

# Insight report 2024

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*METRO is fighting my corner.*

*I feel connected to the staff and the HIV and mental health services you provide.*

*METRO's services are very distinct and are not necessarily available elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>*



*METRO, Pride in London, July 2022*

## Abbreviations

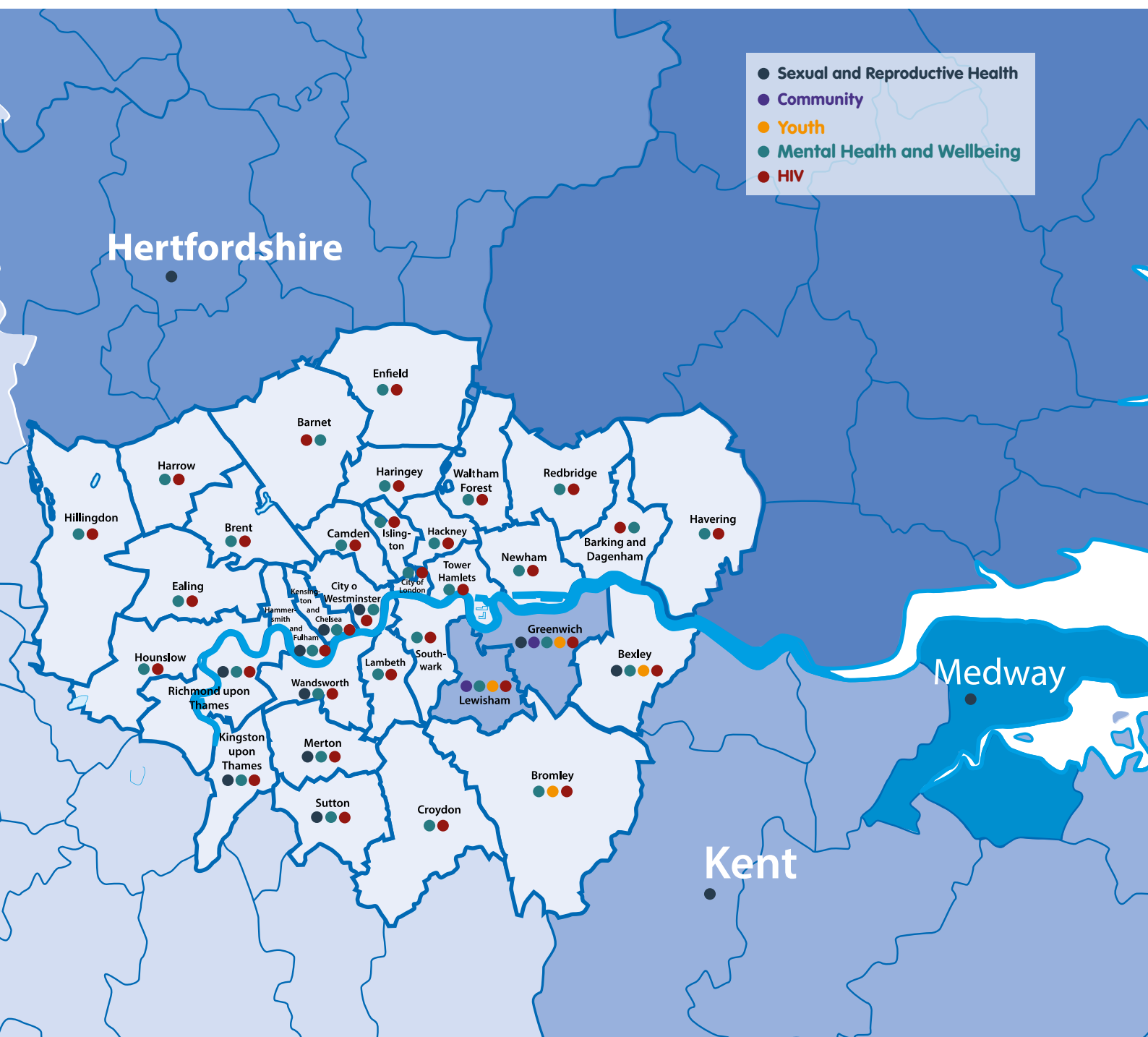
<b>BACP</b>	British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy	<b>MHWB</b>	Mental health and wellbeing
<b>COL</b>	Cost of living	<b>MSM</b>	Men-who-have-sex-with-men
<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions	<b>PLWHIV</b>	People living with HIV
<b>FTC</b>	Fast-Track Cities	<b>RBG</b>	Royal Borough of Greenwich
<b>GSH</b>	Greenwich Sexual Health	<b>RSE</b>	Relationships and sex education
<b>KCC</b>	Kent County Council	<b>SEND</b>	Special educational needs and disabilities
<b>LBL</b>	London Borough of Lewisham	<b>SOGI</b>	Sexual orientation and gender identity
<b>LSL</b>	[London boroughs of] Lambeth, Southwark, and Lewisham	<b>SRH</b>	Sexual and reproductive health
		<b>VCS</b>	Voluntary and community sector
		<b>YP</b>	Young people

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# Map of METRO's services across all the regions we serve

This map shows where each of our five types of service are available. The list on the following page provides further details. See Appendix 1 for more comprehensive information about specific services and locations. Also see the services directory on our website: <https://metrocharity.org.uk/services>





## Sexual and Reproductive Health

- Advice and information
- Care coordination
- Clinical services
- Free condoms
- Health and wellbeing support
- Online services
- Relationships and sex education
- Sexual orientation/gender identity awareness training
- STI prevention
- STI testing

## Community

- Advice and advocacy for Disabled people
- Hate crime support for Disabled people and / LGBTQ+ people
- LGBTQ+ prostate cancer peer support
- Strategic equalities in public and voluntary sectors
- Strategic health inequalities projects
- Voluntary sector infrastructure support (CVS)

## Youth

- LGBTQ+ youth groups
- Relationships and sex education
- Risk and resilience programmes
- Sexual health advice and support
- SOGI in Schools programme
- Trans and gender diverse youth group
- Young people's GP clinic and counselling

<https://metrocharity.org.uk/services>

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

Advice and advocacy

- Counselling
  - People living with HIV
  - LGBTQ+ adults
  - LGBTQ+ young people
- Film-based projects
- LGBTQ+ drop-in group
- Parenting support
- Sexual health advice and support
- Wellbeing activities

## HIV

- Advice and advocacy
- Counselling
- Health and wellbeing support
- HIV prevention
- Parent and children's support
- Peer mentoring
- Peer support groups
- PrEP education

91  
staff



10,700+

social media followers



150,000+

occasions of service per annum



84

volunteers



£4,850,339<sup>2</sup>

turnover

# Introduction: A report focused on our insights and impact in Greenwich, Lewisham, Kent, and Medway

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Sharing insights from a range of our health, wellbeing, and community services, this report provides an in-depth portrait of the work METRO's staff and volunteers deliver, focusing on four of our geographical areas and the impact we make as a charity. We want this report to show the spectrum of work the organisation does for you as readers: Our funders, our commissioners, our supporters, our current and future service users, our partners, our local councillors and residents of the areas we serve – among other readers with a stake or an interest in METRO's work.

Given the charity's large operational scale across many places, our Communications, Policy, and Research team has chosen to focus this Insight Report on our impact by geography during 2023. METRO offers pan-London services and operates in Essex, Hertfordshire, Medway, and Kent, however this report showcases our current services specifically in Greenwich and Lewisham, where we have a longstanding footprint, and Kent & Medway where some of METRO's most innovative work in sexual health promotion is delivered (the map in the previous section illustrates the full span of METRO's services across all geographies where we work).

Post-COVID, virtual areas of our services, such as sexual orientation and gender identity awareness (SOGI) training also operate regionally and nationally. Internationally, during 2019 to 2023 we have worked on the SHIFT sexual health research programme for over 45s with research partners in the UK, Belgium, and The Netherlands.<sup>3</sup>

This insight report is designed to highlight the locally-based, grassroots work with individuals and communities that creates the best practice

we use and adapt in other geographical areas. Quantitative data in the report is focused specifically on our delivery in the four geographical areas, during the financial year ending 2023.

## Context

### Cost-of-living

People who use our services, our staff, and our volunteers have all been affected by the recent global and national economic, and political, issues in terms of inflation affecting food costs, and the energy crisis stemming from the war in Ukraine alongside cuts in public sector spending.

We have worked closely with our local and regional partners to ensure that we can offer accurate and timely advice through our services and in our digital communications about where support and specialist information can be accessed, with up-to-date information published on our 'cost of living hub' webpage. This resource highlights local expertise, such as Greenwich-based South East London Community Energy whom we have consulted and signposted people for critical energy advice. Internally, in October 2022 we also implemented a modest cost-of-living salary increase for all staff, excluding our Senior Management Team. Then in November 2023 a further modest cost-of-living percentage increase capped at the average UK manager salary.

During 2023, METRO's appointment of a new Director of Finance and Resources has provided a structural change to our financial operations that will provide leadership in addressing our sustainability both in the current economic climate and long-term.

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## Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our operations, our services, and our staff. There has been an increased need for sustained mental health and wellbeing (MHWB) support for service users and staff. There have also been opportunities to re-shape and re-imagine our work, for example through our in-person, hybrid, and virtual Service User Forums of 2022 and 2023.

At these events, people who use a variety of our services discussed some of their experiences during the pandemic. Participants shared how this period changed their needs and their perspectives, not least how much social space is valued as part of METRO's services.

## Race equity

METRO started an organisational change programme around race equity in 2022. Working with Jedi Consultancy, the charity's relationship with race was scrutinised through an internal audit that revealed institutional racism and experiences. 'A tale of two METROs' was how one staff member relayed their experience.<sup>4</sup>

We published the report resulting from Jedi's audit in March 2023 alongside a statement from our Chief Executive Officer and (then) Chair of our Board of Trustees.

### **This is an excerpt of the statement from our CEO:<sup>5</sup>**

*In this report are the real voices from team members brave enough to share how racism has played out in their daily life at METRO and the impact this has caused. These voices are to be respected and valued, and on behalf of the charity I apologise for the hurt we have caused.*

*We will right the wrongs that are still causing inequity and deliver on a future where we live the vision we have set ourselves.*

**Andrew Evans, CEO**

METRO's subsequent work and progress on improving race equity is detailed in this news item published on our website in September 2023: <https://metrocharity.org.uk/news/2023/sep/22/race-audit-update>

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**METRO's Strategic Plan, 2023 to 2028 articulates our vision, mission, and values which we have co-produced across the charity.**

## Our Vision

METRO's vision is that health and wellbeing is universal; everyone can access high-quality empowering health and wellbeing services; oppression is eliminated, and identities are celebrated.

## Our Mission

We provide health and wellbeing services. We empower people and communities to develop personally and collectively, with a focus on marginalised communities. Key to our mission is partnership working and advocating for equity inside or outside of METRO.

## Our Values

METRO has agreed a set of values we want to embody and demonstrate when we work with others and within the charity. These values and behaviours were co-designed through two workshops and refined using online voting by members.

**Collaboration**



**Compassion**



**Empowerment**



**Equity**



**Transparency**

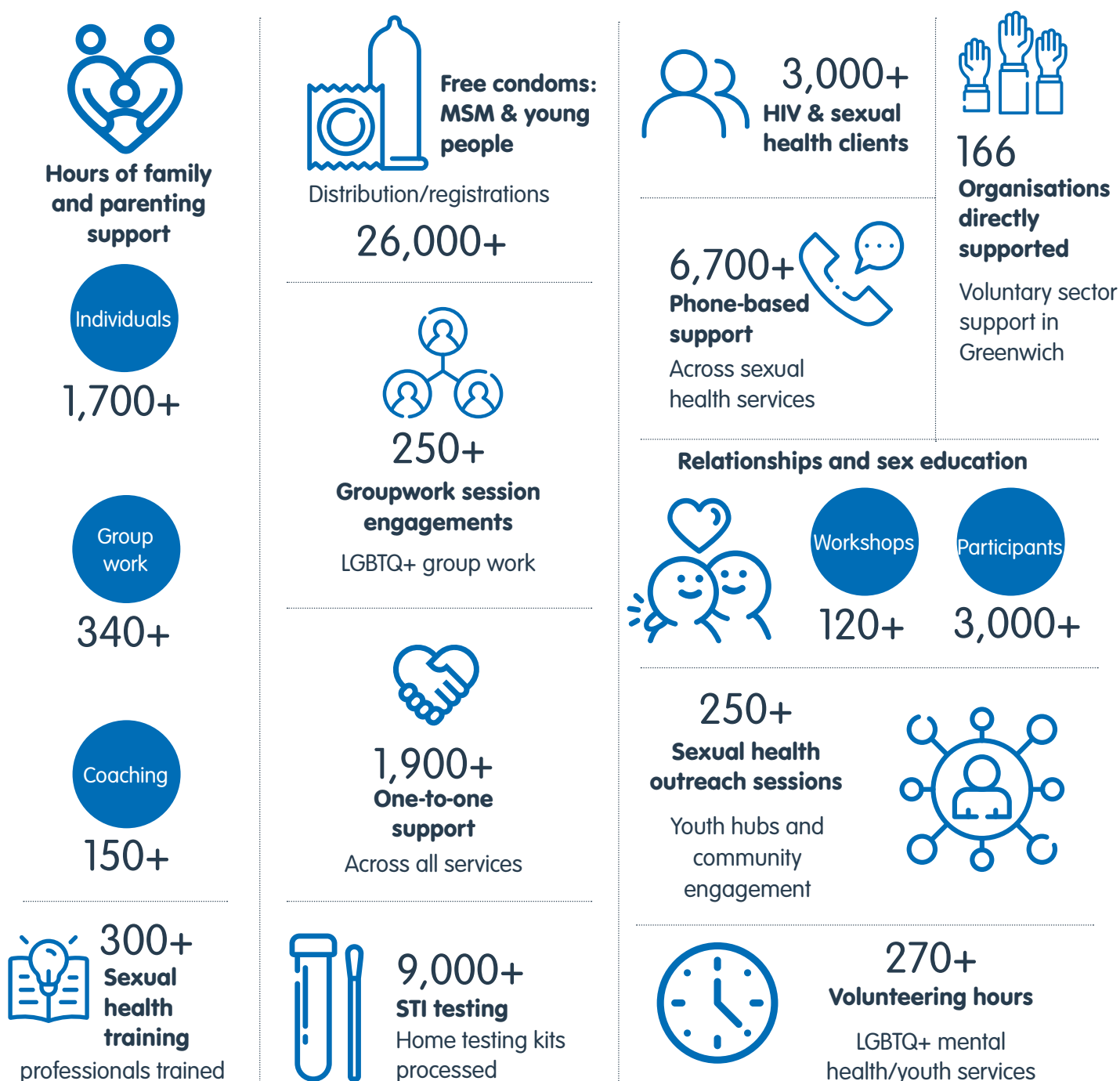


**Trust**



# Data: Greenwich, Lewisham, Kent and Medway

Summary data of our outputs collated across services in these areas (financial year to March 2023).





# Insights

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## **Desire for social connections, communal activities and shared cultural experiences**

Across our support services, staff report demand for more social spaces and connectivity, a trend we see continuing from feedback in our Service User Forums of 2021, 2022, and 2023.

## **Economic context for people who are already marginalised**

There is clear evidence of links between increasing economic instability and higher levels of demand for support to individuals. This challenging economic, and political climate, and operational issues around the social welfare system have been particularly challenging during 2023. Staff have also had significant issues in supporting our clients to navigate the post-COVID health system.

We have seen a significant increase in need for mental health and financial crisis support, particularly for people living with HIV who are lone parents, migrants, and refugees. Our staff are also serving more people who are ageing with HIV who have complex health and social support needs, as well as issues around poverty.

