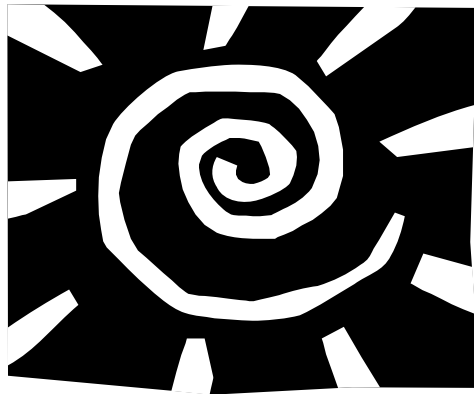


**Manchester
Lesbian
Community
Project**



**Annual Report
2006-2007**

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 a 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

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.

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 2003 the LCP took the decision to change the way it was governed and became a Registered Charity (1098158) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (4657590).

2004

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 in June 2004. Consultation of over 200 women was carried out at Pride 2004 resulting in an increased number of women accessing the project and the development of new groups. The Project Co-ordinator left in September.

2005

A business consultant was taken on to produce a strategic plan which will be available in 2005. Recruitment took place for a new part-time Project Co-ordinator, but we were unable to appoint. In March 2005 a temporary admin worker was employed. Following a significant gap without a Project Co-ordinator, staffing restructuring took place and the posts of Coordinator and Development Worker were reorganized. A joint administration worker with Peer Support was employed.

2006

Due to the growth and requirements of the Project a full-time Administration, Finance and Information Worker was appointed from May 2006. A part-time Community Development Worker was also recruited in June 2006 and a new Board of Trustees came into post. Work is currently being carried out to secure funding when the Comic Relief grant ends in June 2007.

2007

The LCP is actively recruiting for a new Treasurer after the previous post holder resigned. Funding has been applied for to secure the future of the 3 staff posts to ensure that the LCP can continue to operate at its current dynamic level. A decision is anticipated at the end of April.

Chair's Report 2006-2007

The last year saw many changes at the LCP to ensure that it continues to thrive. Crucial organisational restructuring took place last summer: the LCP's staff complement of three was finally filled and job descriptions were amended. Lisa's position was redefined as Project Coordinator, enabling her to focus on the managerial and strategic aspects of her work and to continue to expand her role in outreach and networking activities across the community.

In June we were pleased to welcome Naomh as part time Community Development Worker. Throughout the year Naomh has provided an important liaison with groups both within the LCP and those supported by the organisation. Naomh has also devised and coordinated the delivery of a structured programme of training and supervision for LCP volunteers and recently secured significant funding to support ongoing volunteer development.

Following the closure of the Peer Support Project, Lyndsey has joined us on a full-time basis as Administration, Finance and Information Worker, efficiently managing the everyday business, finances and organisation of the LCP. She has initiated an innovative "stars" scheme, raising awareness of the LCP and encouraging donations from LCP users and supporters.

Last June saw the election and formation of a diverse Board of Trustees. The shared focus of the Board continues to be strategic planning; Board members are currently working closely with Lisa to amplify and clarify LCP's established goals. The results of this process will be used to inform practice and secure funding to support future development. In addition to supporting the work of LCP's staff trustees are also in the process of reviewing procedures and policies in light of changing legislation and best practice.

The LCP Drop In and Discussion groups continue to go from strength to strength. The discussion group has enjoyed many lively debates and has moved to Wednesday nights in order to increase accessibility to its users. Indeed the positive outcome of one debate has been the proposed reformulation of the Disabled Lesbians' Group into a direct action/campaigning group, particularly concerned with the inaccessibility of the gay village to disabled members of the community.

The Drop In has enjoyed an increase in membership this year with particular successes including the pre-Pride party, International Women's Day celebrations and hosting a successful seasonal fundraiser in support of Women's Space.

The LCP continues to provide a sign-posting and publicity service for lesbian groups across the community and once again joined forces with Women's Space colleagues at Manchester Pride 2006 to ensure an enjoyable event for all.

LCP is supporting several new groups in response to identified need. We also promoted and facilitated the introduction of the extremely popular "Drumroots" women's drum circle.

The LCP continues to work tirelessly to achieve its goals of promoting all aspects of the well-being of lesbians and bisexual women across Manchester and beyond.

