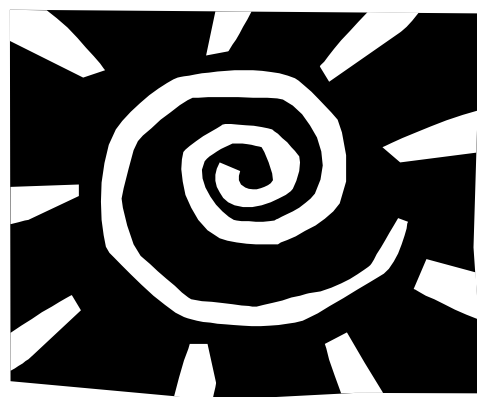


Manchester  
Lesbian  
Community  
Project



Annual Report  
2004–2005

## History of the Project

In 1997 Manchester City Council undertook a review of voluntary sector services for lesbians and gay men. This review highlighted significant gaps in the service provision for lesbians, and showed a need for more women-only spaces, groups and support. From this review, the post of Lesbian Participation Worker was established in March 1998, supported by Manchester City Council Voluntary Sector grant, to provide information and support to lesbians living in Manchester. Community Health and Resources Ltd (CHRC) – now renamed Diverse Resources – took on the task of managing the post and the budget, and provided support for the new worker.

On the basis of the recommendations contained in the review, it was agreed that the work should be concentrated on developing groups and networks, and facilitating the dissemination of information. This work was prioritised to focus on older lesbians, Black and Asian lesbians, disabled lesbians and lesbians with children – a focus that is still maintained today. The first Manchester Lesbian Newsletter was produced and distributed in December 1998. New lesbian groups were set up, including a lesbian parenting group and a lesbian football team. Both of these groups are still going strong today.

Additional funding was secured in 1999, allowing the creation of a part-time information and administration post. The Project was renamed the Lesbian Community Project.

The Project became independent of CHRC in 2000, the original Project worker left and was later replaced by two new workers, working on a job-share basis. These workers, with the support of the information and administration worker, continued to take the work of the Project forward and build on the successes of the last three years. At the end of October 2001, the Project moved to the Lesbian and Gay Centre on Sidney Street, creating more space for the Project and making it more accessible.

In 2003 the LCP took the decision to change the way it was governed and became a Registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. At the end of 2002 we were awarded funding from Comic Relief to create a new post of Development Worker and to create a Business Plan.

In spring 2004 a new Board was elected, and specific priority was given to consolidating the organisation and ensuring that funding was sought to sustain the increasing demand for services. The Comic Relief Development Worker position was filled.

## Mission statement

The Lesbian Community Project aims to address the imbalance in society that causes lesbians to suffer prejudice and inequality. Homophobia coupled with sexism is experienced by lesbians in various ways, including discrimination, isolation, harassment and low self-esteem. The Lesbian Community Project aims to tackle this through providing a range of services, which:

- ❖ Break down the isolation of individual lesbians
- ❖ Address and serve the specific and diverse needs of lesbians as opposed to other groups
- ❖ Work with mainstream services to be more lesbian-aware and lesbian-friendly
- ❖ Provide specific and relevant services for lesbians who are particularly isolated, including black lesbians, lesbians with children, lesbians with disabilities, and older lesbians

The long-term, broad aim of the Project is to increase the confidence, pride and self-esteem of individual lesbians and lesbian communities as a whole.

## Aims

- ❖ To support the development of self-organised groups and networks for lesbians
- ❖ To provide information and advice on a wide range of issues to individual lesbians and groups
- ❖ To offer information, support and training on lesbian issues to existing voluntary sector agencies and services
- ❖ To support the development of lesbian friendly services enabling better access for lesbians to existing provision
- ❖ To raise the profile and visibility of lesbians in Manchester, facilitating their participation in city-wide events and activities

## Councillor Mary Murphy:

*“ The Lesbian Community Project is unique. I am delighted that it has not only remained in existence but is already showing signs of developing at a great pace. As a lesbian, I want to thank the Board, staff and volunteers who have come together over the last year to strengthen the Project and move it into the future. ”*

### This year the LCP:

- ❖ Employed a Community Development Worker
- ❖ Commissioned a Business Plan with *Comment* consultants
- ❖ Supported:
  - Disabled Lesbians Group
  - Rainbow Families
  - Manchester Stingers Football Team
  - Jessies walking group
  - North West Older Lesbians Network
  - Lesbian Service Providers’ Network
  - LGBT Network
  - Women’s Network
- ❖ Started:
  - Lesbian and Bisexual Women’s Drop-In
  - Discussion Group
- ❖ Held a stall at Women’s Space, Manchester Pride with a consultation questionnaire filled in by over 200 women
- ❖ Held 4 focus groups on the questionnaire
- ❖ Held stall at International Women’s Day, Manchester Town Hall
- ❖ Produced 3 newsletters, +1 post AGM
- ❖ Started to update its website

# Chair's report

I am very pleased to be writing this report one year on...

