



Annual Report 2023



Supported by



Funded by



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais, Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Oige
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Introductions

Hello,

Our third annual report. Where has the time gone? I am over the moon to be back here again to show you all how year 3 has gone. 2023 was a huge year for Midlands LGBT+ Project with a whole heap of highs and some unfortunate lows, but I remain immensely proud to be able to work and serve it for the past three years.

From 2021 when it was a very small one support group project called Laois LGBTI Project to where we are now as a project covering four counties (Laois, Offaly, Kildare and Westmeath), with three staff members, with over 200 groups per year taking place, supporting hundreds of LGBT+ people in the midlands I am in awe of the project itself and the people who make it what it is.

2023 has had some amazing highlights in the MLP HQ. For me they include- Laois Pride, the first ever Heartlands Pride in Athlone, launching our first trans in person group and two new Kildare groups.

In 2023 we have seen more people, answered more calls and emails, put on more groups than ever before, and we love doing it. We are bursting with energy going into 2024 and ready to do it all again.

Thank you all so much for being here with us on this incredible journey and we can't wait to show you what's in store in 2024.



Christina Fitzharris
Midlands LGBT+ Project Coordinator

Hi Everyone,

After three years of providing support, information, and engagement, we're amazed at the remarkable progress and hard work that has gone into the Midlands LGBT+ community. With four counties under their wing, witnessing the growth of the organisation within these last three years has been truly remarkable.

The diverse range of groups show us how important visibility and presence really is; the LGBT+ Book Club extending out to three groups due to demand, the Trans Midlands group breaking out from the online sphere and into real world connections, and the Kildare group showing us that the LGBT+ community doesn't have to resort to the big cities just to find their people. All this, and the trainings, research, and support outside of the community provided by the project.

As a steering group member, we are thrilled to have welcomed new volunteers, staff, and committee members over the past three years. The diverse and innovative skills and ideas continue to hold up the ongoing development and inclusivity of the project. Volunteers are the sole driver of the Midlands LGBT+ Project, and we are sincerely grateful for all of their unwavering commitment and time to the project.

We extend our gratitude and thanks to the Coordinator of the Project, Christina Fitzharris, and Lucas Cross for their hard work in establishing and maintaining numerous groups, social opportunities, and training for the wider community. Regardless of the hardship faced, their focus and approach makes all the difference for both the community and the stakeholders involved. Here's to another fantastic year ahead!



Clive Davis Member of Midlands
LGBT+ Project Steering Committee

Introductions

Hello fellow gays and distinguished allies!

Welcome back to another wonderful annual report from your favourite charity.

This year has had its ups and downs for us but for me, 2023 has truly proven our resilience in the face of adversity.

Our staff, volunteers and community came together once again to host a fantastic year of social events, training and another fabulous Laois Pride week!

We hope you've all enjoyed being a part of it and we'll bring the same passion and enthusiasm into 2024!



Sam Kelly
Community Development Assistant

Hi folks,

Welcome to our 2023 Annual Report; a year that was filled with many highs and lows, but inevitably proved that our community can handle even the harshest of waves and still come out shining.

This year has shown us a lot of different challenges, and on many levels; but our community has proven ourselves to bounce right back. As an area of Ireland that we know has a lot of tradition embedded within the varying communities, we've witnessed how important visibility and connection really is; shown in our Laois Pride week and our first Heartlands Pride weekend

Here's to much more connection and solidarity in 2024 for the Midlands.



Lucas Cross
Community Development Worker

Meet The Team:

Staff

Steering Committee

Volunteers



Staff

Christina Fitzharris (Coordinator)



Steering Committee

Clive Davis (Regional Director of Youth Work Ireland Laois)



Volunteer

Annie Moore



Staff

Sam Kelly
(Community Development Assistant)



Steering Committee

Joan Bolger (Manager of Portlaoise Family Resource Centre)



Volunteer

Roisin Lalor



Staff

Lucas Cross
(Community Development Worker)



Steering Committee

Josephine Rigney (HSE Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention)



Volunteer

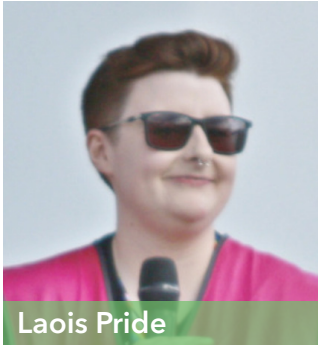
Heather Law

Meet The Team:

**Laois
Pride**



**Heartlands
Pride**



Laois Pride

Shauna Golden
(Chair)