Co-ordinator's Report

March 2006 – February 2007

The past 12 months has been an exciting and productive period for the LCP. For the first time in several years, we have been fortunate enough to have 3 members of staff: 2 full-time and 1 part-time. The part-time worker joined us in June 2006 to fill the post of Development Worker, enabling us to focus more on developing our groups and services and to take greater advantage of networking opportunities. We have continued to raise the profile of the LCP both within Manchester and beyond. As the only full-time lesbian-specific organisation in the country, this has inevitably increased our contact with individuals and groups in the North-West and nationally. We have over 300 individuals directly accessing our services each month and we provide advice, support, information and signposting via telephone/e-mail/face to face to an average of 870 individuals/organisations per month.

The political remit of the LCP has also expanded over the last 12 months. Whilst by its very nature, much of our work has political undertones; this has been particularly evident in the work we have been doing around lesbian asylum issues. We now have a thriving immigration campaigning group who are raising awareness of the issues affecting lesbian asylum seekers and refugees. In October 2006, we launched an ongoing campaign to support Florence Moses, who is a lesbian asylum seeker from Sierra Leone. This work is supported by a committed group of volunteers who work tirelessly to campaign on behalf of the members of our community who experience multiple oppressions: as lesbians from minority ethnic backgrounds who are fighting for the right to live in the UK free from fear and persecution.

We have continued to develop our work supporting other minority groups within the lesbian community such as disabled lesbians; lesbians with caring responsibilities; lesbians from BME communities; and older lesbians. The uniqueness of the LCP is that it is a place where lesbians can come and be accepted for all of who they are. We are aware that, for example, many older lesbians don't feel comfortable being 'out' in generic older people's projects and similarly, many disabled lesbians don't feel able to be 'out' in generic projects for disabled people. The ethos of the LCP is to ensure that women who access our services are respected and valued as a 'whole person', where both their individual and shared needs can be met.

Groups and Networks

We continue to support a total of 18 Groups and Networks. In September 2006 we established the OWLs group (Older Wiser Lesbians) in partnership with Age Concern Manchester. This came about in response to expressed need for a daytime group for older lesbians who for a variety of reasons found it difficult to access our evening groups. This group is thriving and has contributed to a reduction in isolation for many older lesbians who would otherwise feel 'disconnected' from their community. The LCP Drop-in celebrated its 2nd birthday in January of this year; it has continued to thrive and has an attendance of between 15 – 40 women at each session. Our groups, including those which are now self-supporting, provide a variety of opportunities for lesbians including: sports, discussions, social events, workshops; support; campaigning; as well as volunteering opportunities.

Volunteers

Over the past year, the work of the LCP has been supported by 19 volunteers without whom much of the work we do would not be possible. They have assisted with running

groups; administration work; mailouts; delivering training; staffing information stalls at events; welcoming new women; campaigning work etc. We have recently been informed that our application to Awards For All to fund our volunteering projects has been successful which will enable us to provide further training opportunities for volunteers as well as to provide improved accessibility to volunteering.

Funding

Over the past 12 months we have received various grants for project work. These have included funding from the Community Chest and Impact Fund for immigration work and for the newsletter; we received a grant from Operation Fundraiser for the Drop-in; and we have had the ongoing financial support of Manchester City Council and Comic Relief. The three-year Comic Relief funding comes to an end in June 2007 and we have been working hard to secure replacement funding for this. We are currently awaiting a decision from the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund regarding our application for three year's funding to cover staff salaries.

Future of the LCP

The future of the LCP is currently dependent upon the outcome of the Big Lottery application. If it is successful, we have plans to increase our service outputs and to establish new services in accordance with identified need. We will endeavour to seek further funding to enable us to continue providing a much needed service to the lesbian and bisexual women of Manchester and the North West. As we continue to find creative ways to achieve sustainability for our project, the ongoing support of members of the lesbian community is crucial to our survival. Our battle is not only for financial recognition of the value of our work, but also to counteract the institutionalised heterosexism and homophobia that we all face on a daily basis. It is through collective action, that takes into account the diversity of our needs, that we are able to empower ourselves to bring about change on a personal, social and political level. We would like to thank all our supporters for their ongoing commitment which has enabled the LCP to grow from strength to strength. And we look forward to continuing working alongside members of our community as we face the challenges that still lie ahead of us.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.” *Margaret Mead*

Development Worker's Report

I came into post as Community Development Worker at the LCP in June 2006. My role was funded (initially – depending on funding) for one year. When I first came into post, the LCP was going through changes including the introduction of the new Board of Trustees. It was all very exciting as the new Board is made up of a mix of fresh faces and experienced people all coming with varying skills.