## **Housing quality issues and risk of homelessness affect many of our service users**

A recurrent theme from the frontline of our services is housing in the context of the cost-of-living crisis but also housing insecurity and unacceptable standards of living conditions, such as faced by this service user:

*I live in a confined accommodation, making it difficult for my baby to access the floor space to play in order to explore crawling then walking during the growth span. I am happy to say I witnessed my child crawling for the first time at the Stay and Play session. HIV domain service user.*

**(anonymous)**

# Insights

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## Transphobia and wellbeing: Practice, policy and training

Young people we support seek our LGBTQ+ youth groups as safe spaces in an increasingly hostile culture of transphobia and gender-critical views in society. This is echoed in our adult-focused work where trans and gender diverse people can access hate crime support in Greenwich and specialist mental health and wellbeing services in Lewisham. This issue is also impacting the wellbeing of our staff.

METRO actively challenges transphobia in our policies and practice, through our LGBTQ+ mental health services and our delivery of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) awareness training as a paid service (across all sectors locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally). We are seeing high demand for this work to improve organisations' literacy around gender identity and inclusive practices.

Our proactively inclusive practice around gender identity is reflected in trans and gender diverse young people's sense of safety in our LGBTQ+ youth groups, for example the practice of introductions including pronouns in these groups, and across the organisation.

*I found METRO when I was in desperate need of help. I have had help with [welfare] forms and benefits. This tripled the benefits in terms of what I was entitled to. ... Feel a lot more stable than I did because of the help.*

*Information I have received has been second to none, with high quality advice from METRO GAD during my benefits tribunal.<sup>6</sup>*

## Impact of early intervention LGBTQ+ counselling for adults in reducing risk of mental health crises

Our counselling service for LGBTQ+ adults effectively reduced 81% of clients' symptoms from moderate to mild over the span of their counselling programme.<sup>7</sup>

*Coming from a very homophobic family and culture, having a counsellor like you who accepts me and my sexuality has been invaluable to build my confidence.*

**Counselling client: Anonymous**

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

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**Greenwich has been our home borough for four decades, and I want to ensure that our services continue to become even more integrated and connected with other local services.**

Our service users span people living with HIV, LGBTQ+ young people, and Disabled people among other groups. I want METRO to continue connecting and forging relationships of trust with those individuals and within communities. Building on the strengths of our person-centred, agile, community-based and often peer-led services in reaching people who are seldom listened to, and often struggling to access statutory services. Through our advocacy services we help people with the discrimination they often experience, and barriers they face, building their confidence to access statutory provision.

**Andrew Evans, CEO**

## **METRO GAD**



*(left to right) Andrew Evans (CEO); John Ley Interim Treasurer, Board of Trustees, Theresa Ley<sup>8</sup>*

Greenwich Association of Disabled People was founded in 1974, and merged with METRO in 2019, creating our METRO GAD programme representing the Deaf and Disabled population in the borough. Funded by the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG), METRO GAD provides a free advice and

advocacy service which is available to all Deaf and Disabled residents, as well as those who work and study in RBG. METRO GAD is based at The Forum in Greenwich and offers support in-person and by phone. A counselling offer is provided by volunteers who are also Disabled people.

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

METRO GAD has a distinct voluntary management committee who continue to campaign for a more equitable and accessible borough, and wider society. METRO GAD has alliances with other groups in London, the UK, and internationally. We advocate the social model of disability, and the need for independent living to be fully enabled.<sup>9</sup>

*I want to make sure the service will continue for other people in the borough as you always go the extra mile.*

**METRO GAD donor (anonymous)**

Our staff advise people around their welfare rights, for example on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) applications and advocating for those who are appealing decisions about their welfare entitlements. We also have a dedicated hate crime victim support service for Disabled people affected by this discrimination.

## Insights

### The key needs we have seen are:

- High demand for in-person appointments
- Energy advice
- Support with social isolation and loneliness
- Debt advice

Advice and signposting around financial pressures have increased, as Pauline O'Hare, METRO's Voice and Infrastructure Manager, explains in her oversight of these services.

*A key issue for many people is debt. People are trying to maximise their incomes as much as possible and identify any extra benefits which they may be entitled to. Demand for support also reaches beyond welfare advice with requests from people with all types of form-filling, such as Blue Badge and Taxicard applications. In part, this demand comes from the quantity of word-of-mouth referrals as a trusted local service.*

Navigating the welfare system online is still a considerable barrier for some service users who need one-to-one support, including those with literacy challenges. But there has also been a noticeable improvement in digital independence among some service users.

Mindful of social isolation, staff make extra time to have informal phone conversations with service users and offer social support, providing information about social opportunities locally, for example the 'warm spaces' scheme over winter.

## Royal Borough of Greenwich



174

individual clients  
supported on average  
per quarter



138

new service users



839

phone calls advising  
people with high  
levels of need

### Insights

Frustrations in supporting people include the operations and systems within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This impacts on the capacity of the small team, which includes welfare and hate crime advice workers, to assist others.

*When trying to phone the DWP to get answers or updates, it can take two hours to get a response. The biggest barrier we encounter is the time taken to get issues resolved. This applies to benefit applications and renewals which can take up to 18 months, especially if it's necessary to apply to the Tribunal Service to appeal against decisions.*

**Alan Kerr, Welfare Rights Adviser (2019-2022)**

More positively, METRO GAD has supported many successful appeals, for example one tribunal advocating for a Disabled child whose carer was a lone parent. This resulted in a successful outcome for the young person's Disability Living Allowance (social welfare benefit for under 16s).<sup>10</sup>

*She won her case and was awarded high rates of compensation. Her parent is now applying under the Mobility Scheme to get a new, more reliable, car.*

**Alan Kerr**

Other successful cases during 2022 to 2023 saw clients receive substantial backdated payments for financial support, such as the Employment Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payments (PIPs). Many of METRO GAD's appeals and tribunals on behalf of clients revolve around disputes about the rate of PIP that has been awarded by the DWP and either incorrect assessment of need or failure to review a changing level of need for a client. In one case a reassessment of a client's needs, based on our advocacy and evidence, increased her monthly income by over £600. This was critical for the individual's wellbeing as well as that of her partner as her main carer.

Funded by the Peabody Trust, METRO GAD also provides community outreach at The Carers Centre in Charlton and The Links Medical Practice in Thamesmead, bringing the advice and advocacy service closer to residents who may need access outside of central Greenwich.



# Royal Borough of Greenwich



*Sue Elsegood, Co-chair, METRO GAD – Royal Greenwich Together 2022*

## Local partners

Long-established and networked in the borough, METRO GAD has close links with many other voluntary and community sector groups as a proponent of the independent living and the social model of disability. These connections are local, regional, and nationally within Deaf and Disabled policy-based and service-focused agencies, such as Inclusion London.<sup>11</sup>

**We benefit from inward and outward referrals with a range of external agencies, with specialist expertise, including:**

- Debt Free Advice (pan-London service)<sup>12</sup>

- Greenwich Carers Centre (improving the lives of unpaid carers in the borough)
- Her Centre (supporting women with domestic violence and abuse locally)
- Kairos Community Trust (alcohol and drug dependency support)

During the ongoing energy crisis, South East London Community Energy's free advice service has been a critical point of signposting for specialist information. The service is open to communities in Greenwich, Lewisham, Bromley, and Bexley, and is based in The Forum, alongside METRO GAD.<sup>13</sup>

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

## Hate crime support

*As an LGBTQ+ repeat victim of hate crime METRO was my last hope and attempt to prove I wasn't losing my mind. They were willing to accept that I was being discriminated [against] because of my sexuality and nationality.<sup>14</sup>*

Since 2003, METRO has been working on LGBTQ+ hate crime awareness and prevention. In 2013 we developed a partnership to raise awareness of hate crime with Greenwich Inclusion Project (GrIP) and Greenwich Association of Disabled People (prior to our merger as METRO GAD). This work encompassed hate crime issues on the grounds of identities including being Disabled, faith, LGBTQ+, race, and their intersections.

In 2015, this work developed into specific services to support hate crime victims while continuing awareness-raising and community engagement activities around hate crime issues in Greenwich. Continuing in 2023, we have offered hate crime victim support within this partnership to residents. METRO provides tailored support for Disabled people and LGBTQ+ people among the 107 victims of LGBTQ+ hate crime and 18 victims of disability hate crime recorded within the borough during 2022 to 2023.<sup>15</sup> Our hate crime workers provide one-to-one support and advocacy for victims, liaising on their behalf with statutory agencies such as the police and housing providers.

METRO also engages strategically on community safety and criminal justice with statutory agencies and works regionally on raising hate crime awareness and prevention, such as promoting



(Left to right) Marcus Grey, LGBTQ+ Hate Crime and Equalities Officer; Colin Finch: (former) Disability Hate Crime Worker; Hate crime pop-up stall, February 2023

National Hate Crime Awareness Week every October in partnership with 17-24-30.<sup>16</sup>

## Equalities service

Our METRO GAD and hate crime services work includes strategic support commissioned by the local authority to fulfil its public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. Our strategic equalities service provides support around Deaf and Disabled people and LGBTQ+ people's protected characteristics for those who live, work, or study in Greenwich. We bring decades of expertise and lived experience insights and reflect the identities service users, volunteers and staff with these protected characteristics.





*Performers for METRO's event at Royal Greenwich Together, 2022*

The service advises the VCS on embedding disability and LGBTQ+ equalities into organisational practice and services with associated training in cultural competence. Our strategic equalities work also includes participation in local forums and networks to promote and address equalities issues.

This strategic work is further connected with our services around advocacy and education for LGBTQ+ equalities and inclusion in schools, supporting LGBTQ+ young people through our youth group, and our broader work in the Young Greenwich programme that supports both young people and their parents in services spanning mental health and wellbeing, sexual and reproductive health, community engagement and youth work.



*Kate Brown, member of METRO GAD management committee, Royal Greenwich Together, 2022*



## Royal Borough of Greenwich



Young Greenwich Sexual Health outreach. (Left to right) Tina Obinna-Anikpe, YGSH worker; Emma Cunnane, YG Sex and Relationships Mentor.

### Young Greenwich programme

*We try to meet young people where they are - always.*

**Olawumi Ademokun, Young Greenwich Sexual Health Lead**

METRO is a partner in the Young Greenwich service for young people aged 10 to 19, or up to 25 for young people who have additional educational needs. The partnership includes Charlton Athletic Charitable Trust (CACT), Greenwich Leisure Limited operating as 'Better', METRO, and Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, and provides a suite of services as an integrated universal youth offer.

### Our provision includes:

- One-to-one mentoring, supporting a range of mental health and sexual health needs and risks (A service provided in partnership with CACT in community hubs that they manage)
- Sexual health testing
- Mentoring
- LGBTQ+ awareness programme for schools
- Risk and resilience work for individual young people
- Parenting programme for the parents of teenagers

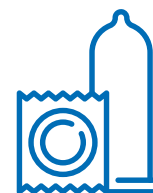
# Royal Borough of Greenwich

249



positive tests for chlamydia for young people, ensuring treatment and onward prevention

7,890



tests preventing STIs and improving pregnancy choices



120

workshops in schools reaching over **3,000** participants



50

sexual health sessions delivered in youth hubs across Greenwich

## **This programme works in concert with our Greenwich Sexual Health offer for young people to provide:**

- The C-card condom distribution scheme – free condoms for 16-24s
- Safeguarding referrals for 13-15s to the Young Greenwich Sexual Health team
- Advice on access to sexual health clinics in the borough
- Chlamydia testing in the community
- Administration of an online system for STI testing kits and follow-up advice
- Pharmacy liaison
- Sexual health phonenumber which is open to both adults and young people (10am-6pm weekdays: 020 8305 5005)



# Royal Borough of Greenwich

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## Young Greenwich sexual health

Under the banner of Greenwich Sexual Health (GSH), we deliver sexual health services to young people including the 'c-card' condom distribution scheme. We provide information on sexual health clinics throughout the borough, administer an online STI testing service, and liaise with pharmacies on contraception and STI testing for young people.

We also provide a comprehensive sexual health outreach programme combining our Young Greenwich and Greenwich Sexual Health work across the borough's schools and youth hubs including our 'clinic in a box' outreach service. GSH also has a dedicated phoneline delivering specialist sexual health advice, including information and expert support for young people.

### Insights

In our schools' workshops, we found consent, contraception, and STIs are currently the most requested topics by young people: Over 70% of our content centres on these issues as they are crucial to their needs and their experiences. Workshops commonly feature lively discussions on pornography and gender roles which, similarly, stimulate debates in our outreach sessions.

Feedback from young people requests better access to self-registration via our GSH website for free condoms and STI testing. We added QR codes and a 'YGSH Linktree' on our social media pages, improving young people's agency in accessing services digitally.

## Interview with Olawumi Ademokun, Young Greenwich Sexual Health Lead

### Why is this outreach work important to you?

*I enjoy knowing that I'm a part of a young person's network to help inform and empower them in their sexual health and their general wellbeing. I think there's a lot of benefit being an external practitioner coming in and having those young people feel comfortable or confident enough to ask questions.*

*I've learned so much from working with young people.*

### Which topics dominate Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) workshops?

*The current, widespread wave of misogynistic content online has created a lot of issues, especially with younger boys in schools and their attitudes towards consent, attitudes towards healthy sexual relationships; attitudes and values on relationships, and being a good partner. A lot of teachers have picked this up and wanted to have more sessions on consent and have that kind of overlap with healthy relationships.*

*One 14-year-old boy commented that he felt like we often talk about consent and teach it in a way that empowers women and girls to say no, which is really important. But he felt like there was always this unspoken pressure that boys and men should always be up for having sex and that just isn't the case.*

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

*We don't want to have any young boys feel like they're being targeted for things they may not be doing or may already be accused of doing based on wider social scripts. But we also acknowledge where misogyny does exist and plays out.*

*Consent comes up practically every session with groups in year 10 and above, with discussions about where you can and can't give consent, for example: 'What if both of them are drunk? Who's giving consent?' While we can't stop young people from drinking and having sex, we discuss these scenarios and issues.*

## **How do you educate on sexually-transmitted infections (STIs)?**

*In our sessions, we look at how STIs are spread, transmission through bodily fluids and how we can best prevent them, whether through forms of barrier method contraception or through regular testing. We heavily signpost where young people can get free STI testing and encourage sexually active individuals to test every three to six months.*

*We also try and dispel myths about the tell-tale signs of STIs. Whilst there can be clear physical signs, on average only approximately 3 out of 10 people with an STI will experience a physical reaction. Young people who are sexually active and asymptomatic can be under the assumption that they're fine. It's really trying to debunk that myth and destigmatising it as much as possible because*

*STIs are very common and easy to treat if they are detected.*

## **Future aspirations for the service?**

*We want to reach more communities in Greenwich. We get a good scope of diversity through our outreach in Pupil Referral Units, however, we're aware that there are communities whom we don't access as much in our schools' work, where these conversations would be helpful.*



## Royal Borough of Greenwich



40

in-person groups



349

hours of support within  
parenting groups



34

hours of counselling  
delivered to  
individual parents



154

hours of one-to-one  
coaching to parents

### Young Greenwich parenting programme

*Sometimes parenting can feel like a lonely journey.*

**Phinnah Ikeji, Young Greenwich Parenting Support Manager**

METRO's Young Greenwich parenting programme offers both group-based support and services for individuals, couples, and co-parents, such as coaching and counselling, alongside community outreach. The service is for parents of young people aged 10 to 19, or up to 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Schools refer parents to the service for issues such as non-attendance at school – a phenomenon that has increased post COVID-19's home schooling era – and other statutory or voluntary sector agencies can refer, or people can self-refer.<sup>17</sup>

Parents can attend groups for 6 to 8 weeks and the parenting support team has also developed a programme of themed 'drop-in' sessions for groups of parents who want specific support on

a one-off basis. These sessions reflect popular themes which have emerged in the groupwork, such as techniques for managing challenging behaviour or parenting and neurodiversity, both for young people's and parental neurodiversity, most frequently ADHD and autism.