Laois Pride

Rosie Palmer
(Secretary)



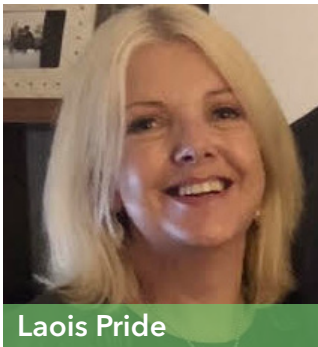
Heartlands Pride

Anthony Keane



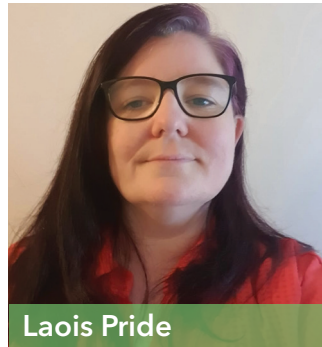
Heartlands Pride

Barry McCaffrey



Laois Pride

Mary Flanagan
(Parade Coordinator)



Laois Pride

Helen Lanigan
(Community Outreach)



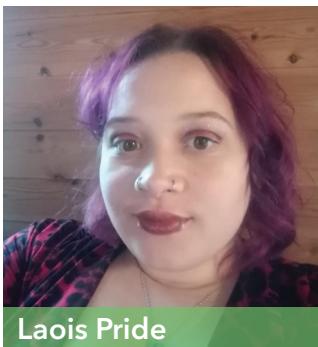
Heartlands Pride

Christine O'Mahoney



Heartlands Pride

Edward O'Connor



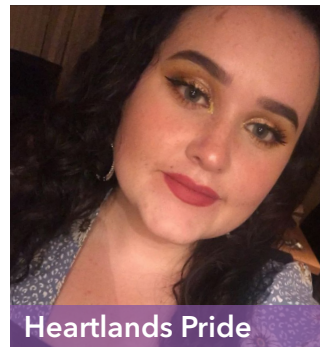
Laois Pride

Mia Fitzpatrick-Mackay



Laois Pride

Amy Byrne



Heartlands Pride

Lucy Matthews



Heartlands Pride

Hilde Simboeck



Laois Pride

Dani Ronan



Laois Pride

Caroline Cahill

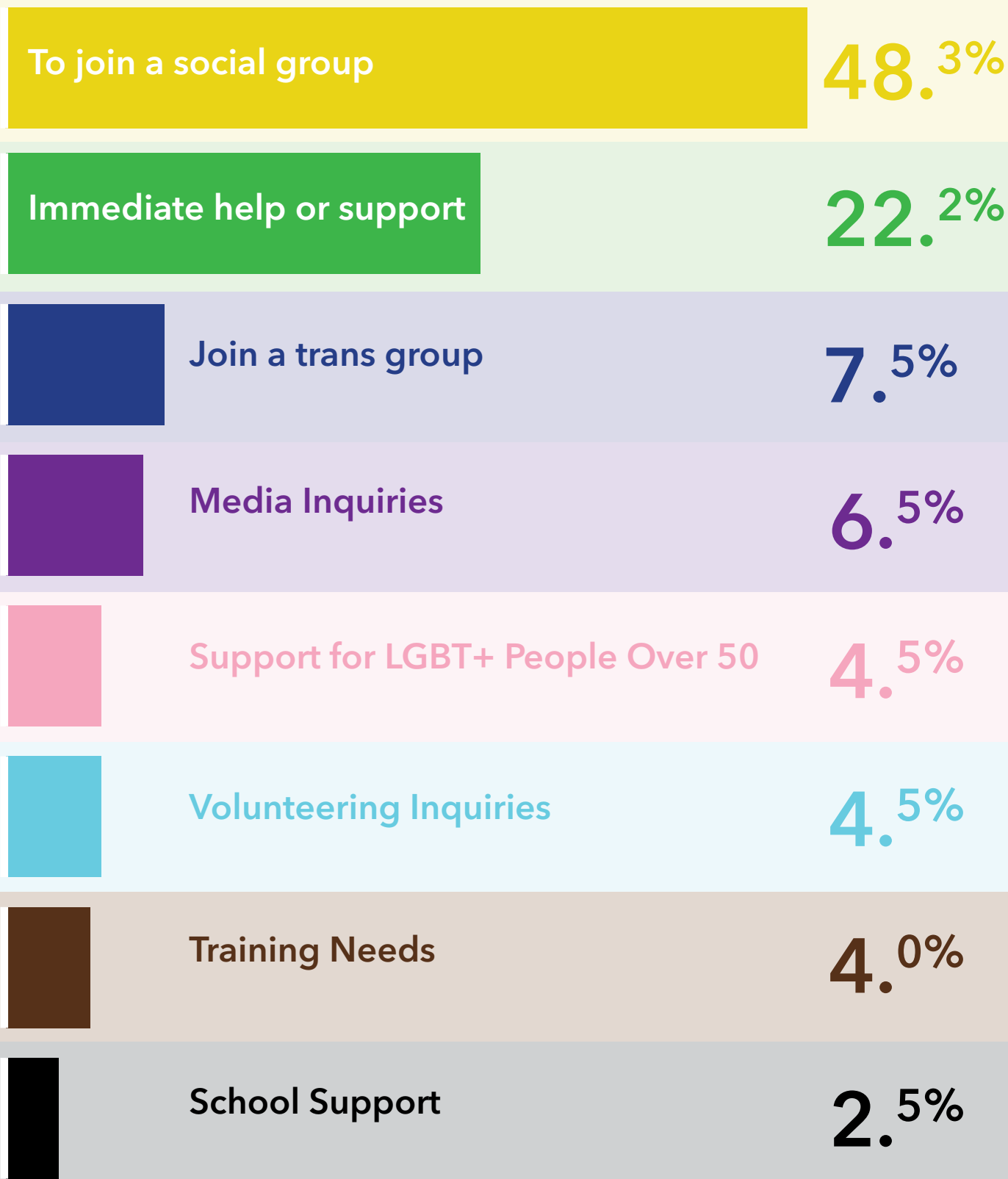
Statistics

Help and Support
Enquiries Answered:

318

Increase
from 2022

8% 



Statistics



Virtual support and social group meetings

32



In-person support and social group meetings

63



Volunteers recruited

10



Professionals Trained

150+



New regional Pride launched

1



Awards shortlisted

3



Committees represented on

28



New groups launched

3



New website launched

1

Support and Social Groups

Laois

Laois Coffee Morning is a monthly meetup in Portlaoise for adults in the LGBT+ Community. It's a chance to have coffee, breakfast, or cake together and make new friends in a friendly and relaxed setting.

Our **Over 50's group** is just what it says on the tin. It is a group for LGBT+ people aged 50+ who want to meet up every month, do an activity, have a chat and meet others.

Laois Social Group is a laid-back social group for LGBT+ individuals, where members choose activities and meet casually to connect with like-minded people. We do social dinners, sports, and workshops based on the interests of the group.

Laois Pride Committee is responsible for organising and hosting the Laois Pride week events, including events such as the parade, Poster Making workshops, drag events, and many other festivities.



Kildare