As the Development Worker, my aims were to work closely with the already existing groups that the LCP supported, support Women's Space, and revive the volunteering opportunities for members of the Lesbian and Bisexual women's community by recruiting a diversity of volunteers with various skills and to support the development of new groups to the LCP through various partnership works.

Groups

The Lesbian Community Project supports a wide variety of groups in many different capacities. The LCP supports/is involved with seventeen different groups and networks within Manchester. These include:

- Drop In
- Loving Me!
- Discussion group
- Older Wiser Lesbians (OWLs)
- Kaffequeeria
- Frontrunners
- Disabled Lesbian's group
- Women's Space
- MORF
- Rainbow Families
- Jessies walking group
- North West Older Lesbians' Network
- Lesbian Immigration group
- Lesbian Service Providers' Network
- Manchester Women's Network
- Valuing Older People
- Manchester Multi Agency Housing Forum

The support that we provide includes but is not limited to: publicity, funding advice, management and supervision, advice and advocacy, venue and postal support.

Volunteering

Last June, I met with current volunteers and ask them what their role had been, what they had gotten out of volunteering and how they feel volunteering benefited the community.

Volunteering can mean different things for a variety of people but essentially volunteering is to perform or offer to perform a service of one's own free will; to do charitable or helpful work without pay and a person who renders aid, performs a service, or assumes a commitment voluntarily. People volunteer for a wide variety of reasons. For some they may be volunteering for their own benefits, for others it is about community and developing friendships or it is because they believe in the cause and are passionate about what they do.

The following answers are from discussions and questionnaires with volunteers regarding their experience. They are named Vol. 1 to Vol. 5.

	Vol 1.	Vol 2.	Vol 3.	Vol 4.	Vol 5.
Current volunteer role	Currently the chair of the LCP	Drop in and discussion group volunteer	Admin and practical support	Women's Space volunteer	Meet and greet at different events
Benefits to the volunteer	Meet new people both for personal and professional benefit	Good experience as I meet people with similar interests such as animal rights	Helped meet new people and reduce my isolation as a lesbian with disabilities.	Helped me to focus	Expand my skills and experience
Benefits to community	Communication with other agencies	Making contacts and informing others of what is happening at the LCP	Promoting LCP's work	Introduce L+B women to the LCP	---
Benefits to the LCP	Encourage others to become more involved and more confident	Helped to reduce other women's fear	Help the smooth running of the project	Reduce workload of staff	Opened dialogue with those who previously felt excluded from the LCP, i.e. SMdykes
Ideas for future	Regular contact	Regular volunteer meetings	Volunteer's training	More involvement to training from volunteers	Clearer roles

Improving Volunteer Support

I updated the Volunteer induction pack; we are now working with a new application and monitoring form. Volunteer roles are now explained in descriptions.

Training

Our first Volunteer Training Day was held in September. There were ten people in attendance including volunteers and staff members. The programme for the day's event included:

- Teambuilding and getting to know you
- What's the point; why we do the work we do
- Overview of the organisation
- Personal journeys
- Volunteering opportunities
- Health and Safety

Volunteers found out more about the LCP, more about what was on offer and they were able to figure out if we were the project for them. We are happy to say that all volunteers and staff came back the following week.

Of the women who were able to attend the Volunteer training:

- 50% identified as being disabled,
- 34% were aged 41+
- 33% identified as White British
- 100% identified as lesbian.

Some of the responses from the day included:

- Covered a lot of ground well. Liked the warm ups.
- Very comprehensive, good mix of topics and issues covered
- Participative and didn't feel rushed.
- Excellent to re-focus as my motivation

Where we are up to:

Working on suggestions made from volunteers about ideas for future training, I set up a six month volunteer training programme. Topics included HIV awareness, Health and Safety and Drug and Alcohol awareness.

Volunteers are now supporting staff in all aspects of the project.

