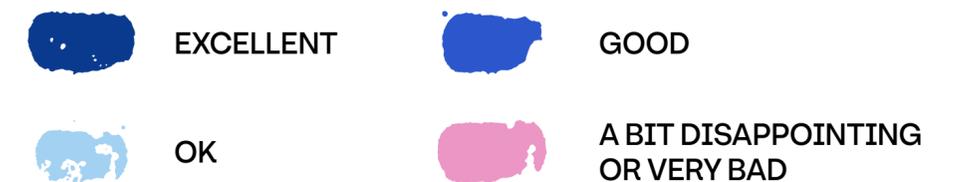
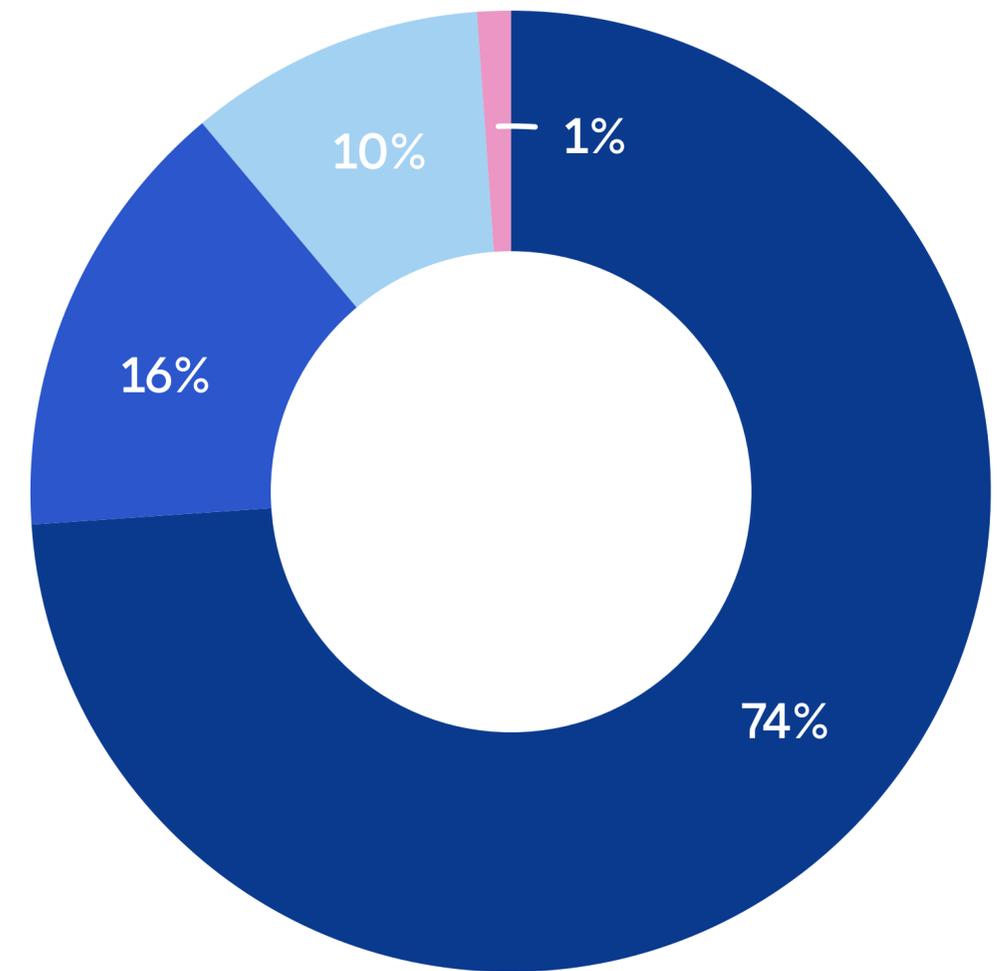
Views from visitors of the Centre

Three quarters of those who visited the Centre had an excellent experience.

The vast majority of those who visited the Centre had a good time. This is encouraging data and shows that we are heading in the right direction. Comments from our feedback forms indicate that people particularly value the diversity of events and activities on offer, the size of the space, the different kinds of people they can meet at the Centre, and the fact that the Centre is sober and quiet.