Maynooth Book Club is a monthly meet-up for adults who are interested in queer literature. Members select a book to read and discuss throughout the month, whether it be an LGBT+ story or author.

Kildare Social is a laid-back social group for LGBT+ individuals, where members choose activities and meet casually to connect with like-minded people. We do social dinners, sports, and workshops based on the interests of the group.



Offaly

Offaly Coffee Morning is a monthly meetup in Tullamore for adults in the LGBT+ Community. It's a chance to have coffee, breakfast, or cake together and make new friends in a friendly and relaxed setting. This is mixed up with a walk (when the weather is on our side!)



Support and Social Groups

Westmeath

Westmeath Coffee Morning is a monthly meet up in Athlone for adults in the LGBT+ community who want to meet new people and catch up with others in a friendly environment over breakfast or a quick coffee

Trans Midlands Social is a monthly social and support group for people over 18 who identify under the trans umbrella. Similar to other social groups, members pick an activity of interest each month, providing an opportunity to connect and share experiences from their peers.



Online

Crystal Queer Book Club and **Leabhar Power** are our two monthly virtual book clubs for adults who are interested in queer literature. Members select a book to read and discuss throughout the month, whether it be an LGBT+ story or author.

Midlands Trans Online Group is a monthly social and support group for people over 18 who identify under the trans umbrella. The group takes place online and provides an opportunity to share experiences and seek support from their peers.



Courses

We run a number of different courses and classes throughout the year, with the main goal of integrating everyday hobbies with the community that may not have had the opportunity to explore because of identity. This can range from a number of activities, such as our Couch to 5k, Meditation and yoga class, pole-dancing, and many more!