Linked to the various interventions is an annual programme of social events for parents and their children, addressing peer support, combatting social isolation and strengthening community connections around parents and families.

### Insights

#### Interview with Phinnah Ikeji, YG Parenting Programme Manager

#### On the programme, the team's approach and users of METRO's parenting service.

*Most of the parents we see are parenting on their own and they are mothers, including those who have recently separated from their [cis] male partners, or have been separated for years, although some couples have taken part in our groupwork.*



Many parents find it difficult to share their challenges. They hear other parents are saying, 'Oh, things are going so well', and if you're a parent for whom things are not going so well, you don't see someone that is like you who is going through similar challenges. That's what we mean by that lonely journey.

No-one is understanding them, no-one is understanding the actual issue they're going through. Some parents feel that schools are not being sympathetic with them, so they just feel all alone in the struggle, and also with social services, some parents are told 'you need to do this' and they feel blamed.

One of the ways we attend to, and deal with, this issue is by emphasising to parents that our space is non-judgmental. We always do this because a lot of times parents already come guilt-ridden. They're already feeling guilty, so we try to make them relax and remind them: 'We're all in this together. Let's see how we can help. What can we do? What are some changes you can make?'

Mental health is a big deal for us. In the programme, we coach and support parents rather than focusing too much on parenting style.

We focus more on: 'How are you taking care of yourself to be able to give to your children? How are you taking care of your emotions?' Mindfulness is one tool we offer to support parents in taking care of themselves and their mental health.

### On combatting stigma around parenting and nurturing peer support.

When you share your parenting problems, you automatically feel that people are thinking you're a bad parent. It's almost like an unwritten rule. So, in our programme they're exposing and sharing that these are the issues they're going through. They can often feel attacked from other people and that's what we're trying to reduce around, by saying: 'No, we all need support as parents. Get support because you cannot give out of an empty cup!'

Every time we end a group session, one of the things that parents often say is: 'Ah, I didn't know other parents were going through the same thing that I'm going through all the time.'

This helps people to shift that perception that parenting is a lonely journey.

### Future plans and aspirations

- Involve more fathers
- Engage more parents who are Black and people of colour
- Work within schools to widen and diversify access to support
- Create positive narratives about teenagers and parenting in the borough





Trans Pride London, Piccadilly

## LGBTQ+ youth groups

*It's been amazing to come to an event full of gender non-conforming people, and just feel surrounded by Trans joy and power.*

**Service user feedback – METRO Trans Day of Remembrance event, 2022.**

METRO has two LGBTQ+ youth groups open to young people from Greenwich or Bexley. These weekly groups include METRO Shine for 16-to-19s based in Woolwich (up to 25 years for young people with SEND), and the Zest group for under-16s based in Bexley. Referrals to the groups come from schools, parents, Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health Services.

Groups participate in and co-produce a range of groupwork activities in affirmative, safe spaces. They address physical health and wellbeing topics including peer relationships, social skills, sexual health information and advice.

**Members can take part in sessions led by guest facilitators, as well as external trips, such as these activities:**

- Black History Month event with artist Malakai Sargeant
- Future Makers Theatre Company: Introduction to drag workshops
- Globe Theatre for I, Joan, by non-binary playwright Charlie Josephine
- My London project: Youth Summit
- Open University research workshops on developing a toolkit for LGBTQ+ allies
- Trans-Masc Clothing company workshops
- Trinity Laban: Drop-in music workshop

*It's incredible meeting LGBTQ+ creatives who have made it, and make money doing what they love!*

**Zest youth group participant (anonymous)**





Royal Greenwich Together, 2022

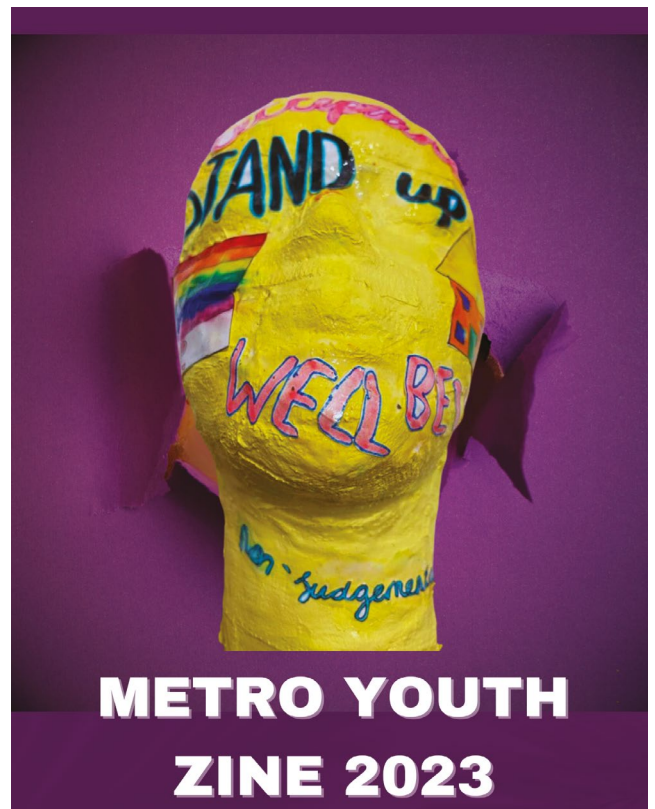


234

volunteering hours:  
adults and young  
people

100%

of participants  
indicate feeling safe  
in our groups<sup>18</sup>



LGBTQ+ Youth Group zine extract 2023

## Royal Borough of Greenwich

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*Photograph: METRO Youth, Pride in London 2023*



# Royal Borough of Greenwich

## My London Youth social action programme: Greenwich & Lewisham Partnership<sup>19</sup>

*In April 2023, METRO participated in the My London Youth Summit, funded by the Greater London Authority, bringing together young people across Greenwich and Lewisham to build confidence and skills for social action. Under the theme 'investigate,' they explored who holds power when it comes to making change and how young people can get involved. Each My London partner hosted an interactive stall and activities, including members of METRO Shine. Youth group members displayed and distributed their zines, sharing important LGBTQ+ issues with their peers and inviting them to display allyship.*

**Nicola Jones, Greenwich LGBTQ+ Youth and Schools Lead**

Annual events, not least Pride, offer an important rhythm to the year culminating in METRO's annual Winter Ball for young people. The themes have included 'shimmers and shadows'. We have a range of activities and games, crafting activities, karaoke, drag king performances and open mic performances by young people.

*At these annual events we ensure we capture young people's voices. We hold quarterly evaluation and planning sessions with young people to develop our programme. Young people also develop their own 'youth agreements'. Sessions are devoted to planning specific events, and young people are offered volunteering opportunities within these events. In this way, youth voice is continuously integrated into the METRO Youth programme design, allowing us to be agile with our priorities for the group, which often shift with participants' needs and interests.*

**Tracey Dwamenah, Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing & Youth**



LGBTQ+ Youth Group zine extract 2023

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

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## Insights

*The biggest need for young people is currently around trans issues and identities. Those who attend our youth groups predominantly identify as trans or non-binary. A lot of our young people are trans, and they deal with a lot of things like being out to parents, acceptance from parents, and issues with school. Many young people have talked about not having [safe] spaces at school, or support from school.*

**Will Spiller, Lead youth worker for Shine and Zest (2022-2023)**

A significant outing in translating the safety and trust within the youth group space into a public setting was a daytrip to Brighton beach. Facilitators noted in their report to the programme's commissioners how important the supported swimming activity was for those who may be experiencing issues with their body image relating to gender identity can often present a barrier for trans and gender diverse young people taking part in sports and other mainstream physical activities in non-LGBTQ+ spaces. A participant reflected on the small things which made a big difference:

*...extra things like tents to change in made it easier for Trans people to get involved in swimming. I don't think we would have otherwise. It was great.*

**Youth group participant (anonymous)**

Further support for LGBTQ+ young people is provided internally through links with other METRO services, complementing needs for sexual health advice, and access to LGBTQ+ counselling tailored for young people aged 13+.

## Funding for youth work

Securing sustainable, long-term funding for LGBTQ+ youth groups has long been a challenge for METRO. This issue stretches back to its first services as the Greenwich Lesbian and Gay Centre in the 1980s when the security of the service, youth worker posts and levels of funding were unstable.

We want to ensure that the staff who provide this vital work to create safe spaces for people are valued and respected for their professional work and their vocation. They enable LGBTQ+, and curious, young people to explore and discuss their identities in safe spaces and create the context for peer support. In our youth groups, young people form friendships and allyship, protecting their mental health and wellbeing in the short term and develop toolkits for better emotional and psychological resilience for their adult futures.

Some of the common issues span the LGBTQ+ spectrum: Coming out to friends and family, coming out at school, accessing medical support around gender identity, safer sex and relationship issues, finding a partner, working out your identity, dealing with shame and isolation, bullying in school and at home.

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

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*METRO Youth at Pride in London, 2023*

We find that these issues are even more pressing currently for young people who need support and affirmation around gender identity within our safe space. They form the majority of our youth group membership rather than cis gender young people.



# Royal Borough of Greenwich

## Sexual health and HIV services

### Greenwich Sexual Health

METRO has delivered the Greenwich Sexual Health (GSH) service in partnership with Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust since 2009.

Operating as a one-stop-shop for sexual health in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, GSH is funded by the local authority. The partnership delivers clinical services, health promotion interventions, distribution of condoms and lube across our sites and sexual health advice services such as risk reduction.

### Jackie Foley, Clinical Services Manager and Pete Martin, Sexual Health Data Officer

*In our sexual health clinic in Plumstead, we deliver a regular sexual health clinic service with screening for HIV, syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhoea and also contraception services. This is mostly used by people who live in close proximity to the clinic in the east of the borough and this fits well to improve access to local people whilst expanding capacity at the GSH Central clinic in Market Street, Woolwich.*

*Our offer to young people includes the provision of the C-Card free condom scheme by post and at pharmacy collection points across the borough. METRO also operates the National Chlamydia Screening Service in Greenwich, enabling chlamydia and gonorrhoea testing pathways through the Checkurself website and screening kits at the dedicated pharmacy collection points operating across the borough. This tailors with*

*the outreach services METRO provides to young people at youth hubs, schools and colleges, enabling wider access to screening and condoms for this cohort.*

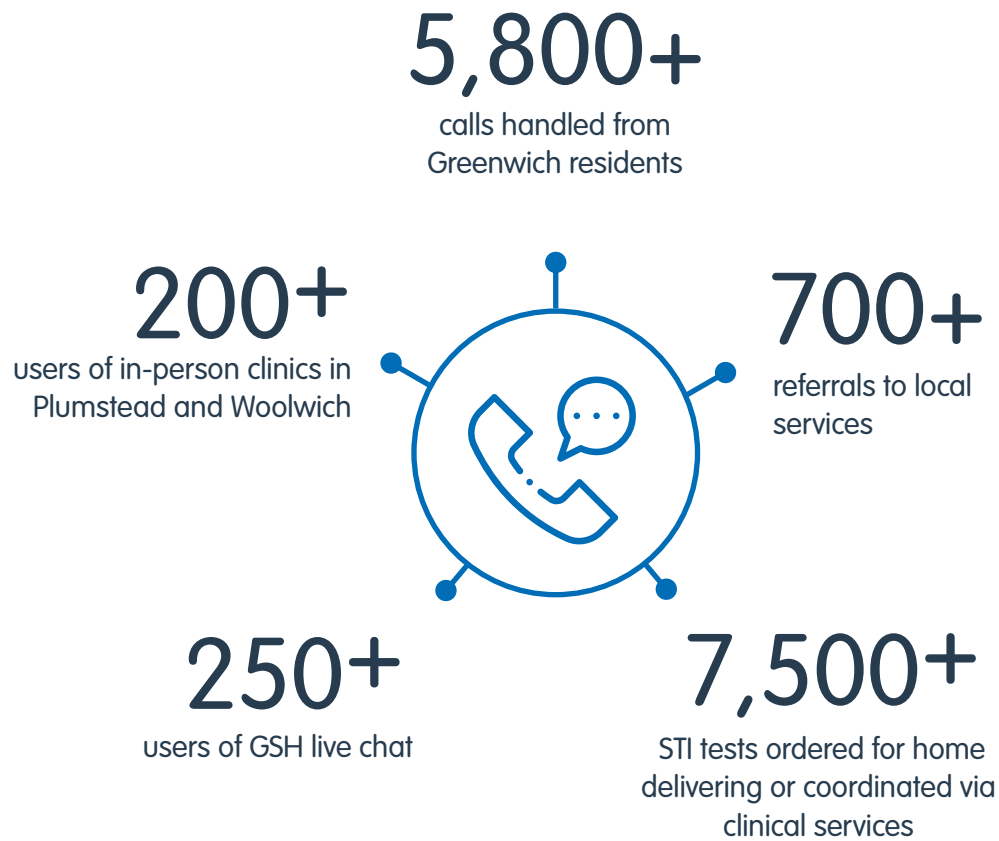
*Working in partnership with Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust's GSH Central clinic, METRO provides administrative support to the clinic and through its operation of the GSH Sexual Health Office phone line. METRO triages patients contacting the service by telephone, directing asymptomatic patients to the online services where appropriate.*

*The GSH Sexual Health Office processes all online results for screens undertaken through the range of online services such as Greenwich Sexual Health, Checkurself and Pitstop PLUS (our MSM offer) and provides advice, information and risk reduction on STIs, advises callers on access to a range of contraceptives, termination of pregnancy services and access to the morning after pill. In addition to signposting, referrals are made into Level 2 and Level 3 treatment services and support, and access, are given to online testing platforms for home delivery screening kits.*

*The Sexual Health Office also undertakes post-treatment follow-up and test of cure reminders, in particular with young people testing through the national chlamydia screening programme.*



# Royal Borough of Greenwich



Greenwich Sexual Health website<sup>20</sup>

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

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## Clinical services

Clinics have been affected long-term by closure during the COVID-19 pandemic and wider changes in primary care services since that period. Our sexual health experts have seen a significant change in how this loss of service affects how we can engage with young people through in-person clinics and, critically, providing information and advice about pregnancy choices.