It is important to note that not everyone had fully positive experiences at the Centre, and some visitors identified areas that need to be worked on going forward. In particular, some visitors mentioned that the space got too cold during the winter months, that the Centre entrance can be difficult to find, that there are no food options, and that the bathroom facilities at the Centre are not accessible for wheelchair users.

Fig. 16: Visitors' experience at the Centre



Q4: Overall, how would you rate your experience visiting the Centre? Base: all respondents (n = 468)
N.B. Responses for 'A bit disappointing' and 'Very bad' have been aggregated for readability due to no responses for 'A bit disappointing' & Chart may not total 100% due to percentages being calculated prior to rounding

CHAPTER 3: How has the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre been received so far?

Views from visitors of the Centre

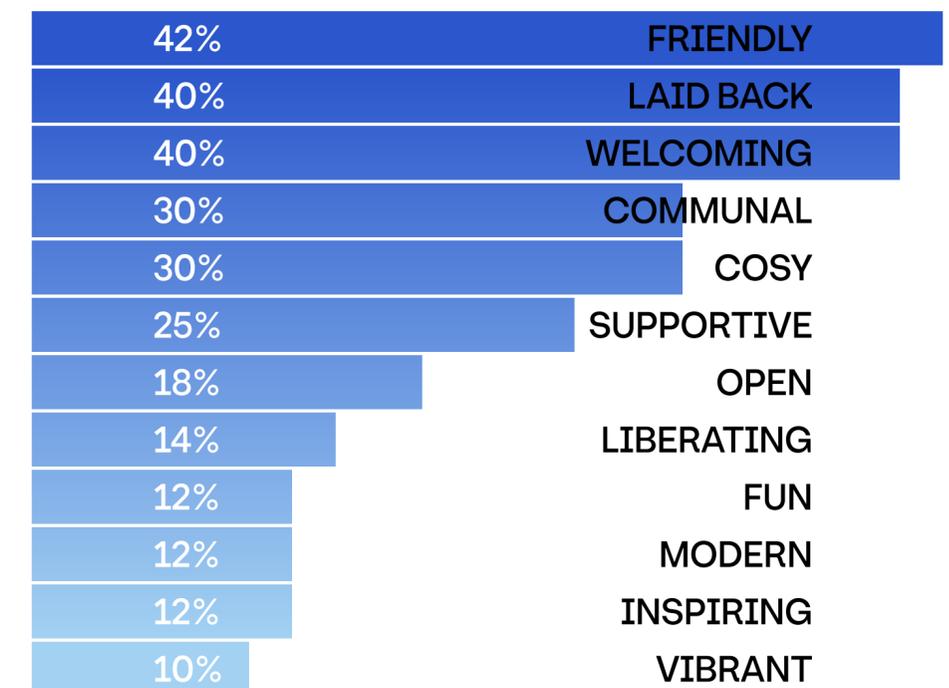
Addressing these issues is a priority for the Centre, and we are undertaking the following in response:

DEVELOPMENT POINTS	RESPONSE
CENTRE TOO COLD IN THE WINTER	The team at the Centre had not known originally that we would be able to stay at the space beyond the initial contract. Now that the Centre is settled in its home for the medium-to-long term, we will be able to plan heating more carefully. The team is currently discussing options for the coming winter, and better heating is a key priority for both staff and patrons visiting the Centre.
ENTRANCE TO THE CENTRE DIFFICULT TO FIND	We are aware that some people have struggled to find us, and will be adding better signposting to our website and socials.
NO FOOD OPTIONS	We are unable to provide food preparation, however we are currently discussing pre-packaged food options. Our objective at the moment is to source options that will be both affordable and ethically sourced.
BATHROOM NOT ACCESSIBLE FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS	This is currently being addressed. We are looking into how the toilet could be made as accessible as possible despite the space limitations and raising the funds needed to carry the works out. We aim to have completed the works by the end of 2023.

We asked visitors to select which words they would use to describe their time at the Centre - the most commonly selected words were: friendly, welcoming, and laid-back.

These adjectives were also raised spontaneously in responses to our qualitative questions, demonstrating that the friendly and welcoming nature of the Centre was at the forefront of people's minds after they visited.

Fig. 17: Adjectives used to define the Centre



Q3. Please select the three words that best describe the atmosphere of the Centre. Base: all feedback form responses to Q3 (n = 486)
N.B. This chart shows the percentage of those who chose each word within their top 3.

CHAPTER 3:

How has the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre been received so far?