A year ago the future of the LCP was in the balance, and members responded to the situation with their support, participation and commitment at the last AGM. I was proud to be elected onto the Board of an organisation that means so much to its community.

Over the last year the new Board, staff and volunteers have worked incredibly hard to re-establish and develop the service provided by the LCP. Wearing my other hat as administration volunteer I have witnessed first-hand the need for an organisation like the LCP. People and organisations across the country contact us for information and advice; isolated women looking for contact, community; local women looking for groups, events; and of more concern women (and gay men) needing help and legal assistance.

Lisa Buklovskis, our new Community Development Worker funded by Comic Relief, is doing excellent work supporting existing groups and networks and establishing new ones at the same time as working closely with other groups providing information and services for lesbians and bisexual women. As well as working with existing groups such as the Jessies walking and cycling group, Stingers football team, Rainbow families, we have re-established the Disabled Lesbians group. The new lesbian and bisexual women's Drop-in has brought in women from far and wide and has an exciting programme of events. The Lesbian Herstory discussion for LGBT History month has developed into a new discussion group about lesbian community, politics etc. We have a team of hard working and committed volunteers without whom we could not have done all of this!

We were very sad to say goodbye to our Project Co-ordinator, Amanda Elwen, this year. Amanda's vision, experience and commitment have been fundamental to this Project and its development over the last four years. We subsequently interviewed for the Co-ordinator's post but were unable to appoint.

This year there have been some significant changes for our community. The Civil Partnerships Bill will have implications for couples on benefit, and women in particular. The increase in homophobic attacks and the increase in the number of candidates put up by the British National Party are a cause for grave concern. The Disability Discrimination Act may make some difference to access and inclusion but there is a way to go yet... the Disabled Lesbians group is contacting premises in the Gay Village as we speak! The Gender Reassignment Act is a great step forward, however there are implications for married couples and over pension rights.

The LCP has a vital role to play along with other groups in consulting and providing information to lesbians and bisexual women. This year will provide us with many opportunities for growth and change and we hope you will be part of it.

*Kay Bastin*

# Development Worker's Report

I came into post as the Development Worker at the LCP in June 2004. At that time, the organisation was coming out of a difficult phase where its future had been uncertain. After a period of consolidation and consultation, the LCP has gradually begun to build up its services again in direct response to the expressed needs of the lesbian and bisexual women of Manchester.

As the Development Worker, my aim has been to work closely on a face to face basis with individual lesbians and groups. As a community organisation, I feel strongly that it should be representative of the community we serve. To this end, we carried out a survey at Pride last year as well as a series of focus groups, the findings of which have been the basis for our development work.

I feel passionate about working in the city's only lesbian-only project. As lesbians, and as women from diverse backgrounds, we experience multiple oppressions that can be more effectively challenged by collective action. By bringing women together and focusing on our individual and collective needs, we are able to empower ourselves to bring about change on a personal, social and political level. My vision for the future of the LCP is of a truly representative community organisation that has a voice in shaping the direction of the operational and strategic development within and beyond the LGBT communities of Manchester. I would encourage all lesbian and bisexual women to come along to the project and contribute your ideas, views, knowledge and skills to help make that vision a reality.

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has."*

Margaret Mead

## Development Worker's Post:

- Funded for 3 years by Comic relief
- Current Worker came into post in June 2004 following a long period where the post was vacant

## Expected outcomes of the post

### Aim:

- to reduce the levels of isolation and discrimination faced by individual lesbians and lesbian groups.

### Objectives:

- to improve the support available and the access to services of lesbians in Manchester and the surrounding areas.
- to improve the participation of individual lesbians and lesbian groups in city wide events and initiatives.
- to increase the involvement of volunteers in the running of and the work of the organisation
- to improve the accessibility of the services of the Lesbian Community Project to specific targeted groups facing multiple oppressions.