Highlights of 2023

January

- January- Couch to 5k
- Volunteer training

February

- NDI Awards

March

- New team member Lucas
- Erasmus Training Event
- Joined Trans Equality Together

April

- Laois Pride AGM
- Healthy Ireland Laois Expo

May

- Meditation Classes
- Pole Classes

June

- Dublin Pride
- Shine in Emo
- Drag Bingo Pride Fundraiser
- ABC's of LGBT+ with Shout Out



Highlights of 2023

July

- Chosen charity of 4 Tesco community funds in the Midlands
- First Heartlands Pride Meeting
- Forest Fest
- Athlone Trans Peer Support Launched



August

- Edenderry Rainbow Crosswalk



September

- Maynooth Book Club Launched
- Laois Pride



October

- The Gala's

November

- First Ever Heartlands Pride
- Community and Voluntary Awards Laois
- Midlands LGBT+ Erasmus to Poland



December

- Kildare Social Group Launched

News & Media

Laois Pride 2023

Laois Pride 2023 announced

IN PICTURES: Portlaoise in glorious colour for Laois Pride parade



Heartlands Pride 2023

Athlone to host first-ever Pride festival this winter

Running from November 10-12, the Heartlands Pride event will feature market stalls, local artists, educational workshops and entertainment.



Westmeath Line-up of events announced for Athlone's first ever Pride

Galas LGBTQ+ Awards



Laois Community Awards

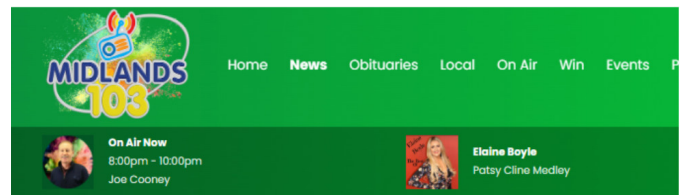


News & Media

MLP Future Uncertain

The work of the Midlands LGBT+ Project is vital for our community' – Laois County Councillor calls for increased LGBT+ funding

By Mark Comerford - 29th November 2023



Midlands LGBT+ Project To Continue Operating Into 2024

News Home More from Midlands News

Wednesday, 29 November 2023 09:29



ShoutOut Collaboration

Laois LGBTQ+ workshop in Portlaoise aims help with identity understanding

LEINSTER EXPRESS



Couch to 5k 2023



Midlands LGBT+ Project wants you up off the couch in Laois for 5km



Testimonials



It has been a privilege to work with Midlands LGBT+ Project since their establishment both in my capacity as Parliamentary Assistant to Minister Pippa Hackett and Green Party Local Area Rep for Portlaoise, but also as Secretary of the Laois Pride Committee in 2022 and 2023, and as Fundraising Co-ordinator in 2024.

I was also delighted to nominate Midlands LGBT+ project in the 2023 Laois Community and Voluntary Awards for their outstanding contribution in the community to minimise social exclusion and improving the quality of life for socially excluded groups, in which they received the runners up prize.

I have seen, first hand, the invaluable work Midlands LGBT+ Project does for the Rural LGBT+ community here in Laois and the wider Midlands and commend the whole team on another fantastic year.”

-Rosie Palmer, Laois Pride Secretary



“I have been a volunteer for Midlands LGBT+ Project and on the Laois Pride committee for the past few years. It is so rewarding to run events and help people find community in their local areas within the Midlands. The project provide training for all their volunteers and I’m thankful for all the personal growth and professional development that I’ve acquired through volunteering with Midlands LGBT+ Project.”

-Shauna Golden, Laois Pride Chair & Volunteer for Laois Coffee group



“Being a volunteer for the Midlands LGBT+ Project has been an incredible experience for me knowing that I’m helping to make a difference to other Queer people like myself, the training provided to you as a volunteer is so beneficial and varied and I love the confidence that it has given me one of my favourite parts of volunteering is teaching courses on LGBTQIA+ people in schools.

Being a member of the Midlands LGBT+ Project is amazing it’s allowed me to reconnect with old friends of mine as well as making new ones, the community that has been built from their work is so kind and caring and genuinely feels like a safe space to be yourself and get to know other people with similar experiences. Since joining in September 2021 I feel as if I’ve gotten more comfortable in my gender identity and expression because of this space.”

- Mia, Laois Pride Volunteer

Thank You!

The Midlands LGBT+ team would like to extend a huge thank you to our funders, partners, volunteers, group members and everyone who has helped out or used our service in the last three years.



Laois County Council
Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois



**An Roinn Leanai, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



Healthy
Laois



Healthy
Westmeath



Youth Work Ireland
LAOIS



@midlandslgbt



Midlands LGBT+ Project
c/o Youth Work Ireland Laois,
James Fintan Lawler Avenue,
Portlaoise, Co. Laois.
R32 W310



Mobile: 086 0757985



help@midlandslgbtproject.com



www.midlandslgbtproject.com