Views from visitors of the Centre

“It felt like such a welcoming and inclusive space. The staff were very friendly and the range of events that you offer are very diverse.”

“So friendly and supportive! Never felt so ok to be me. Thank you :)”

Many visitors specifically mentioned the staff and volunteers that they met at the Centre, who they felt to be especially kind and welcoming.

“All the staff and individuals were very friendly and welcoming.”

“The staff are endlessly welcoming and great company... I’ve had many lovely conversations with them, but they also are good judges of when you just want quiet/space (they don’t hover). The event runners were also great, the different book club runners, the Saturday meditation team and especially [the yoga instructor].”

There was a real sense that the individuals working at the Centre contributed significantly to its friendly and inclusive atmosphere.

“I very much enjoy every time I go to the Centre. It’s truly welcoming and I always meet inspirational people and stories...the members of the staff are just wonderful.”

“I love the affordable and open events here. It is an incredibly inclusive space and so welcoming. As soon as I walked in I felt safe and I wanted to return. The volunteers here are so lovely and friendly. There are no other spaces like this in London, and it is so important for the community.”

CHAPTER 3: How has the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre been received so far?

Views from visitors of
the Centre

While there are some development points, the feedback we have received clearly shows how positive the Centre has been for some LGBTQ+ Londoners.

The evidence gained during our research shows that the Centre helps to make the experience of living, working and studying in London better for LGBTQ+ people, and it is clear that its presence would be sorely missed. The following quotes provide some insight into what the Centre has already meant to those who have visited it:

“So...someone fund this place! It needs to be permanent. It serves such a crucial role for marginalised queer people in London and losing it would be such a terrible loss.”

“How can the Centre improve? Just stay open please! You are making a positive difference to many peoples lives. Many vulnerable people come to the centre to breathe and be themselves and meet other people in a sober safe space.”

“I don't say this lightly because it's important to be real - but the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre was excellent in every way. Hugely supportive, accessible, vibrant, welcoming, inspiring and dynamic.”

“[In reference to an LGBTQ+ young person who had come to the Centre] it probably didn't look this way on a surface level, but the space that you all created offered them safety for a day in a world that isn't always so kind to them. You are doing good work, and I'm sure that plenty of people (myself included) are thankful for such an accessible, safe, community centred space in London.”

“I am grateful that something like this exists in London after 'a long winter' of no spaces like this one.”

“I absolutely loved it and will definitely be back - there were times in my life when I could really have done with a safe space like this - I'm so grateful it now exists for others. Thank you.”

CHAPTER 3: How has the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre been received so far?

Views from visitors of
the Centre

It is clear that the Centre is already helping to meet the first priority raised in our initial research – that of helping to build community.