Group support

- Making people feel welcome,
- Setting up the tea and coffee,
- Leading or co-leading sessions
- Cleaning up after groups leave

Campaign Support

- Interviewing key people responsible for new initiatives around Manchester
- Writing articles for our newsletter to keep the community in touch with what is happening
- Helping collect signatures for petitions
- Letter writing
- Supporting our work with Florence

Administration support

- Statistics
- Diary support
- Displays and Notice boards
- Filing and photocopying
- Database support

Promotional Support

- Information days
- Displays
- Photocopying
- Welcoming people
- Informing people about the LCP

Centre Volunteer

- Notice/Display boards
- Keeping information up to date

Volunteer testimonial –Sheila Carson

I have been a volunteer at the Lesbian Community Project since September 2006. My main duties are updating the monthly statistics spreadsheet and assisting with the newsletter mail-outs. I have helped with word processing documents for Florence's campaign and also researched information on the Disability Discrimination Act for use in a recent discussion group. In February I attended a training session for HIV / AIDS awareness which was a useful update of knowledge I already had about the subject. I have regularly accessed various groups at the LCP as a service user for several months and feel volunteering is my way of saying thank you to the staff there for providing a welcoming, supportive environment for lesbian and bisexual women to socialise.

Volunteering since June 2006 has increased by approximately 60% and we hope that it will increase more over the next twelve months if we secure funding.

I would personally like to thank all the volunteers for their hard work and commitment to the Lesbian Community Project. It has been very rewarding working with each of them and seeing them develop their skills and gain more confidence personally and in the work that they do.

Financial Report

Income March 2006 – February 2007:

Carried forward at the beginning of the financial year	£17,296.91
<u>Grants</u>	
Manchester City Council – General	£31,680.00
Manchester City Council – International Women’s Day	£700.00
Comic Relief	£18,500.25
Impact Fund	£1,085.76
Community Chest – Carers’ Group and Immigration Group	£747.00
Operation Fundraiser – Drop In	£1,000.00
Donations	£254.31
Sales	£152.50
Total Income	£73,666.73

Expenditure March 2006 – February 2007:

General Running Expenses	£11,925.85
Payroll	£53,581.06
Insurance	£862.16
Rent	£1,500.00
Carers’ Group and Immigration Group	£746.93
Staff/Volunteer Training	£2,257.58
Drop In Expenses	£987.97
Volunteer Travel/Subsistence	£245.65
Staff Travel/Subsistence	£335.53
International Women’s Day	£574.86
Total Expenditure	£73,017.59
Net Income	£649.14

The Lesbian Community Project’s Comic Relief funding will be ending in June 2007. We are currently actively seeking funding to replace this essential income. We increasingly rely on donations from our groups and the Stars scheme and on the sale of advertising space in our newsletters and e-bulletins for extra income.

Lyndsey Girling
Finance Worker

Thank You

The Lesbian Community Project would like to say a big thank you to:

Beth Aze
Kay Bastin
Jo Bee
Joanne Bentley
Reverend Andy Braunston
Julie Hesmondhalgh
Allison Lowry
Phaedra McHale
Claire Mooney
Barbara Proctor
Lynda Shentall
Michelle Walmsley

Awards for All
Comic Relief
Manchester City Council
Operation Fundraiser
VAM

Age Concern Manchester and Salford
Chorlton Irish Club
Chroma
Cornerhouse
Drumroots
Ecover
Funky Crop Shop
Lesbian and Gay Foundation
Library Theatre
Manchester Metropolitan University
McVities
Neal's Yard
Pink Sofa
Taurus Bar

Who are we?

Staff

Lisa Buklovskis –	Co-ordinator
Lyndsey Girling –	Information, Administration and Finance Worker
Naomh McKee –	Development Worker (June 2006 – Present)
Karen McCarthy –	Development Worker (Temporary cover December 2006 – February 2007)
Elaine Bolton –	Development Worker (Temporary cover December 2006 – February 2007)

Board of Trustees

Jo Monkton –	Chair/Secretary
Rosie Garland –	Staff Supervisor
Linda Calvert –	Treasurer (resigned December 2006)
Janet Marrs –	Board Member
Moira Clenaghan –	Board Member
Leila Wilson –	Board Member
Tish Harrower –	Board Member

Volunteers

Barbara Proctor	Kay Bastin	Vicky Fraser-Smith
Sheila Carson	Karen McCarthy	Judi Jameson
Tanya Nunn	Florence Moses	Helen Hamilton
Phaedra McHale	Sara Atherton	Suryia Nayak
Marion Girling	Paula Gibbons	Lesley Bennington
Elaine Vaughan	Miriam Imran Omar	
Nicky Jackson	Maria Arraez	

Average number of individuals the LCP worked with per month in 2006-2007
256

Average number of organisations the LCP worked with per month in 2006-2007
157

Average number of hits on the LCP website per month in 2006-2007
15,028

The number of hits on the LCP website has doubled in the last year.