*There are issues getting to young people with sexual health advice and contraception with the loss of youth services. We have not seen young women in our services who would have been 12 years old when COVID started. That worries me because they're now 15 or 16. Local services in Greenwich, such as The Point in central Woolwich, have closed. This site is where our sexual health clinics for young people were previously integrated with other advice services such as employment and training, and easy to access.*

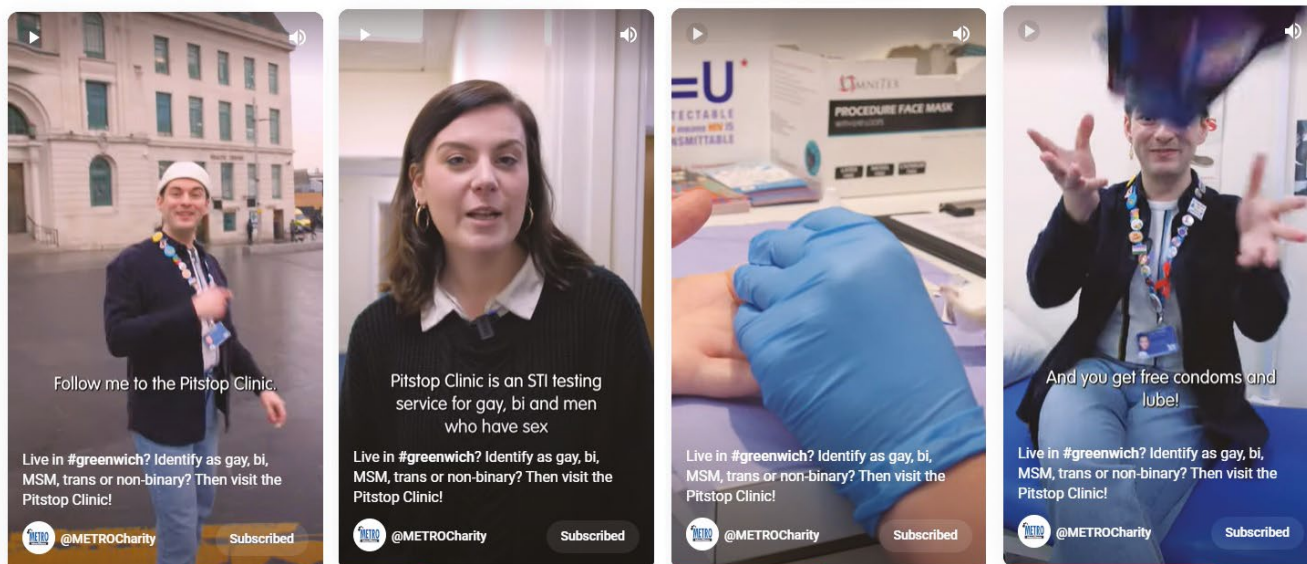
**Clinical Services Manager, Jackie Foley**

Given this landscape, METRO has created new approaches to ensure that young people have alternatives for accessing advice about contraception, and other sexual health information and support. For example, our 'clinic in a box' is a mobile intervention bringing contraception, testing, information, and advice to young people within their communities in Hawkesmoor and Woolwich Common youth hubs. This is integrated with our Young Greenwich service and partnership with NHS and other local VCS agencies.

In 2022, GSH also started a live chat function on our website, focused on after-school hours on weekday afternoons to provide live advice for young people and all GSH users on sexual health. People have sought a wide spectrum of information and support, benefitting from this anonymous expertise, including HIV testing, herpes symptoms, chlamydia incubation periods, and premature ejaculation. Staff running this advice service have also supported people who have anxiety around testing, such as clients who are blood or needle-phobic.

Reaching out to a new client base to rebuild our in-person services, we have promoted and engaged new clients through social media and our in-house filmmaking service, including a film about the Pitstop Clinic and a general video designed to assist people in providing sufficient blood for the lab to complete screening for HIV, syphilis, hepatitis B and hepatitis C across all online testing services.<sup>21</sup>

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

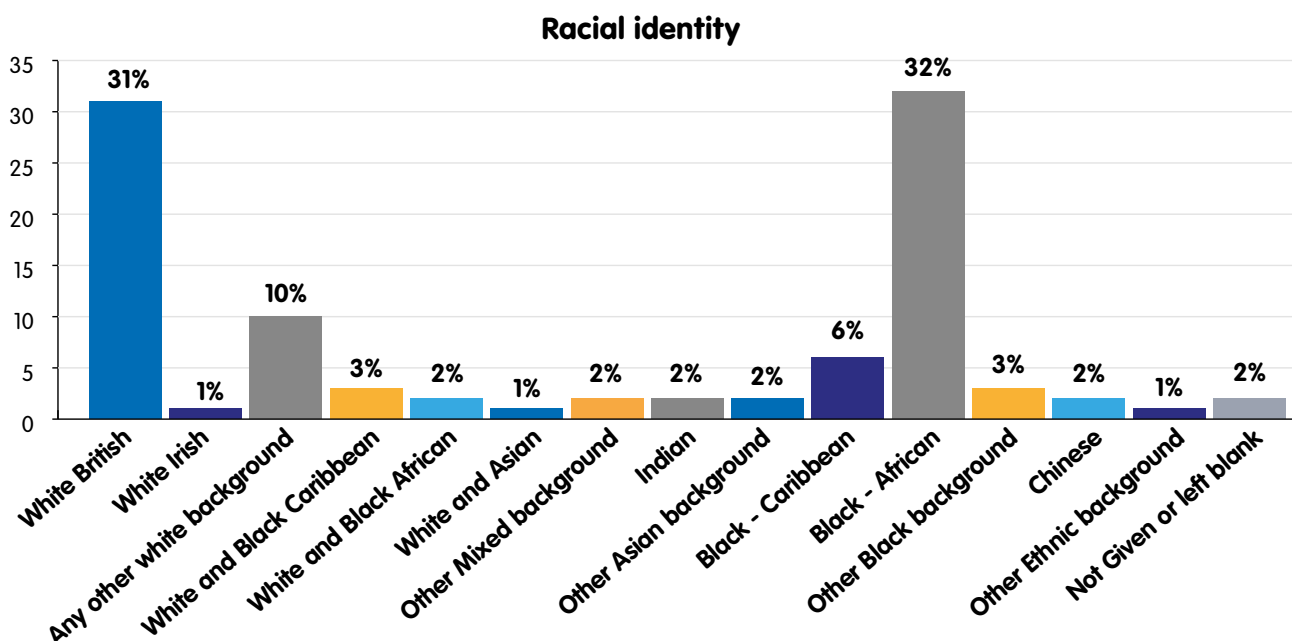


Stills from Pitstop clinic promo film

## STI testing

Across the 8,849 people who ordered products from the range of STI testing services we provide, 29% were young people aged 16 to 24 and 71% were aged 25 and above. In terms of racial

heritage, the group was made up of 9% mixed racial identities, 38% Black and people of colour, 50% White racial identities with a further 3% unspecified (see chart below).



# Royal Borough of Greenwich

## Targeted services for MSM

**Clinical Services Manager, Jackie Foley, explains our tailored offer for this population.**

METRO also delivers the Pitstop range of targeted services for men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM) which complements and interacts with our HIV prevention and support services in Greenwich. These include the Pitstop Clinic, a nurse-led weekly LGBTQ+ walk-in service offering screening, free condoms, lube and a referral pathway for PrEP and vaccinations. This is located at the Equitable House site in Woolwich and is aimed at providing gay and bisexual men, trans and gender diverse people and lesbians with a dedicated LGBTQ+ safe space for STI screening and clinical intervention.

The service reopened in summer 2022 after its closure during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is targeted at people who don't have symptoms and who want to test for a range of STIs. Complementing the online equivalent (Pitstop PLUS), the service widely sees MSM who may be blood or needle-phobic and therefore disenfranchised by online/home testing services. In addition, the service offers support to MSM who have had syphilis in the past (undertaking intravenous confirmation tests) and those who wish to check their immunity levels for hepatitis B.

The mpox (formerly monkeypox) outbreak has played a big part in reopening the Pitstop clinic, as MSM need somewhere to ask questions and receive important testing and vaccination information.

### Pitstop Clinic

Pitstop Wednesday

Clinic Information & Urgent Needs

## Welcome to Pitstop Clinic

We operate a dedicated clinic for Gay & Bisexual Men, Trans people and Lesbian women, who don't have symptoms and would like to test for a range of STIs.

This is a face-to-face, nurse-led, testing service, that runs out of our Woolwich office on a Wednesday evening.

Pitstop PLUS website<sup>22</sup>

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

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## The Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected the Pitstop clinic in 2023, rating the service 'Good' against all criteria.

*Staff treated patients with compassion and kindness, respected their privacy and dignity, took account of their individual needs, and helped them understand their conditions. They provided emotional support to patients, families and carers.*

*All four service users we spoke to were very positive about the Pitstop Clinic and the staff that worked there. Patients expressed gratitude that this type of service was available in their local area.*

*The service planned care to meet the needs of local people, took account of patients' individual needs, and made it easy for people to give feedback. People could access the service when they needed it ... Patients told us that the atmosphere is relaxed and welcoming. They also told us that staff are never judgemental and are happy to listen to any concerns. Patients described staff as knowledgeable and gave examples where they were signposted to other services. Everyone that we spoke to told us that they found the timings of the clinic helpful as they were outside of normal work hours.<sup>23</sup>*

## Mini case study

*Pitstop had a young trans-masculine, non-binary client attending the clinic who chose it as a 'safe place' for their first STI check. This encouraged staff that a young person would trust METRO's inclusive provision rather than a generic service.*

The online service PitstopPLUS offers a range of health promotion, risk reduction and self-referral features as well as home testing kits and condoms and lube by post. Again, tailored to the needs of MSM, it integrates our services between sexual health and HIV teams. Free condoms, lube, and STI test kits are available by post via this service to any gay or bisexual men, trans and gender diverse people who are Greenwich residents.





Launch of UK AIDS Memorial Quilt exhibition at Woolwich Works, where we heard speeches from RBG Councillor Linda Bird (right) and (now) Mayor of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, Dominic Mbang (centre) among other METRO guests: World AIDS Day event, 2nd December 2022

## Sexual health and HIV services

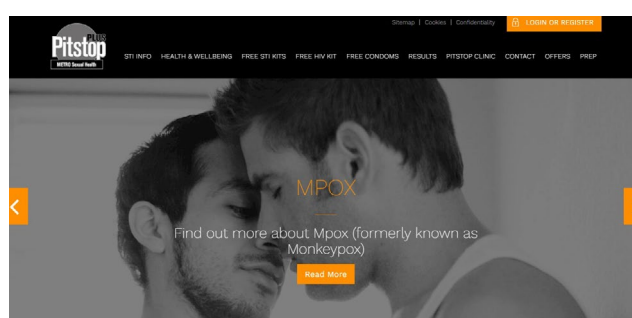
### HIV prevention

#### Context

METRO has been commissioned since the 1990s to provide HIV prevention services in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, and Bexley, initially in the mid-1990s for targeted work with MSM.<sup>24</sup>

In 2010, METRO merged with Woolwich-based charity the Harbour Trust, an organisation led by and supporting Black and global majority migrant populations, particularly from African nations. This expanded our service user base alongside the MSM community. METRO's services and expertise developed with new staff and their service users beyond work in HIV prevention to encompass advice, advocacy, welfare, emotional and social support.

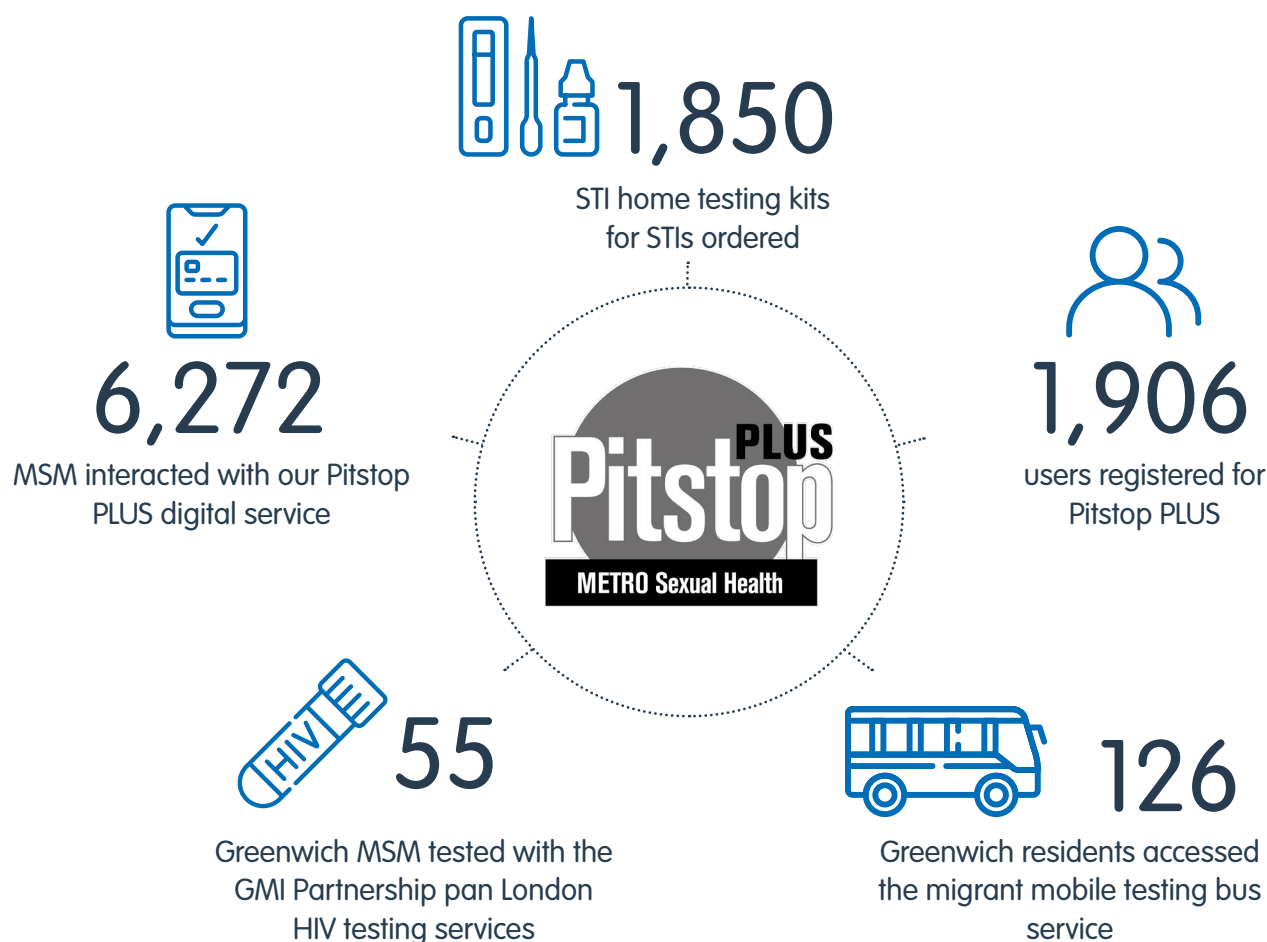
Our HIV prevention work complements the Greenwich Sexual Health service locally and regionally, in particular the targeted work for MSM of the Pitstop Clinic and Pitstop PLUS. METRO's staff collaborate closely to maximise the synergies between these programmes.



HIV prevention and support services



# Royal Borough of Greenwich

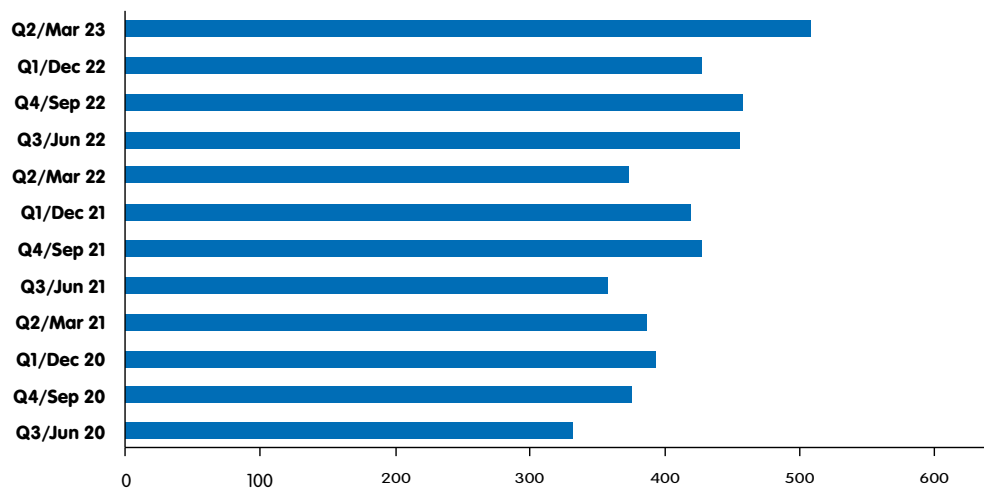


*METRO undertakes specific work with MSM locally, across a suite of services, to prevent HIV and STI transmission, reduce stigma and provide meaningful support to this population group. We combine face-to-face clinical interventions, digital outreach services and online service provision to provide the best possible service equity and access to this community. The Greenwich-based clinical services reach more than 3,000 individual Greenwich residents annually who identify as MSM.*

**Anders Neilson, GMI Partnership and HIV Prevention Manager**

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

MSM Testing: Total Returns (June 20 - Mar 23)



Online test returns June 2020 to March 2023

In the case of any positive or reactive HIV or STI diagnosis, METRO liaises with our clinical partners in local NHS services and provides information and holistic support options to clients, including our many HIV peer support services in south London and Essex; our advice and advocacy offer, and counselling. We also offer specialist services to support parents and their families who are living with, or affected by, HIV.