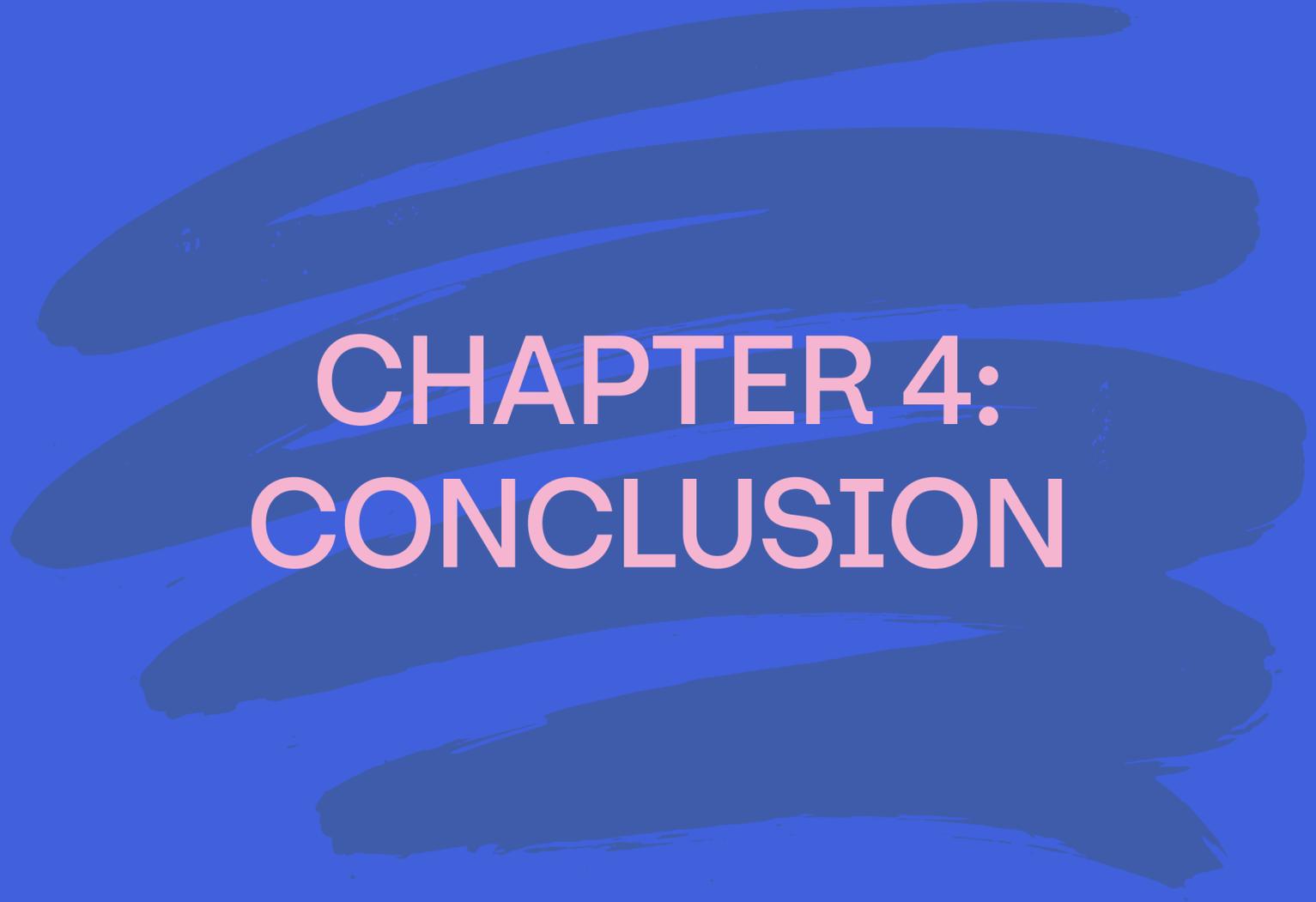
It is our intention to keep helping people to meet and connect with others with whom they can have shared experiences and form strong and nourishing community relationships.

“As a bisexual woman who has known very few queer women before, this Centre has been such a liberating and safe space – I’m so grateful that you’re here and that you’ve got funding for the next five years.”

“I really like the Centre. I am on my own and it has been wonderful to have a Centre to go to. The people staffing the Centre are really lovely and friendly and polite. The space itself is very relaxing and I look forward to my visits. I have met interesting people and have learnt about things like what non-binary is. Love the place.”

“Since the first time I went to the Centre I felt incredibly welcomed. I never knew I could feel this comfortable in a space and meet so many lovely people. The space is laid back and allows for everyone to connect at their own pace. It feels like a second home and has made such a big difference in my life. I’ve attended a few workshops and they have all been great.”

“It gives you a lot of hope when you feel part of a community. There is a place to go, and you’re not alone.”



CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 4: Conclusion

It is clear that there is a need and a demand for more LGBTQ+ centres like ours in London. While there are many excellent LGBTQ+ community spaces, and service provision organisations, in London already, a 2017 report by University College London found that 58% of London's LGBTQ+ venues had closed, with the number of spaces dropping from 125 to just 53². Many of the existing spaces are associated with 'nightlife' and are difficult to access for disabled people, neurodivergent people, those with limited funds, people in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction, and older people, among many others. By offering a sober, intergenerational, relaxed LGBTQ+ space, we can come closer to reaching all parts of the LGBTQ+ population, including those who cannot, or do not want to, access nightlife spaces.

We are offering the LGBTQ+ population of London a different kind of space to many of those currently on offer. It is a welcoming space, a social space, an educational space, a creative space, a kind space. It is a community space.

Our research has shown that the Centre is already having a significant positive impact on the lives of many LGBTQ+ Londoners, who we hope we can continue to serve going forward.

“The best thing you could do is to continue as you do and keep going!”

“Coming into the space I felt so immediately safe and full of queer joy. This space is everything I've ever wanted.”



APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Sample structure

We conducted 10 semi-structured qualitative interviews.

Interviews took place between November 2021 and February 2022, both before and after the opening of the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre.

Interviews were recruited from those who had taken part in the online survey, or those who had attended the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre.

Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

Our sample contained a mix of ages, those who identify as men, women and non-binary, and ethnicities. There was also a range of participants from more central and less central London locations.

We have supplemented these findings from these interviews with our survey and the feedback forms – both of which have had a wider reach, with the survey in particular reaching a larger cross section of the LGBTQ+ community. However, we acknowledge that our ability to get a good cross section of the community with these more in-depth interviews has been limited by the small number of interviews we have conducted.

We are committed to continuing this outreach and building our understanding of the wide range of views in our community in future research projects.

APPENDIX

Appendix B: Questionnaire text

Intro text

Hello! We are so grateful to you for taking the time to answer this survey for the LGBTQ+ Community Centre (the Centre) in London. The following questions are designed to help the team in making sure that the Centre is useful, accessible and safe for all members of the LGBTQ+ community in London.

The survey should take _ minutes on average, and there will be some open text boxes at the end if you wish to explain any of your thoughts in more detail.

Again, thank you so much for taking the time to help us, and we look forward to seeing you at the Centre in the future!

Section 1 – Sense of connection with the LGBTQ+ community

Q1. To what extent, if at all, do you feel that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on your mental health?

Scale:

- 1 – A very positive impact
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 – A very negative impact

Q2. To what extent, if at all, do you feel that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on the LGBTQ+ community in London?

Scale:

- 1 – A very negative impact
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 – A very positive impact

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Scale:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Statements:

- I have a network of LGBTQ+ support in my life
- I feel a strong connection to the LGBTQ+ community in London
- I do not feel welcome in LGBTQ+ nightlife in London
- The LGBTQ+ scene in London is for people like me
- There is a strong sense of LGBTQ+ community in London
- Outside of Pride and nightlife, there isn't much of a LGBTQ+ community in London
- Since the pandemic, I feel more a part of the LGBTQ+ community

Q4. Compared to before the Covid-19 pandemic, do you feel more or less connected to the LGBTQ+ community?

Scale:

- Much more connected
- Somewhat more connected
- No impact
- Somewhat less connected
- Much less connected

APPENDIX

Appendix B: Questionnaire text

Section 2 – LGBTQ+ spaces in London

Q5. To what extent, if at all, do you think that London has the following types of spaces:

Scale:

- Too many
- Enough
- Too few
- None
- Don't know

Statements:

- LGBTQ+ spaces in general
- LGBTQ+ spaces for people like me
- Nightlife venues for LGBTQ+ people
- LGBTQ+ spaces that aren't orientated around nightlife, such as cafes or sober spaces
- LGBTQ+ spaces for people of all ages
- LGBTQ+ spaces that are welcoming to people from all backgrounds

Q6. How important or unimportant is it to you that London has the following types of spaces:

Scale:

- Very important
- Fairly important
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Fairly unimportant
- Very unimportant
- Don't know

Statements:

- LGBTQ+ spaces in general
- LGBTQ+ spaces for people like me
- Nightlife venues for LGBTQ+ people
- LGBTQ+ spaces that aren't orientated around nightlife, such as cafes or sober spaces
- LGBTQ+ spaces for people of all ages
- LGBTQ+ spaces that are welcoming to people from all backgrounds

Q7. Before the pandemic, how frequently, if at all, did you go to any of the following types of spaces in London?

Scale:

- Once a week or more frequently
- Two or three times a month
- Once a month
- Once every 2-3 months
- Once a year
- Never

Options:

- LGBTQ+ spaces in general
- LGBTQ+ spaces for people like me
- Nightlife venues for LGBTQ+ people
- LGBTQ+ spaces that aren't oriented around nightlife
- LGBTQ+ spaces for people of all ages
- Online LGBTQ+ spaces (such as online community centres, zoom calls)
- LGBTQ+ social clubs, activist groups or volunteer organisations
- LGBTQ+ spaces that are welcoming to people from all backgrounds

Q8. Looking to the future, how frequently would you like to go to the following types of spaces in London?