### Indicators

- an increase in the number of volunteers within the project
- an increase in service provision
- an increase in subscribers to the newsletter
- an increase in the involvement of lesbians from targeted groups due to the reduction of barriers to involvement
- an improvement in the experience of volunteering within LCP and the development of skills of volunteers
- the improvement of organisational policies and procedures
- an increased awareness of the needs and issues of the lesbian communities within wider communities
- improved consultation with lesbian and bisexual women by wider networking and partnership bodies

## Comic Relief Targets and Outputs

Outputs achieved during year 1	Target by year 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newsletter circulation increased to 1,000 on database</li> </ul>	1,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 groups supported</li> </ul>	20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 networks supported</li> </ul>	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 hours per week dedicated to improving partnership work</li> </ul>	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comprehensive volunteer policy and induction pack rewritten</li> </ul>	creation of written policies relating to volunteers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 volunteers recruited (including 6 voluntary management committee members)</li> </ul>	10% increase in number of volunteers involved in the project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• volunteer and service user evaluation process established via consultation, one to one/group feedback and volunteer evaluation forms</li> </ul>	development of a qualitative evaluation process for service users and volunteers

### Other developments:

- Launch of the twice-monthly Drop-in - average of 33 attendees per session
- Launch of the Discussion group - 13 women attended the first session
- Support and supervision of 1 Community Work student
- Increase in attendance at conferences and networking events
- Increased attendance at training events and seminars
- Funding secured for group development and training for staff and volunteers
- Increase in telephone/e-mail support to individual lesbians

# LCP Board

## Strategic Report

### *The medium and longer-term development of the LCP*

Over the last year the long term development of the LCP, and particularly creating a sustainable and secure future for the LCP, has been a fundamental priority for the Board and staff. This section of the annual report outlines some of the key components to making sure that the LCP has a bright future serving the lesbian community of Greater Manchester and beyond.

#### **Strategic Plan and Consultant**

In spring 2004 the project re-commenced the process of recruiting a consultant to lead the development of a long-term strategic plan, using part of the grant from Comic Relief. The primary objective of the consultancy was to assist LCP in developing a 5-year strategic plan and a corresponding fundraising strategy. The brief also included a review of organisational aims and objectives, identifying strategic priorities for service delivery, advising on an appropriate and effective staffing structure, reviewing management arrangements and examining policies and procedures.

Following an application, presentation and negotiation process, *Comment* were appointed and began work with the project in July 2004. The views of community members, staff, board members, funders and other stakeholders were used to gain a clear idea of the needs of lesbian and bisexual and develop a collective vision of the future for LCP. The plan is currently in draft form and will be finalised in the coming months, when the executive summary will be shared with our community and funders. Some of the themes in the report include: Revision of our mission and objectives; ensuring services are what is needed and avoiding duplication; developing new services; a funding strategy that will provide sustainability; exploration of 'business' opportunities; promotion and marketing; premises and other resources; and our staff and volunteer capacity.

#### **Community Lead Development**

That LCP is a community based and lead organisation is fundamental to our ethos. It was essential that the experiences and views of lesbian and bisexual in Manchester and beyond were the starting point for any plans for future development. Over the Manchester Pride weekend in August staff, board members and volunteers distributed questionnaires produced by *Comment*. Over 200 questionnaires were completed and returned. The results of these indicated that 82% of lesbian and

bisexual wanted more social opportunities, 58% wanted a safe space to meet, and 55% wanted support.

*Comment* also developed a focus group format, and provided guidance that enabled Board members and staff to facilitate these groups. Over 40 women took part in a series of focus groups during September and October 2004. Many of the women who took part were recruited through the stall at LCP Pride, whilst others were targeted specifically to ensure particular groups, such as older or disabled lesbians, were represented. These groups explored in more detail the barriers faced by lesbian and bisexual women, experiences of services that are currently available, and what services could be developed to increased lesbian and bisexual women's life chances. The information gathered has informed the development of the strategic plan, as well as contributed to current initiatives, such as the Drop-In launched in January 2005.