METRO aims to reduce societal and self-stigma around HIV and works closely with our partners across the HIV sector, both locally and nationally, to develop prevention campaigns and extensive outreach activity.

**Our HIV Prevention Manager Anders Neilson explains his team’s approach to outreach and community engagement.**

*We are a Local Activation Partner in the delivery of the National HIV Prevention England programme providing community-based testing advice and support, predominantly to gay and bisexual men-who-have-sex-with-men (GBMSM) and Black African communities across London, alongside promotion of the National Campaign.*

*METRO collaborates with our GMI partner agencies (Positive East and Spectra), The Love Tank and Freedoms in delivering the outreach arm of the ‘Do It London’ London HIV Prevention Programme. Our experienced teams deliver outreach services to London’s GBMSM, offering HIV testing, condom access, referral to PrEP access and other holistic*



*METRO staff and supporters: Fighting HIV Stigma and Proud March, Rally and Vigil, 18 March 2023*



*HIV team outreach: Royal Greenwich Together 2023*

services across the capital. This work is immersed in communities through our physical engagement with clients where they are: in clubs, bars, sex-on-premises venues and public sex environments. We also outreach at large events such as Pride in London, UK Black Pride, Mighty Hoopla and Fetish Week.

METRO's role in the GMI Partnership through the innovative HIV Migrant Testing Bus programme, funded by Fast Track Cities from 2020 to 2023, provided mobile outreach and testing services to marginalised and migrant populations on local high streets. This included monthly outreach in General Gordon Square in Woolwich's town centre.

Locally, prevention work is branded with the Pitstop PLUS suite of services, encompassing our clinical and digital offer, including information via our website and targeted social media activity.<sup>25</sup>

Mpox (MPX) was an ongoing concern during 2022 to 2023 and, while mpox is not an STI, mpox is spread through skin-to-skin contact and was disproportionately affecting gay and bisexual men. In responding to mpox, we were an integral part of the GMI Partnership's London Mpox Outreach Team, delivering tailored and essential health messaging, and linking health agencies with venue owners and our MSM population.

We worked closely with stakeholders such as the Trafalgar clinic in Greenwich locally, and regionally with Terence Higgins Trust, Love Tank, London Councils, and the UK Health Security Agency to keep up-to-date with the evolving information and develop MSM-specific mpox messaging to raise awareness of symptoms, transmission and current health advice, including vaccine availability.

**Anders Neilson**

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

## Insights

In Greenwich, our HIV prevention service users and HIV support service users are demographically very distinct. The MSM who benefit from our prevention services are predominantly British, White, gay or bisexual, and are largely aged between 26 and 35, while the clients who use our HIV support service are 66% Black African cisgender women, and 34% cisgender males, 58% aged 46 to 65, including people identifying as 78% heterosexual, 21.5% gay and 0.5% bisexual.

## HIV Support

This service provides advice, advocacy, as well as emotional and social support to individuals living with HIV, and their families. We advise people on welfare rights and assist them directly with benefit applications, providing support for their physical and mental health and wellbeing needs, such as HIV medication adherence. The service is integrated with METRO’s HIV peer support and counselling.

## Key support needs

- Anxiety related to welfare benefit cuts and policy changes
- COL crisis impacting those already on low incomes
- Debt
- Mental health issues
- HIV stigma
- Treatment adherence
- Housing insecurity and risk of homelessness
- Immigration issues
- Social isolation
- Complex needs



90

new clients assessed



97

clients received in-person support



67

clients supported by phone

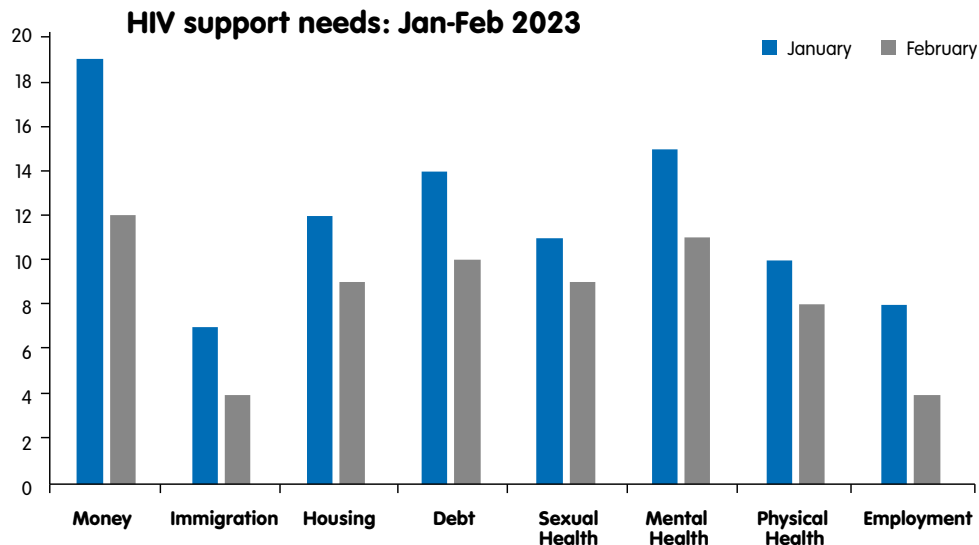


612

occasions of service



# Royal Borough of Greenwich



*Snapshot of support needs*

## Mini case study: HIV family support

Mary is a 66-year-old Black African heterosexual woman living with her adult daughter who has been diagnosed with a severe mental health issue. She is the primary carer for her daughter, however Mary's physical health deteriorated with kidney disease and cancer. These issues coincided with a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about changes to her social welfare benefits. Mary's daughter, a long-term service user, contacted METRO for advice and our team supported both women with contacting the DWP and processing a new application for a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) benefit relating to Mary's new diagnosis, and changed familial situation in terms of care.

*Advocating for Mary, we ensured her PIP application was expedited with a two-week turnaround to review and her income was successfully increased. This enabled Mary and her daughter to reduce their anxiety and stress about affording necessities. We continued to provide contact beyond this crisis and monitored where our support was needed after the situation had stabilised.*

Collaboration with local agencies and partners is critical to supporting clients' specific needs with additional expertise and services. METRO's support addresses food poverty, debt, domestic violence and abuse, mental health issues, and legal advice signposting on immigration. Onward referrals ensure appropriate, holistic support and expertise can be given to individuals, particularly when they are in an immediate crisis.



National HIV Testing Week, Woolwich town centre, February 2024

### Partner agencies include:

- Citizen's Advice
- Debt Advice Helpline
- Greenwich Time to Talk
- Greenwich Welfare Rights
- HER Centre
- Lewisham Refugee and Migrants Network
- Live Well Greenwich
- Greenwich Homes
- South East London Community Energy

For our HIV support clients, as previously highlighted above, ageing is a significant factor for this group with some 58% of service users aged 46 to 65. This correlates with the needs we are seeing from co-morbidities, physical impairments, and social isolation.

### Edith Ntabyera, London HIV Support Services Manager provides further insight:

*The quantity of service users with complex needs is rising, particularly older people with mobility issues, and age-related health needs, including some presenting with cancer, dementia,*

*Parkinson's disease and more. These complex requirements require METRO to have more capacity than is currently available to fully support this population.*

*Other escalating issues are referrals for people with late diagnoses of HIV, predominantly Black heterosexual men, some of whom have No Recourse to Public Funds and consequently face financial crises and food poverty in addition to poor physical health.*

*Balancing some of these significant challenges is the range of support we can provide directly and indirectly, including applications to hardship funds for emergency support. Socially, we also support our service users through annual events at Christmas and during school holidays.*

*I was delighted to be invited to the METRO families' seaside trip this summer. It gave me a real boost to spend time with others in my situation. I feel much less lonely now, and I'm happier and more confident to share my diagnosis with loved ones.*

**Anonymous feedback from a METRO HIV support service user**

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

## METRO GAVS

# 439

members, including:

 335

Black and people of  
colour-led groups

238

Deaf and  
disabled groups



200

older people's groups



120

carers organisations



272

faith centres

*While the cost-of-living crisis continues, local organisations are feeling the impact and need more support with areas such as financial management and accountancy to maximise their resources and efficiency.*

**Pauline O'Hare: Voice and Infrastructure Manager,  
METRO GAVS**

METRO GAVS was created as a programme of the charity in 2017 when Greenwich Action for Voluntary Service (GAVS) merged into METRO. This is an infrastructure service that supports the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG). Our staff advise formal and grassroots organisations, as well as emerging groups in the borough, on their development, fundraising, and best practice for ensuring strong governance. The service is about strengthening and sustaining the VCS to ensure it can deliver services and support to communities,

both within and beyond the borough, while stimulating the local economy, job creation, and external investment.

METRO GAVS collaborates with other local organisations which also support the voluntary sector including Greenwich Inclusion Project (GrIP), Volunteer Centre Greenwich and Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency.

We also collaborate closely with the local authority and other statutory agencies. Strategically, we represent the interests of the member organisations through our voice work in advocating for their interests at over 150 formal meetings in the borough. These include the Healthier Greenwich Partnership, Live Well Greenwich Partnership Board, Children and Young People's Partnership Board, Safeguarding Adults Board, and in a variety of meetings around the South East London Integrated Care System as the key NHS body regionally.

## Royal Borough of Greenwich

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Annually, we provide targeted advice sessions to over 190 organisations with dedicated support to specific sectors within the VCS, including the arts and organisations led by Black and global majority groups.

### Insights

*When I came into post seven years ago, the predominantly Black-led groups were Caribbean, but there have been demographic changes in the borough and there has been a rise in faith groups and that has completely shifted to us having more demand for African Black-led rather than from the Caribbean which were from older settled communities.*

*Recently, I supported the Greenwich Vietnamese Women's Group with a successful funding application.*

*They've been around for over 35 years and are based in the Woolwich Common Community Centre. They're self-contained in many ways, however that's made them even more marginal as a community in terms of their political recognition and presence in the borough in terms of representation. Last year I worked with them to secure substantial funding for a wellbeing project for older people, incorporating physical and social activities such as gardening, walking and a chair-based exercise group.*

*Some of the people are very elderly, so even a little bit of gardening and activity outdoors promotes wellbeing, and they're growing stuff [at the Community Centre] and they're going to cook the produce and share it.*

**Mutmahim Roaf, Development Officer, METRO GAVS**

### Feedback from Nhi Vinh Chu – Greenwich Vietnamese Women's Group

*Mutmahim has been giving our group ongoing support for the past five years. His support has been invaluable not just in winning £40,000 funding for our project to continue much-needed support for Vietnamese community but he is always available to help whenever we requested his service.*

*Despite being around for 30 years our group has been marginalised and faced exclusions. Mutmahim has reached out to our group and his persistence and willingness to get to know our group then gives us bespoke help and guidance to empower our group to grow from a small and insignificant group into a thriving and active one.*



# Royal Borough of Greenwich



Visualising G-HIVE's key activities

## Greenwich Hub for Voice, Influence and Engagement (G-HIVE)

G-HIVE is a new programme of work for METRO that tackles health inequalities on a system-wide level in Greenwich. The programme started in 2021, building on work developed during the COVID-19 pandemic and funded by The National Lottery Community Fund until 2025.

*This project harnesses the strengths of METRO's strategic work within the public sector and our grassroots work, alongside our VCS infrastructure relationships. We bring key people together to work in partnership in identifying how the local health and care system can change to better meet specific local needs. G-HIVE aims to support the statutory and voluntary sectors, and local communities in RBG to redress the deep-rooted inequalities in the borough.*

**Andrew Kerr: G-HIVE Programme Manager**



G-HIVE networking event

### Co-production within the VCS around this agenda has included:

- Creating a powerful infrastructure and set of activities that better ensure representation of local communities' needs and aspirations
- Building a culture of system change, with a focus on developing strong, professional, and beneficial relationships with local communities, groups, and organisations based on trust
- Improving consultation and co-design processes, which include the voices of seldom-heard communities, to ensure continued progression of community development, engagement, and participation

### **Debora Mo, Mental Health Commissioning Support and Engagement Officer, NHS South East London Integrated Care Board (Greenwich).**

*Attending G-HIVE events has always been time well spent. The METRO GAVS team is skilled at creating a warm environment for genuine interaction and I never come away without new information on activities in the borough plus new connections made.*

*We are always looking for ways of extending our reach, which is a challenge not only in terms of resources but in finding the right approaches in a borough that is so rich in people and experiences. The value of there being a space like G-HIVE cannot be underestimated, in my view, especially in helping us break down barriers to trust and in creating the right conditions for co-production to take place. I am supportive of the project's co-developed priorities and look forward to upcoming developments.*

# Royal Borough of Greenwich



*G-HIVE networking event and workshop; METRO Woolwich, January 2023*

## **A range of organisations have already participated in shaping the programme across the VCS and statutory sectors:**

ARC and You; Bromley, Lewisham, and Greenwich Mind; CAP Debt Centre Greenwich; Charlton Community Delivery Team; Greenwich and Bexley Community Hospice; Greenwich Carers Centre; Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency; Greenwich Inclusion Project; Healthy Food Events; HER Centre; Home-Start Greenwich; MumsAid; Mycenae House and Gardens; Royal Borough of Greenwich Children's Services; Royal Borough of Greenwich Public Health; South East London Community Energy; South East London Integrated Care System (NHS regional body); The Design Charity; Unity in the Community; Volunteer Centre Greenwich.





METRO volunteers at our allotment in New Eltham

## Wider Greenwich-based programmes

### METRO Orchards

Our allotment in Eltham has been supported by the Royal Borough of Greenwich and the Mayor of London's Greener City Fund to create a community wildlife area and productive spaces to grow food. This programme was reignited after the pandemic, and we are seeking funds to develop our community engagement, grow and sustain the allotment project to include more local people and other people such as those who attend our LGBTQ+ mental health drop-in, HIV peer support, and LGBTQ+ youth groups.

### Research

METRO's Research Working Group propels the organisation's research strategy under leadership from our Communications, Policy and Research team with a range of external relationships. In 2023 we made steps towards formalising our research partnership with the University of Greenwich in collaboration with the Institute for Lifecourse Development and as members of the interdisciplinary Centre for Inequalities. This partnership develops our previous collaboration with

the University of Greenwich on the National Youth Chances survey of LGBTQ+ young people aged 16 to 25, published in 2016, which has been cited in academic literature nationally and internationally.<sup>26</sup>

### Inclusive end-of-life care for LGBTQ+ people

During 2023, METRO produced community-engaged research for Greenwich and Bexley Community Hospice on LGBTQ+ experiences of end-of-life care as well as a staff training programme in sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) awareness delivered by METRO's Training and Development team.