Scale:

- Once a week or more frequently
- Two or three times a month
- Once a month
- Once every 2-3 months
- Once a year
- Never

Options:

- LGBTQ+ spaces in general
- LGBTQ+ spaces for people like me
- Nightlife venues for LGBTQ+ people
- LGBTQ+ spaces that aren't oriented around nightlife
- LGBTQ+ spaces for people of all ages
- Online LGBTQ+ spaces (such as online community centres, zoom calls)
- LGBTQ+ social clubs, activist groups or volunteer organisations
- LGBTQ+ spaces that are welcoming to people from all backgrounds

Section 3: LGBTQ+ services in London

Q9. Are you aware of the following types of services for LGBTQ+ people in London?

Scale:

- I know a lot about LGBTQ+ services in this area
- I am aware of LGBTQ+ services in this area but do not know a lot about them
- I am not aware of LGBTQ+ services in this area

Statements:

- Housing
- Youth
- Domestic violence
- Drug and alcohol
- Immigration and asylum advice
- Services for older LGBTQ+ People
- Mental health
- Sexual health
- Physical health / transition support
- Community kitchen
- Arts and rehearsal space
- Creche
- Exercise space/gym/classes
- Library/archive
- Clothes/ food bank
- Interfaith space
- Bicycle workshop
- Cafe

Q10. For each of the following types of services, please indicate how important or unimportant you think it is that there is a specific service available for LGBTQ+ people.

Scale:

- Very important
- Fairly important
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Fairly unimportant
- Very unimportant
- Don't know

Statements:

- Housing
- Youth
- Domestic violence
- Drug and alcohol
- Immigration and asylum advice
- Services for older LGBTQ+ People
- Mental health
- Sexual health
- Physical health / transition support
- Community kitchen
- Arts and rehearsal space
- Creche
- Exercise space/gym/classes
- Library/archive
- Clothes/ food bank
- Interfaith space
- Bicycle workshop
- Cafe

Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Scale:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Options:

- I feel there is enough provision within mainstream services for the community in London
- I do not feel there is enough provision within existing LGBTQ+ services in London (Please expand on your answer if you would like to)
- I feel there are enough LGBTQ+ spaces in London that I can access (Please expand on your answer if you would like to)

Section 4: LGBTQ+ services in London

Q.12 Please select the three services you would most like to see at the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre?

Options:

- Housing
- Youth
- Domestic violence
- Drug and alcohol
- Immigration and asylum advice
- Services for older LGBTQ+ people
- Mental health
- Sexual health
- Physical health / transition support
- Community kitchen
- Arts and rehearsal space
- Creche
- Exercise space/gym/classes
- Library/archive
- Clothes/ food bank
- Interfaith space
- Bicycle workshop
- Cafe
- Community garden

Q13. For how long would you be willing to travel to visit the centre? Please select all that apply.

Options:

- Less than 15 minutes
- 15-30 minutes
- 30-45 minutes
- 45-60 minutes
- 60+ minutes

Q14. How important, if at all, is it to you that the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre be in the TfL travel zones 1/2?

Scale:

- Very important
- Important
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Fairly unimportant
- Very unimportant
- Don't know

Q16. Is there anything that would stop you from visiting the Centre? If so, please explain below:

- [Open text response]

Q17. Is there anything that has not been mentioned in this survey that you would like to see provided at the Centre?

- [Open text response]

Q18. Has the Covid-19 pandemic changed what you would want from a community centre?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Q15. How likely, if at all, do you think you would be to access the Centre at each of the following times:

Scale:

- Very likely
- Fairly likely
- Fairly unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Never
- Don't know

Options:

- Weekday early morning (4:00-8:00)
- Weekday morning (8:00-12:00)
- Weekday afternoon (12:00-17:00)
- Weekday evening (17:00-22:00)
- Weekday night (22:00-4:00)
- Weekend early morning (4:00-8:00)
- Weekend morning (8:00-12:00)
- Weekend afternoon (12:00-17:00)
- Weekend evening (17:00-22:00)
- Weekend night (22:00-4:00)

Q19. If you feel that the Covid-19 pandemic has changed what you would want from a community centre, please explain how below:

- [Open text response]

Q20. Do you have any further comments for the team who are planning the Centre? If so, please write them below:

- [Open text response]

Section 5: Demographic questions

OPENING TEXT: We are now going to ask you a few short questions to help us better understand who you are. This information will support the team in making sure that the Centre is useful, accessible and safe for all members of the LGBTQ+ community in London.