## **A Safe Organisation**

During the first half of the year, priority was given to developing policies and working procedures to safe guard staff, volunteers and service users. Following previous challenges in the project it was felt strongly that a period of consolidation to ensure the safe management and running of the LCP was needed, before we could develop further. Policies that were either revised and updated, or created for the first time, were based as much as possible on best practice from local authorities and comparable voluntary sector organisations. Grievance and disciplinary, redundancy, health and safety, vulnerable adult protection, volunteer, supervision, recruitment and selection, staff development, annual leave and other staffing policies were produced, as well as revising the Equal Opportunities policy to include bullying and harassment.

## **Our Key Resource – Staffing**

The staffing of LCP has changed dramatically over the last 18 months. Due to funding difficulties, the project has been without the traditional Administration and Information Worker since September 2003. Since February 2004 a volunteer Administration Worker, Kay Bastin, has valiantly provided an extensive range of day-to-day Administration support for the Project. The Board has recently appointed a temporary part-time Administration Worker, Ann Harrower, whilst long-term funding for the post is sought. This will allow the Administration volunteer to focus on other areas in the project – her role as Chair! Board member Beth Aze has contributed a great deal of time and support as staff supervisor and in many other areas, which has been essential in this difficult year.

Between April-September 2004 the project Coordinator returned to work on a part time basis, and made a substantial contribution to the consolidation of the LCP and beginning work on strategic development. Board members, staff, volunteers and

service users alike were sad to see Amanda Elwen move on to a new position in September. We remain deeply grateful for the tremendous dedication she gave the LCP, and the lasting ethos she helped to create that strongly remains. Unfortunately, the project was not successful in appointing a new coordinator, and is currently revising the role and grading of the project coordinator, in conjunction with strategic and funding developments.

The Comic Relief funding for a development worker provided significant opportunity for the LCP, and it was an early priority for the Board and Coordinator to appoint to this position. Following an extensive recruitment process, we were very pleased to appointment Lisa Buklovskis as the LCP's Development Worker. It is fair to say that Lisa 'hit the ground running' during a challenging and uncertain time for the LCP, and much of the work outlined in the rest if this report can be attributed to Lisa's hard work and extensive abilities.

## **Funding and Community Enterprise**

Over the course of the year, LCP has been successful in a number of funding applications. £5000 from the Community Learning Chest to build the skills of Board members, staff, and volunteers was secured in November 04. £900 from the Community Chest ensures the production and distribution of the LCP community newsletter. A number of smaller applications to Operation Fundraiser by several of the Groups LCP supports have also been successful. The LCP continues to receive annual funding of £30,450 (2004-5) from Manchester City Council to cover core project costs. The project is currently considering and drafting a number of applications for voluntary sector funding to safe guard and create staffing positions.

The financial sustainability of the LCP is a clear priority for the Board, and moving away from grant dependency into a position of self-sustainability for central project costs is viewed as essential. This is very much inline with current Government strategy, and the project hopes to tap into funding streams designed to build voluntary sector infrastructure and social enterprise. That the LCP became a company limited by guarantee earlier in the year was an initial first step in this direction, and the strategic plan will guide the development of business opportunities.

# Financial Report 04–05

Accounts for April 03–March 04 are being audited by the Community Accountancy Service, and will be presented to the next General Meeting.

The financial report below outlines income and expenditure from April 04 to date. A full statement of accounts will be audited after the end of the financial year.

## Income

Manchester City Council	£30,450
Comic Relief	£28,060
Community Learning Chest*	£2,500
Lesbian Link Donation	£2,869.62
Operation Fundraiser	£2,000
Total Income	£65,879.62

## Expenditure

Wages / Staffing costs	£17,208.96
Tax and National Insurance	£4890.45
Rent	£1125
Stationary and Newsletters	£1370.23
Office Expenses and Equipment	£1205.78
Volunteer and Group Expenses	£767.56
Travel	£156.10
Training	£176.33
Petty Cash / Sundries	£350
Comic Relief Strategic Plan Consultant	£1,500
Manchester City Council Repayment	£300
Total Expenditure	£29,166.74

\* Further £2,500 awarded

# Who are we?

## Staff

Lisa Buklovskis – Community Development Worker

Ann Harrower – Temporary Administration Worker

## LCP Board

Ann Mitchell – Company Secretary

Beth Aze – Staff supervisor

Kay Bastin – Chair

Susan Wood – Treasurer

Eileen Oak – Co-opted

Deborah Fairclough – Co-opted

## Volunteers

Mandy Sellars

Emma Jones

Lucy Harris

Nicky Jackson

Geraldine Preston

Eileen Oak