Testimonies from contributors to the community research were recorded in video interviews with people who supported partners through palliative care. Additional contributors offered professional care and activist perspectives. This project produced the short documentary, *Care and Loss*, with community research led by consultant Mark McNestry and film production and direction by METRO's Film Maker, Thomas Line.

The film includes an academic perspective from the David Evans, Professor of Sexualities and Genders at the University of Greenwich, in his capacity as an educator of nursing staff. The research project has created a resource for training hospice staff and volunteers around LGBTQ+ inclusion, along with sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) sessions delivered by METRO's training and development team continuing to develop an inclusive culture alongside the SOGI awareness training we delivered.

*Care and Loss* is freely available to watch on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuoNSfHH5F4>



# London Borough of Lewisham



*Service User Forum, October 2022 – METRO New Cross (The Mulberry Centre, Lewisham)*

In Lewisham, our work centres on providing mental health and wellbeing (MHWB) services for LGBTQ+ people and supporting people to live well with HIV. Since the 1990s, METRO's specialist MHWB support for LGBTQ+ people has included populations in Lewisham. Similarly, our HIV prevention work in Greenwich during the same era also traversed the boundaries of the boroughs in reaching LGBTQ+ communities in social spaces such as the many pubs and clubs with thriving queer scenes and alternatives to central London LGBTQ+ culture, not least for those living on low incomes.

METRO's merger with HIV charity Positive Parents and Children in 2016 further shaped our relationship with Lewisham. As a Black-led organisation based in Lambeth yet serving

residents in Lewisham and Southwark, we expanded the communities we serve. We connected with residents across three boroughs in our HIV work, in a contract spanning Lambeth, Southwark, and Lewisham that continues to this day.

We are based in New Cross within the Mulberry Centre, which we lease from Lewisham Council and share with local services supporting adults with a learning disability. We also manage affordable hire of the space for voluntary sector meetings. Our commissioned local services run from this building and we also have an LGBTQ+ prostate cancer peer support group, METRO Walnut, which meets twice a month in-person, and online.



*Catriona Scott and Zaziah Wood from METRO's MHWB team at the Lewisham Recovery Event hosted by Change Grow Live drug and alcohol recovery service; November 2022.*

The Mulberry Hub is also based in our New Cross building with a weekly Young People's Health Centre service for 13 to 25s who are residents of the borough wards of Deptford or New Cross. The service is a partnership between the South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, North Lewisham Primary Care Network, and METRO. The Hub provides combined access to GP services, mental health support, and youth work in one setting.

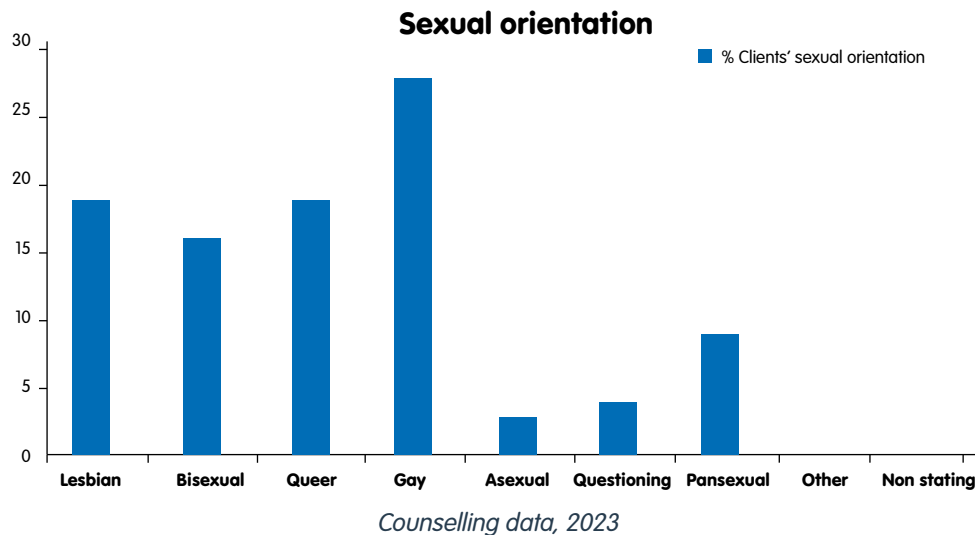
## LGBTQ+ Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Lewisham Sexuality and Gender Wellbeing Service funds METRO to support LGBTQ+ people's mental health through both individual and groupwork programmes. These services are funded by the South East London Clinical Commissioning Group.<sup>27</sup> Lewisham Council's main grants programme for communities also funds our Proud & Well programme to provide a crossover of mental health advocacy on a one-to-one basis as well as group-based wellbeing activities. During 2023, we have also delivered the Well Proud film, a project about the intersection of mental health and wellbeing (MHWB) and Black & global majority identity.

### **Our CEO, Andrew Evans, reflects on his hopes for the development of METRO's services in the borough:**

*We want our work in Lewisham to include more LGBTQ+ people in the population who also have Black or global majority identities. This means ensuring that our high-quality MHWB and other LGBTQ+ services are more equitable in meeting the needs of individuals with intersectional identities with staff and volunteers reflecting those lived experiences in frontline roles and in senior levels of the charity.*

# London Borough of Lewisham



## Counselling for individuals

Our LGBTQ+ counselling service for adults in Lewisham is open to anyone aged 19 or older who identifies as LGBTQ+ and has moderate mental health support needs. Low-cost counselling is provided on a donation-based system per session starting at £5 with an upper limit of £40 to reflect income disparities across the LGBTQ+ population. We also have a dedicated counselling service for LGBTQ+ young people aged 8 to 18 funded by Children in Need.

METRO is a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and ensures that all our counsellors, whether paid staff or volunteers, have regular in-house clinical supervision to support their work and safeguard the quality and safety of their professional practice.<sup>28</sup>

We offer short-term counselling for low-to-medium need clients over twelve 50-minute sessions, in-person or virtually, although in-person counselling is preferred by our clients. For those who need longer-term support, we refer them to other agencies.

Services are offered in New Cross within the Mulberry Centre with a dedicated counselling space.

A spectrum of sexualities is represented in this service with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer identities predominating (see chart above). 'Gay' is not exclusive to cis male people in how our client base identify, with some cis women or trans and gender diverse people also defining their sexual orientation as gay. We added pansexual and questioning to our LGBTQ+ monitoring spectrum to better reflect how our clients were self-identifying.



# 706

counselling hours delivered

# 37

people average caseload



# 81%

people showing improvement  
between first to last counselling  
sessions



## London Borough of Lewisham

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In terms of racial identity, counselling clients are predominantly White. This inequitable representation is being addressed in the service, with commissioners and within our broader voluntary sector partnerships locally.

### Insights

#### **Anonymous feedback from clients**

*Coming from a very homophobic family and culture, having a counsellor like you who accepts me and my sexuality has been invaluable to build my confidence.*

*Since starting these sessions, I feel like I'm living in a more authentic way now and feel more confident to meet new people and go on dates.*

*I was very impressed with the whole process going through METRO. Every person I interacted with was helpful and kind and I was extremely impressed with the counselling provided.*

*Finally talking to someone about my problems has helped me feel lighter and more confident in myself.*

*I feel I have more compassion for myself now; I felt embarrassed about my anxiety before and now I realise my feelings are valid.*

*... I felt safe to be myself, and I felt my counsellor understood me.*

**There are recurrent themes our counsellors see within the service, as Counselling Services Manager, Zaziah Wood explains.**

*Issues for our clients include shame, rejection based on LGBTQ+ identity, and anxiety. Suicidal thoughts are unfortunately common.*

*We often see people struggling with relationship issues which are exacerbated by identity and internalised homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. People can bring whatever they want into their counselling session but the service centres generally on sexual orientation for adults and some gender identity issues, although gender identity is more commonly explored in our counselling with young people.*

*Our counselling service combines counsellors working in either integrative or person-centered, humanistic counselling rather than cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), however, we do use some CBT tools. Generally, an average client will present with anxiety often linked to identity, sexuality and gender identity. This might be how their identity interacts with society, for example.*

*When assessing their needs, we ask our prospective clients what they hope to get from counselling sessions, and match that need with our available counsellors and the type of counselling they are trained in.*



# London Borough of Lewisham

*This is the only space I feel safe to be myself, where I don't feel the need to have a mask on.*

## Client feedback

Each counsellor at METRO has a clinical supervisor who supports their professional practice, for both paid staff and volunteer counsellors.

## The principles that underpin our counselling practice are:

- A non-judgmental space
- Being congruent
- Extending empathy

*These elements ensure a safe space and the conditions we need to grow. We want people to feel accepted for who they are. We have had feedback from clients that endorses the importance of these principles.*

*This is key for the queer community and the rejection that many people experience. Often people just want someone neutral rather than relying on family and friends.*

*Part of this affirmation comes from the inclusive LGBTQ+ space in our Lewisham offices, for example queer exhibitions on display in the communal areas for LGBT History Month.*

**Zaziah Wood, Counselling Services Manager**

## LGBTQ+ Mental Health Drop-In

Safe space is also a central philosophy for a flagship METRO services: LGBTQ+ Mental Health Drop-In.

This group has been running as a weekly service since the mid-1990s, as an informal social space.

## METRO's former Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, Catriona Scott explains more:

*The group is very open to people who may have mental health support needs whether temporary or chronic, including people with lived experience of mental health crises and hospitalisation. People with complex needs are welcomed and there is empathy in the group for these diverse experiences and identities.*

*As well as informal social space, the group also has structured sessions with arts, physical exercise, meditation, and external activities such as walks, cultural events, and participation in local Pride events or Pride in London annually as a group. There is also a one-to-one advocacy service providing follow-on support for individuals for mental and physical health, and wellbeing issues.*

In 2022, the Drop-in group, previously based in Greenwich for many years, moved to METRO's Mulberry Centre location in New Cross. Referrals to the group come from GPs and the local Community Mental Health Team, as well as self-referrals.

METRO's longstanding expertise in LGBTQ+ mental health and wellbeing is documented in a short film we produced about the Drop-in group (2019).<sup>29</sup>

# London Borough of Lewisham

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## Insights

*Drop-In has always had more clients who identify as men (currently 69%). We trialled a women's group a few years ago but there wasn't a big take-up. There is a question about how to reach out to more people identifying as women, but it is positive that those identifying as male are being open about their mental health challenges, or their diagnoses.*

*During 2022 to 2023, we have had clients who are claiming asylum and have come to the UK from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sierra Leone and Saudi Arabia. Our Bangladeshi and Pakistani clients tend to live in East London in Tower Hamlets or Newham where they can rent low-cost rooms. However, they often don't feel safe being out there in terms of their sexual orientation and gender identity, so they like coming to an LGBTQ centre in a different area.*

**Catriona Scott, former Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator**

Needs from this group have stimulated dialogue with Lewisham Refugee and Migrants Network (LRMN) about support needs such as low or no-cost immigration advice, and potential partnership for people who quite literally migrate to find a unique service such as LGBTQ+ Drop-In and, equally for LRMN, how they might refer clients to METRO who are LGBTQ+. This is a highly pertinent issue, especially given Lewisham Council's and the wider VCS policy of being a borough of sanctuary as part of the UK-wide and international movement of places of sanctuary for migrants and refugees.<sup>30</sup>

# London Borough of Lewisham

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[External] services are extremely overstretched in terms of our advocacy for service users with GPs and social services. We are supporting many clients who are struggling to secure medical appointments, particularly for those who have been discharged from hospital care to re-enter services via their GP and have onwards referrals to other services.

Similarly, the government's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has been overstretched. Reassessment for the benefits, Employment and Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payments which were paused during COVID-19 re-started and caused anxiety and stress for our clients. People had a month to provide evidence for their claim being reviewed and then they often had to wait 25 to 30 weeks for a decision. They were left in limbo waiting to hear about the status of their claim, and whether it might continue, cease, reduce or increase.

There has also been a lot of concern and anxiety about affordability of energy and food because most people we see receive social welfare benefits and live on low incomes. There are also problems with notifying the DWP about part-time work and this causes stress for people who are trying to get paid work, yet they are concerned about jeopardising their benefits.

In general, we find people living with mental health issues experience additional stress in a system that is not inclusive of neurodiversity.

**Catriona Scott, former Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator**

One measure to support people around energy bills is through METRO's links via other advice and advocacy services in the charity with South East London Community Energy. An adviser visited a drop-in session open to all mental health service users.<sup>31</sup>

**Creating social opportunities is a key part of these services, such as these trips:**

- Queer walking tour of Soho
- Visit to the London LGBTQ Centre
- Walk to the Sky Garden
- Arts workshop for Pride
- Trip to Catford Mews cinema
- Outing to Lewisham Lanes bowling

# WELL PROUD



Well Proud publicity flyer, 2023

## LGBTQ+ mental health within Black and global majority populations

Our Well Proud film project focused on identity and mental health through intersections of race and LGBTQ+ identities by culminating in a docuseries. Filmed in 2023, the project created video portraits of Lewisham residents identifying as both LGBTQ+ and Black or global majority.

The films feature six Lewisham residents who reflected on their heritage and identities, with insights on how experiences of familial and social discrimination have affected their mental health, as well as the support they have sought. Topics in the docuseries encompass methods of self-help, marriage, creative work, and place.

One of the films was awarded Winner of Best Documentary Short in the South London Film Festival 2024 (Episode 3: Kemal and Tyron). All films are available on METRO's YouTube channel with over 800 views to date.<sup>32</sup>

Supported through Lewisham Council's Better Mental Health Fund, this short-term project was led by METRO's in-house Film Maker Thomas Line who filmed and edited the docuseries which was directed by Charlene Frost and Yorgo Glynatsis.

They have been key to the success of this project, as our press release about the project highlighted:

'Both are queer, POC Lewisham residents whose deep understanding of local communities helped them identify a diverse cross-section of voices to highlight across identities, generations, nationalities and experiences. The directors' unique connection to the topics also helped them draw out revelatory insights from the people they interviewed. Many of the people featured said the topics covered weren't things they'd spoken about with anyone before.'<sup>33</sup>

*This has been such a journey for all of us ... It's not just about capturing the best image on camera or the right angle or the right lighting. We're actually learning about people's lives and getting into their worlds and their universe.*

**Charlene Frost: Co-director, Well Proud docuseries**

*I wanted to help our local heroes to raise their voices and being part of their journeys to tell their stories. I am excited to show this docuseries to the world and hope that these films will create as much of an impact on audiences as they have with everyone involved in this project.*

**Yorgo Glynatsis: Co-director, Well Proud docuseries**



# London Borough of Lewisham



Yorgo Glynatsis (left) and Charlene Frost (speaking) at the Well Proud premiere: Fellowship Cinema, Bellingham, Lewisham



Well Proud premiere

Launched in May 2023 to a local audience, including the contributors, the premiere event was sold out and attended by around 100 people. Sample audience feedback, representing respondents who identified as over 55% Black and global majority.

*Diverse, fantastic and honest. Voices from an array of communities and perspectives which I appreciated.*

*Really amazing film[s], so moving and thought-provoking. Amazing, strong individuals with such a depth of experiences. Only critique is that I could have watched one twice as long.*

*Really insightful into people's different experiences of life and wellbeing in Lewisham.*

**Audience feedback**



Yorgo Glynatsis chairing Q&A at the Well Proud premiere

The local launch was followed by a public launch of one film per week on METRO's YouTube channel during June 2023 to mark Pride Month.