Please only answer those questions that you feel comfortable answering.

We are conscious that not all identities will be covered in the drop-down lists to follow - if this is the case for you, please do feel free to express your identity differently in the open text boxes.

D1. How old are you?

Options:

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to say

D2. Which of the following options, if any, best describes your gender?

Options:

- Woman
- Non-binary
- Man
- Unsure
- I use another term: ____ [open]
- Prefer not to say

D3. Are you trans?

Options:

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Prefer not to say

D4. Do you identify as intersex?

Options:

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Prefer not to say

D5. What of the following options, if any, best describes your sexual orientation?

Options:

- Bi/pan
- Gay/lesbian
- Straight
- Asexual
- Unsure
- I use another term: ____ [open]
- Prefer not to say

D6. Which of the following options, if any, best describes your race / ethnicity?

Options:

- Arab
- Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi
- Asian or Asian British Indian
- Asian or Asian British Pakistani
- Black or Black British African
- Black or Black British Caribbean
- Chinese
- Mixed White and Asian
- Mixed White and Black African
- Mixed White and Black Caribbean
- Other Asian background
- Other Black background
- Other Ethnic background
- Other mixed background
- White British
- Other White background
- Prefer not to say
- Other: ____

APPENDIX

Appendix B: Questionnaire text

Section 5: Demographic questions

D7. What is your highest level of education?

Options:

- No formal education
- GCSEs
- BTEC
- AS Levels
- A2 Levels
- Undergraduate degree
- Postgraduate degree
- PhD
- Prefer not to say
- Other

D8: How would you describe your socio-economic background? (Please answer this based on your circumstances as a child, e.g., family income, housing, and employment.)

Options:

- Middle class
- Working class
- Upper class
- Unsure
- Prefer not to say

Would you like to be added to the community centre mailing list and receive updates on the research?

Options:

- Yes
- No
- Other

Would you like to opt in for further stages of the research?

Options:

- Yes
- No
- Other

APPENDIX

Appendix C: Interview schedule

SECTION	KEY QUESTIONS / ACTIVITIES
<p>Section 0: Introduction to the research</p> <p>Aim: To provide more information about the research and obtain their informed consent to continue.</p>	<p>Interviewer to make sure that they cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of the interview • Consent statements and ensure participant has signed consent form • Offered opportunity for participants to ask any questions
<p>Section 1: Background and warm-up</p> <p>Aim: To understand a bit more about the person and ease them into the interview with some easier warm-up questions.</p>	<p>To start with, can you please tell me a little bit about yourself?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me how you identify? • How long have you lived in London? Can you tell me a bit about your background? <p>What does a typical week in London look like for you? (thinking both about now and before the pandemic)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any parts of London / places where you spend more of your time? • What do you like about London? • And what don't you like?
<p>Section 2: Experiences of being LGBTQ+ in London</p> <p>Aim: To explore the person's individual experience of being LGBTQ+ in London.</p>	<p>I'd now like to talk about the experience of being LGBTQ+ in London.</p> <p>To begin with, I'd like to put you into someone else's shoes. Imagine that you asked a middle aged, cis, white, straight man what it is like to be LGBTQ+ in London. What do you think they would say?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think they would get right? • And what do you think they would get wrong?

APPENDIX

Appendix C: Interview schedule



SECTION	KEY QUESTIONS / ACTIVITIES
<p>Section 2: Experiences of being LGBTQ+ in London. Continued</p> <p>Aim: To explore the person's individual experience of being LGBTQ+ in London.</p>	<p>How would you describe the experience of being LGBTQ+ in London?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Interviewer to note down what they say] • How has this played out in your own experiences? If you feel comfortable in doing so, are there any examples that you could give? • [If unmentioned] Is there anything particularly good about the LGBTQ+ experience in London? • [If unmentioned] Is there anything particularly challenging about being LGBTQ+ in London? • Does this change for you depending on where you are / the situation you are in? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probe different contexts (work vs. social, different parts of London, group of friends vs. unfamiliar groups of people vs. public) <p>How, if at all, do you think these experiences differ depending on who you are?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [I think it would be good to try and tease out whether there is a sense that experiences differ depending on age, gender identity, socio-economic background, whether you consider yourself part of the 'scene' or not - could we potentially hold up a card / sheet with different groups on and ask how things might be different?] <p>How, if at all, do you think the pandemic has changed the experience of being LGBTQ+ in London?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any groups that you think would have been particularly affected by the pandemic? • What impact, if any, do you think the pandemic will have on LGBTQ+ people into the future?
<p>Section 3: LGBTQ+ spaces and services in London</p> <p>Aim: to understand experience and perceptions of LGBTQ+ spaces in London and identify any particular needs.</p>	<p><u>Spaces</u></p> <p>I'd now like to focus a bit more about LGBTQ+ spaces in London.</p> <p>What do you think we mean by LGBTQ+ space? What do you think would fit under this definition?</p> <p>[Do we want to provide a definition about what we mean]</p> <p>Are you aware of any spaces available for LGBTQ+ people?</p> <p>How would you describe these spaces?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are these spaces for? • Do you feel like they are for people like you?