# London Borough of Lewisham

**367**   
occasions of  
one-to-one support

**255**  
engagements in  
group activities



 **45**  
hours  
volunteer  
support

**39%**   
service users  
aged 40-49

## Proud & Well programme

Our Proud & Well service combines individual and group activities, and peer support, with targeted advice and advocacy for LGBTQ+ individuals who have moderate mental health needs. The service is funded by Lewisham Council's main community grants programme (2022-2025).

Service users can access personalised health and wellbeing sessions and advice on social welfare benefits, as well as signposting to specialist external support such as debt services, immigration advice and a range of community wellbeing activities.

## Insights

*Being with other people with similar problems has helped me understand myself, my partner, and other people generally.*

*The group activities really help with feeling connected and trying to be more present in a social setting rather than being completely lost in my illness. I get a lot from being encouraged to do new things.*

**Service user feedback: Anonymous**

The programme incorporates principles from the Five Ways to Wellbeing framework to support individuals with issues such as anxiety and stress alongside METRO's established best practice and staff competence in creating safe and empathetic LGBTQ+ spaces.<sup>34</sup>

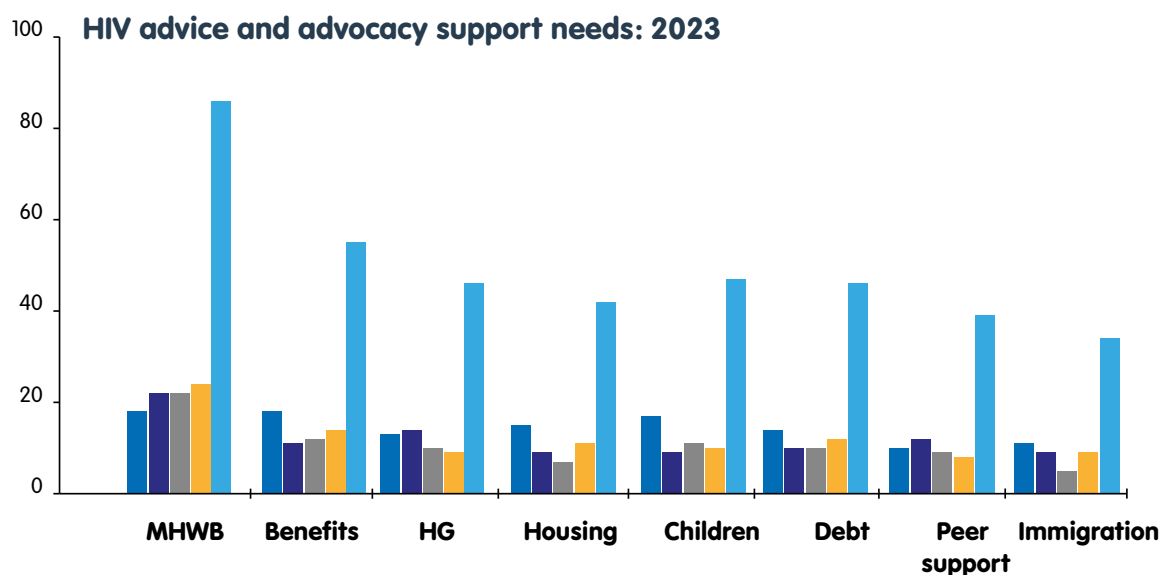
Practical and advocacy support through our MHWB service is critical to ensuring we can have an impact on changing some of the key circumstantial issues affecting service users.

## Mini-case study

Our advocacy work supports individuals with critical needs, or who are in crisis. A recent case involved a client whom we recovering from chest surgery whom we supported to access a new bed during post-operative rehabilitation. METRO's application to the Glasspool Charitable Trust secured a new bed and bedding for this client.

**1400+**   
hours of support to families

# London Borough of Lewisham



April-June	18	18	13	15	17	14	10	11
July-Sept	22	11	14	9	9	10	12	9
Oct-Dec	22	12	10	7	11	10	9	5
Jan-Mar	24	14	9	11	10	12	8	9
Totals	86	55	46	42	47	46	39	34

## HIV support

Our 'Bridges' HIV service in Lewisham is part of a three-borough partnership between Lambeth, Southwark, and Lewisham (LSL) led by Lambeth Council.<sup>35</sup> As the commissioners explain of the public health context and populations' needs:

*LSL together face some of the greatest sexual health challenges in England. Our rates of HIV and STIs are the highest in England, and there are persistent inequalities in sexual and reproductive health, with young people, men who have sex with men (MSM), and Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities suffering the greatest burden.<sup>36</sup>*

395

occasions of one-to-one advice and advocacy support on key issues (as illustrated)

From 2015 to 2023, our HIV support services in LSL have focused on working with parents and their children, peer support, and counselling.

### Insights

Returning sustained in-person services, post COVID-19, was a key issue to support our existing and new clients.

# London Borough of Lewisham



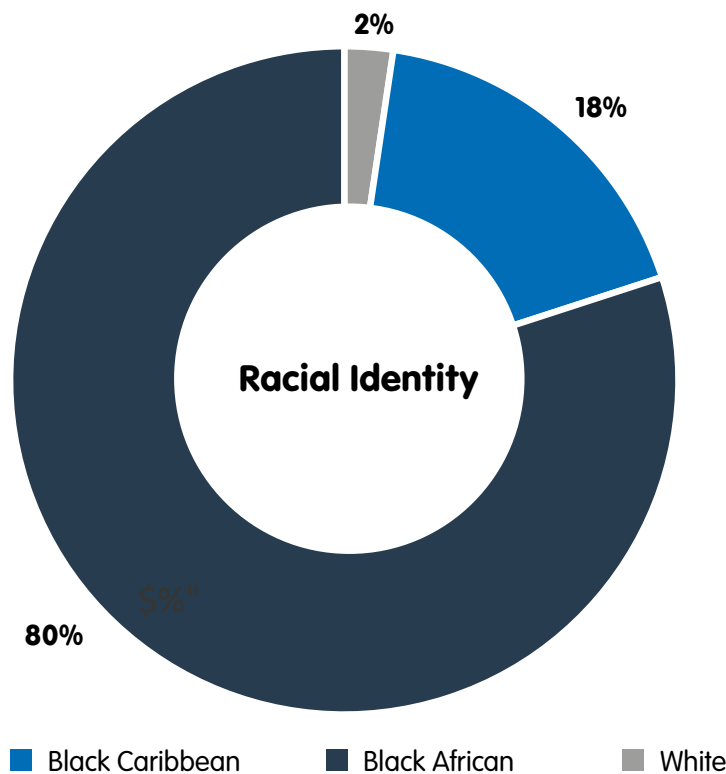
In contrast to our older clients living with HIV in Greenwich, this service in Lewisham (along with Lambeth and Southwark) has predominantly supported young people aged 0 to 18 and their parents aged 36 to 45. This was formerly a distinct service as the METRO Positive Parenting and Children programme. Of these parents, they are overwhelmingly women who are lone parents: 86% of our Lewisham service users were cis women and 13% cis men. In terms of racial identity, they represented global majority populations, with 80% from Black African backgrounds, 18% Black Caribbean identities and just 2% White identities.

*Our team delivered services to help with children's educational needs such as school homework, assisting with access to local after-school play activities. We also supported positive parenting and sharing HIV positive status with a loved one. Families were also supported around treatment adherence and dealing with both external and internal HIV stigma. Pragmatically, we delivered advice and advocacy services around social welfare benefits, access to financial hardship grants, foodbank vouchers, and housing issues such as preventing homelessness, and signposting to other specialist services such as immigration advice.*

**Edith Ntabyera, London HIV Support Services Manager**



# London Borough of Lewisham



*LSL HIV support clients' demographic snapshot: Racial identity*

## Peer mentoring and counselling

Two of our HIV peer support groups are open to people living or working in Lewisham: Positive PALS for men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM) and Positive People's Network. The latter is a mixed group in terms of sexual orientation.

As well as physical and virtual meetings, our peer support service offers a range of social and cultural activities to further develop peer networks, social connection, and wellbeing. These have included a trip to the Africa Fashion exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, a theatre trip, and a visit to Windsor Castle.

In 2023, a new group has launched focused on the lived experiences of migrants living with HIV who identify as MSM: Positive Journeys.

# London Borough of Lewisham

## **Jakub Krzyzynski, HIV Peer Support Services Manager**

Historically, METRO had language specific groups (Spanish and Portuguese speaking for Latin Americans and Polish and Romanian speaking groups). When those projects ended, I had a feeling that there was a gap, and we needed to reach out to the broader client group. We already had a few HIV support groups, but looking at the numbers of clients coming to me who are identify as migrants, I decided that there is no safe space for them, where they can go and discuss their worries and issues.

Positive Journeys meets twice a month, in Lambeth and Lewisham with occasional outings. The group discusses HIV, but also migration, racism, xenophobia, issues with the Home Office, asylum seeking, finances, work, Universal Credit, mental health, homelessness, sexuality, religion and much more.

Sometimes HIV is the last thing on my clients' minds, and they want to make sure they can stay legally in the UK. There are quite a few refugees and asylum seekers in the group. The guys are really supportive to each other and very welcoming to the new members, often just recently diagnosed with HIV. We have a guest speaker at times, such as a refugees' art exhibition during Refugee Awareness Week. On 1st of July there was Pride in London, where several of the group members came as well. For some that was the first time that they joined

the Pride event in their life, as where they came from their sexuality was oppressed or even illegal. It was beautiful to see them blossom in their freedom and sexuality acceptance. For upcoming months, we have planned an HIV doctor visit to our group, we will go to the Migration Museum in Lewisham and, annually we will mark World AIDS Day.

**Positive Journeys**  
METRO HIV

**Peer support group for gay and bisexual migrants living with HIV**

Are you a gay or bisexual man living with HIV in South London? Our new group is aimed at migrants who would like help, advice and the chance to meet similar people in a safe space.

**GET IN TOUCH**  
HIV Support Team | [peersupport@metrocharity.org.uk](mailto:peersupport@metrocharity.org.uk)  
020 8305 5006 | 07494 497590

[@METROCharity](https://twitter.com/METROCharity) [METRO Charity](https://facebook.com/METROCharity) [metrocharity](https://instagram.com/metrocharity) | [metrocharity.org.uk](https://metrocharity.org.uk)

**METRO**  
Embrace Difference  
Charity Number 1070682

Positive Journeys promotional flyer

# London Borough of Lewisham

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## Fast Track Cities

From 2020 to 2023, METRO ran three innovative HIV prevention and support programmes funded by Fast-Track Cities (FTC). London's FTC public health campaign aims to end new HIV infections, stop preventable HIV deaths and eliminate the discrimination and stigma associated with HIV.<sup>37</sup>

**Fast-Track Cities' London partners includes the Mayor of London, NHS England, Public Health England and London Councils. A ground-breaking global initiative, FTC stems from the Paris Declaration that was signed by health and government leaders in 2014 who committed to:**

- *End HIV epidemics in cities and municipalities by 2030*
- *Put people at the centre of everything we do*
- *Address the causes of risk, vulnerability, and transmission*
- *Use our HIV response for positive social transformation*
- *Build and accelerate an appropriate response reflecting local needs*
- *Mobilise resources for integrated public health and sustainable development*
- *Unite as leaders*<sup>38</sup>

## London has developed a commitment to:

- *End new HIV infections in the capital*
- *Put a stop to HIV-related stigma and discrimination*
- *Stop preventable deaths from HIV-related causes*
- *Work to improve the health, quality of life and wellbeing of people living with HIV across the capital*<sup>39</sup>

In 2019, METRO successfully won three bids for innovative public health programmes addressing FTC's London agenda. These included our peer mentoring and Stay & Play programmes which served populations in Lewisham, not exclusively.

## London Borough of Lewisham

### Stay & Play programme

Post COVID, the Stay & Play groups based at METRO's Mulberry Centre in New Cross have provided a space for women who are HIV positive and their children, predominantly aged under five, to have peer support, advice and advocacy from METRO's workers. The service ran in partnership with clinical staff from King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and, due to its success, will continue beyond the Fast Track Cities pilot. It will be open to residents of Lambeth, Southwark, or Lewisham who are living with HIV as part of the Bridges partnership.



Stay & Play group, Mulberry Centre, METRO New Cross

### Feedback from service users

*I was initially a little worried as I haven't been attending anything social outside of my clinic and the hospitals. However, METRO's worker encouraged me ... It was a very nice feeling, sharing the experience of being a parent in a fun activity. The best way I can describe it was feeling at ease and feeling 'normal'. My baby, I know he is still [too] little to express himself, but he definitely had fun, and so did I.*

#### Person A

*I live in a confined accommodation, making it difficult for my baby to access the floor space to play in order to explore crawling then walking during the growth span. I am happy to say I witnessed my child crawling for the first time at the Stay & Play session ... The children get to play and encouraged to eat together. The parents get to support each other through sharing our experiences.*

*Stay & Play has given me as much strength as possible as I talked to doctors in the group, too, for help. The team supported me to move to a better housing environment and I am now looking forward to starting work.*

#### Person B



# London Borough of Lewisham

In partnership with King's College Hospital, METRO's workers delivered a range of support and advice spanning HIV treatment adherence, mental health and wellbeing support, baby and toddler development, breast cancer information, welfare entitlements, and employment support. Service users experiencing food poverty were also supplied with foodbank vouchers, and the high uptake reflects the serious level of need for necessities.

## Peer mentoring

Launched in 2020, our FTC-funded peer mentoring programme was open to people living with HIV who were attending services at King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Guy's and St Thomas's Hospital. Our Peer Mentoring Lead was working in LSL boroughs, supporting populations with the highest incidence of HIV infections in the UK.

## Stay & Play outputs 2020 to 2023



42

children aged 0-5  
participating

48

parents receiving  
advocacy

43

parents receiving  
clinical support

102

service users



55

group sessions

# London Borough of Lewisham



Jaime Sylla, METRO's Head of HIV Services, and Harry Coleman, Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Foundation Trust, Fast Track Cities conference, Seville, 2022

In 2023, an innovative programme of HIV peer support, led by METRO in partnership with Lewisham Hospital developed out of the FTC pilot. Lewisham is one of eight NHS Trusts which is embedding peer mentoring in its clinics (for details of other Trusts, see Appendix 1).

*The peer mentoring programme was designed to support patients with poor engagement in HIV care, such as adhering to anti-retroviral therapy. It addressed the type of HIV-associated morbidity and mortality that should not occur in the UK generally, and specifically as a race-based inequity. The pilot worked with 46 people through peer mentoring to achieve an undetectable viral load of HIV within 12 months of referral.*

**Jaime Sylla, Head of HIV Services**

The impact of the project was shared at the Fast Track Cities conference in Seville and BHIVA conference in Manchester in 2022.

*The service that is being offered is invaluable and I've learned a lot that I could pass on to someone else.*

**Peer mentee A – anonymous**

*My mentor was introduced to me when I was feeling really low and I dismissed his help thinking I wasn't worth the bother.*

*The fact that he saw beyond that and persisted was a breakthrough for me.*

**Peer mentee B – anonymous**

# Kent and Medway



METRO Charity archive

## Introduction and context

In 2008, METRO conducted a needs analysis of LGBT people in Kent and Medway, which we shared with the relevant local authorities and public sector agencies to build our regional engagement. Initially this centred on HIV prevention for gay men.

During that time METRO's sexual health offer also expanded from LGBTQ+ specific to heterosexual communities and young people particularly. The Get It condom distribution scheme, which we had successfully trialled in London Borough of Wandsworth, was also commissioned by Kent County Council (KCC). This work expanded into Medway in 2016 through our partnership with Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust (KCHFT) which included both sexual health promotion and HIV prevention contracts. We also run an LGBTQ+ youth group and annual LGBTQ+ youth event 'The Outing' in Medway.