APPENDIX

Appendix C: Interview schedule

SECTION	KEY QUESTIONS / ACTIVITIES
<p>Section 3: LGBTQ+ spaces and services in London Continued</p> <p>Aim: to understand experience and perceptions of LGBTQ+ spaces in London and identify any particular needs.</p>	<p>To what extent, if at all, do you feel that there are LGBTQ+ spaces in London for someone like you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What, if anything, would you like to see that isn't already available • What would this be like? • How would it be different to what is already available? <p><u>Services</u></p> <p>To what extent, if at all, are you aware of services that are provided specifically for LGBTQ+ people (or in an LGBTQ+ space)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [If yes] What are these? <p>How important, or unimportant, do you think it is to have services that are provided specifically for LGBTQ+ people?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you say that? <p>[If answer important, probe with]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What difference do you think having LGBTQ+ specific services - or services provided in an LGBTQ+ space - will have? • What kind of services do you think could benefit from being delivered in an LGBTQ+ space?
<p>Section 4: LGBTQ+ centre</p> <p>Aim: To explore ideas around the gap the LGBTQ+ centre could fill</p>	<p>I'd now like to talk about the LGBTQ+ community centre.</p> <p>We are doing this interview on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community centre. What, if anything, have you heard about them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [If they have heard] What specifically have you heard? • What do you think about it as an idea? • What impact, if any, do you think a centre like this could have on the LGBTQ+ community in London? <p>[Insert description of the centre]</p>

APPENDIX

Appendix C: Interview schedule

SECTION	KEY QUESTIONS / ACTIVITIES
Section 4: LGBTQ+ centre Continued	<p>What do you think about this as an idea?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What impact, if any, do you think a centre like this could have on the LGBTQ+ community in London? <p>The centre has settled on a few ideals / principles that it would like to pursue to make sure it is an inclusive and welcoming space (for example, for it to be a sober, intergenerational and genuinely affordable space). Beyond this, however, we are dedicated to making sure that the design of the centre is informed by the community. With that in mind, what would you like this centre to be like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What kind of space would you like it to be?• What do you imagine would take place in a space like this?• Are there any services, events, or facilities that you think should be a part of the centre? <p>What do you think the centre should do to make sure that it is truly inclusive and welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community in London?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• And what should it do to make someone like you interested in visiting the centre?
Section 5: Wrap-up	<p>I've come to the end of all of my questions. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about or add that we haven't covered?</p> <p>We might also want to get back in touch with those we have talked to to do a follow-up interview. Would you be happy for us to recontact you?</p>

APPENDIX

Appendix D: Feedback form

- 1) How did you hear about us (tick all that apply)?
 - Walk-in
 - Word of Mouth
 - An organisation I work for
 - Newsletter
 - Article/blog
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - Twitter
 - Online search
 - Other (Please specify)
- 2) Please rate the centre in terms of the following (1 = “Not at all”, 5 = “Extremely”):
 - Inclusive
 - Accessible
 - Informative
 - Well located
 - Safe
- 3) Please select the three words that best describe the atmosphere of the centre:
 - Supportive
 - Laid back
 - Liberating
 - Fun
 - Cosy
 - Friendly
 - Inspiring
 - Open
 - Modern
 - Communal
 - Vibrant
 - Welcoming
- 4) Overall, how would you rate your experience visiting the Centre?
 - Excellent
 - Good
 - Ok
 - A bit disappointing
 - Very bad
- 5) What did you like and how could we improve?
 - (Open text answer)

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