METRO continues to provide sexual health services in Kent and Medway in 2023 as two distinctly commissioned contracts.<sup>40</sup>

During 2018 to 2023, we also worked on a major sexual health research project that included Kent and Medway with UK and European partners; the latter from Belgium and The Netherlands. SHIFT (Sexual Health In the over ForTy-fives) focused on understanding the specific sexual health needs of people aged over 45 and developed a tailored model of practice that was trialled in outreach during 2022. Similarly to our work already developed in the region, METRO's input was focused around engaging marginalised populations (see <https://metrocharity.org.uk/news/2023/apr/18/sexual-health-care-for-the-over-45s-must-change-says-local-charity>).

*Our online services in Kent offer a way for residents to easily access sexual health advice and condoms in a discrete and convenient way. The popularity of our services in Kent, with a high number of users accessing Get It for condoms, shows how needed this service is in the county.*

**Fuchsia Watson, Head of Sexual & Reproductive Health<sup>43</sup>**

## Kent and Medway

65  
active Get It  
sites across the  
county



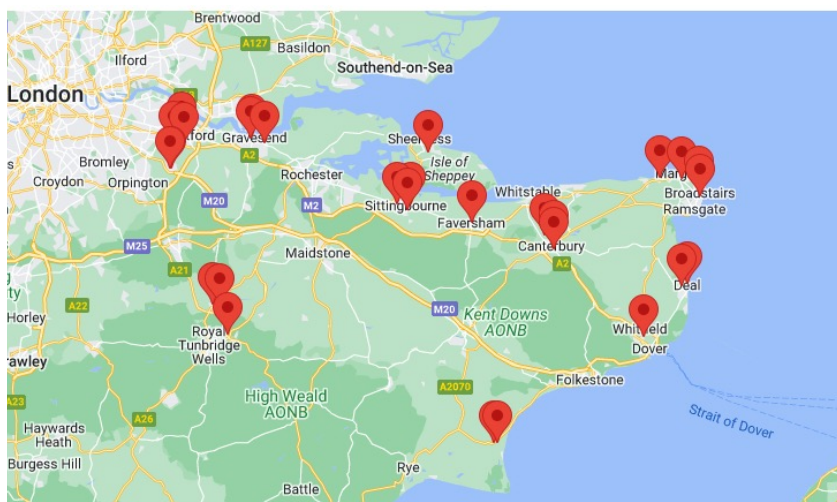
Over  
4000  
new registrations  
for Get It

15,000+  
condoms  
distributed



### Get It

Get It is a brand developed by METRO to engage young people aged 16 to 25 to access clear, friendly sexual health information and advice both online and at local venues. Users can register to access free condoms online or in person. Get It sites in Kent, which physically distribute condoms and enable in-person registration, include schools, colleges, universities, pharmacies, youth groups and hubs, clinics, and young people's services.



*Get It physical locations across Medway  
and Kent: 2022-2023*



**Pop-up stalls in schools**

This is when we have the meaty conversations. You get a group of friends who gather around you and just ask you loads of questions around sex. They start divulging information and that's when you really hear what they think about sex and how they navigate sexual health.

We have found that a key issue for young women is negotiating condom use and you really see that power imbalance because the girls seem to be the only ones who are carrying condoms although there is a very even split, gender-wise between those identifying as male and female, in our data showing who orders condoms. From the conversations, you can hear that they struggle to negotiate that condom use at that time of sex.

One thing that is clear in my team is that we need to do a lot of work in educating people who identify as male on condom use because if they're not carrying them and young women are struggling to negotiate that use, then, ultimately, they're not having safe sex.

**Freshers' fairs**

In colleges, we encounter students aged 16 to 17 with a lack of awareness of how STIs work, for example young people asking, "Miss - I gave someone oral. Do I need to do a chlamydia test?", so there's a lack of understanding around that.

Visiting our stalls at freshers' fairs, we have a huge amount of young people at colleges who asks for STI testing kits and there is also surprise about the range and variety of condoms and we encounter issues around a lack of awareness of condom use. There is a lot of laughter and joking as young people suggest who might need a test: "Yeah, you have a lot of sex", or "I don't do that; that's nasty". And we ask, "Why is that nasty?" and start those conversations.

Once students share that they are sexually active, our staff are trained to break down stigma, being sex positive and following on with the jokey conversations while not undermining any individual. The most important thing is that they're aware of how to get support, what is available to them, and if there's anything they need to be aware of to support their choices.

At freshers' fairs, we also encounter many lesbians and gay women who do not know about femidoms. Although we are promoting these products, it is frustrating because there are supply chain issues with these products post-Brexit and for some of our suppliers femidoms are not seen as a priority.

**Gifty Oduro-Anyan, Kent and Medway Sexual Health Manager**

## Kent and Medway



Medway Pride, 2022

### Community Outreach

*Much of our work in Medway and Kent is about including communities who are seldom heard. What we're really trying to do through our online services is create opportunities for those who can easily access online to do that, but then focusing our other resources on our staff going out into the community and reaching rural as well as urban areas. In particular, people living on low incomes and experiencing other social and economic inequities.*

*In Kent and Medway we are keen to develop new partnerships and build relationships with other agencies and providers to deepen the work that we do in this region around outreach and engagement on sexual health.*

**Andrew Evans, CEO**

A key focus of the team's work has been outreach targeting marginalised groups to improve equitable access to sexual health. This has focused particularly on four populations: Refugees, Traveller communities, young people who are neurodiverse, and racially minoritised people.

In outreach work within Kent's racially minoritised communities, our staff have seen a significant interaction between sexual health issues, religion, and culture such as gatekeeping from pastors and imams.

Engagement with groups and networks such as Napier Friends at Folkestone Barracks – home to approximately 300 male refugees – has led to pop-up sexual health events there and also at Millbank Asylum Centre in Ashford.

## Kent and Medway

200+ 

outreach sessions

68% 

reach to marginalised  
groups

300+ 

professionals trained in sexual  
health awareness training

***Gifty Oduro-Anyan, METRO's Kent and Medway Sexual Health Manager explains more about this work and other services.***

We encounter many barriers in this work, for example with refugees of course there is linguistic diversity yet we have insufficient interpretation services to support the variety of people living in Kent. There are also some centres where refugees are based that don't allow condoms to be given out because they're not encouraging young people to have sex.

Access to Traveller communities has also been challenging. We are focusing on building relationships with local leaders to improve our engagement with this population, and to develop our insights about their needs.

One insightful engagement was an outreach session at Folkestone Youth Hub with a group of Czech and Romany travellers, as our outreach worker reported:

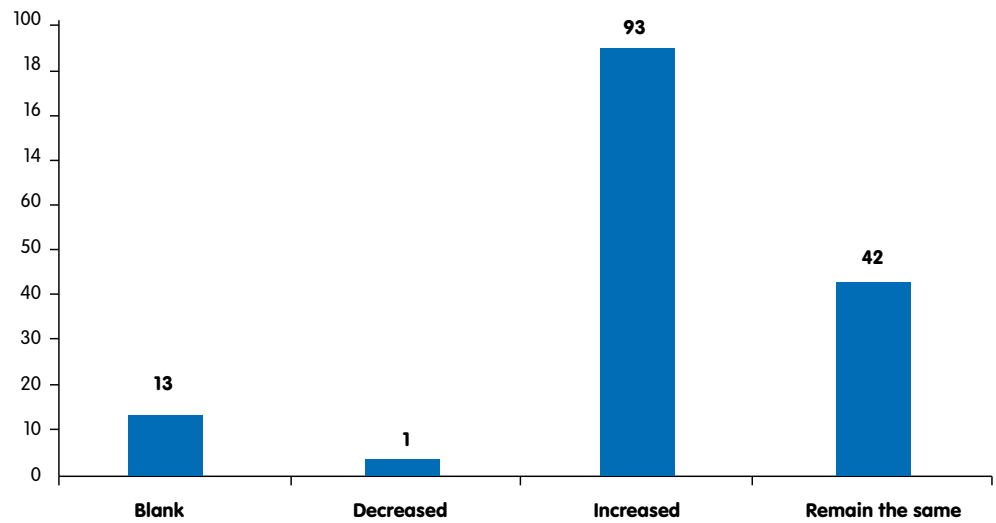
'A pop-up had been booked for 6-8 young people but when I arrived, I was asked if I would 'teach' them. The site is a car park behind a theatre. It was sunny so there was a table outside with some young children playing a card

game with an adult. Next to it was 'The Van'. Inside the space there was a kitchen area near the door and a tiny table between a bench each side. The door at the back is windowless so it was quite dark.

There were 6 young teenage boys, and 1 girl and their ages were 14 to 16. Most were speaking Czech and identified as Romany, one was very local. There was unreliable internet and phone reception, so I used my paper version of the Sexual Health Information Session.

They had poor concentration and there were many distractions, including keeping the much younger children out of the van! They asked numerous questions and although there was a fair bit of banter they never stopped 'coming back'. It was a very long session, and I covered everything as they were so interested. At the end they all signed up to Get It with help with words like 'heterosexual' and politely said 'thank you' and that they had really enjoyed the session. The organiser was delighted and said these sessions could reduce risk of unplanned pregnancy and STIs.'

After this session, my understanding of sex and the law has...



Feedback over a quarterly period illustrating impact of SHISH: 149 young people

Sexual health workshops and training

A further strand of sexual health services in Kent is sexual health education via workshops and training. METRO’s Sexual Health Information Sessions (SHISH) are designed for young people and are delivered predominantly in schools but also in youth hubs, colleges and targeted settings such as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) centres. Brief Intervention in Sexual Health (BISH) are also designed for professionals, including teachers and youth workers.

A range of public and voluntary sector agencies have participated including Kent Social Services, Kent University, teams in the county caring for looked after children, as well as other professionals. All of these groups can influence improved awareness of sexual health issues and access to services, such as METRO’s, within their teams and for the young people whom they support.

Topics in these sessions cover sex and the law, healthy relationships, STI knowledge and treatment, contraceptive options and navigating sexual relationships. We also promote the Get It scheme and advise on local clinical services.

175 

professionals engaged in SH training

 314

professionals engaged in SH training

Feedback from Brief Interventions in Sexual Health (BISH) sessions for professionals

*The in-depth nature of the information given. It was easy to understand, very informative.*

*Useful to have case studies and the trainers were clear, friendly and very approachable, never made anyone feel silly for asking questions. You could tell they were very knowledgeable.*

*The facilitator was able to give clear advice about legal parameters.*



# Appendix 1: Summary of METRO's services across all the boroughs and regions we work

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## Sexual and Reproductive Health

### Get It

Free condoms, STI tests and advice for young people aged 16 to 25 in Bexley, Hertfordshire, Kent, Medway, Merton, Wandsworth & Richmond  
<https://getit.org.uk/>

### Greenwich Sexual Health

METRO's sexual health website for sexual health advice and access to our services and additional clinical services offered in the borough. We offer chlamydia screening advice for 16 to 24s, sexual health clinics in Plumstead open to all and in Woolwich for MSM (Pitstop clinic), contraception advice and signposting, abortion advice, a free STI home testing kit service (18+), sexual health phoneline (adults and young people), and a free condom service for 16 to 21s.  
<https://www.greenwichsexualhealth.org/>

### Hertfordshire sexual health service

Our METRO Hertfordshire Sexual Health service works with NHS Sexual Health Hertfordshire on programmes for countywide sexual health and wellbeing, education and prevention, and outreach focusing on vulnerable communities. We deliver the National Chlamydia Screening Programme and our Get It service, providing condoms and dual testing kits (gonorrhoea and chlamydia). The service is available to anyone living, working or studying in Hertfordshire.

### Kent sexual health service

County-wide sexual health service for young people aged 16+, including the Get It free condom distribution and promotion programme and RSE for young people and professionals in schools, colleges

and universities; targeted outreach to marginalised populations, including in centres for migrants and refugees, and in collaboration with addiction services.

### Medway sexual health service

Sexual health service for young people, including the Get It condoms programme, and RSE for professionals and young people in a range of settings (as above in Kent).

### Pitstop PLUS

Online sexual health and HIV advice service for MSM, and gender diverse people.  
<https://pitstopplus.org/>

### South-west London sexual health

Sexual health service for young people in Merton, Richmond and Wandsworth, including the Get It condoms programme, and RSE for professionals and young people (also HIV).

### Support and Advice on Sexual Health (SASH)

Serving Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea, and Westminster, we are partners in this service led by Turning Point with London Friend and Naz, providing support to individuals and groups with one-to-one health and wellbeing coaching, counselling, peer groups and peer mentoring.  
<https://www.sashlondon.org/>

### Young Greenwich sexual health outreach

We offer schools and youth hub outreach, one-to-one mentoring, phone line information and advice, condom and c-card distribution, STI kits distribution, clinical and other referrals to support and safeguard young people. These services are for young people aged 13 to 24.  
<https://www.young-greenwich.org.uk/health>

# Appendix 1

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## Community

### **G-HIVE: Greenwich Hub for Influence, Voice, and Engagement**

A programme supporting the reduction of health inequalities by improving engagement across statutory and community partners in delivering and using health services, and their design, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund (2022-2025):

<https://www.greenwich-cvs.org.uk/services/voice-influence-representation-and-engagement/greenwich-voice-and-influence-programme/>

### **Hate crime service**

Delivering support and advocacy for Disabled & LGBTQ+ hate crime victims with associated community engagement around hate crime awareness and strategic engagement in RBG.

### **METRO GAD**

Welfare rights and disability hate crime support, for Deaf and Disabled people living in RBG.

### **METRO GAVS**

Support, advice, and representation for voluntary and community sector organisations in RBG through (not exclusively): Capacity building, fundraising support, governance, strategy, and voice.

<https://www.greenwich-cvs.org.uk/>

### **METRO Orchards**

Allotment project in New Eltham for food production and wildlife with volunteering opportunities.

### **METRO Walnut**

LGBTQ+ prostate cancer peer support group that meets in person in Lewisham and virtually. <https://metrocharity.org.uk/community/metro-walnut>

<https://www.lgbt-walnut.org.uk/>

### **Strategic equalities**

Support and advice for the voluntary sector in RBG on disability and LGBTQ+ equalities, and support to the voluntary sector to improve their work around equalities in the borough.

# Appendix 1

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## Mental Health and Wellbeing

### Counselling: Adults

We provide a specialist service for adults identifying as LGBTQ+ over a programme of 12 sessions. METRO is accredited by the BACP with an approved programme for trainee counsellors who are volunteers with METRO. In person and remote services are available.

#### LGBTQ+ adults aged 18+

- Free/donation-based service to residents of Hammersmith and Fulham, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea. This is part of METRO's role in the SASH partnership serving these local authorities (see SRH).

#### LGBTQ+ adults aged 19+

- Greenwich residents (sliding scale £10-£50)
- Lewisham residents (£5-£40 donation per session)

These services are funded by the above local authorities and related health authorities.

(See HIV section above for additional counselling for adults.)

### Counselling: Young people

We offer counselling to children and young people aged 8 to 18 pan-London who identify as LGBTQ+. Services are offered in New Cross, Lewisham, and online for those aged 14+. For those aged 13 and under, we offer short 'wellbeing check ins' as an age-appropriate alternative to counselling. Funded by Children in Need.

### LGBTQ+ Drop In: Lewisham

Our weekly MHWB drop-in group for LGBTQ+ adults provides a social and peer support space for those who have experienced mental health issues or diagnoses.

Funded by South East London Clinical Commissioning Group.

### Parenting support programme: Young Greenwich

METRO's parenting programme offers support and services for individuals, couples, and co-parents who are Greenwich residents. The service includes coaching and counselling, and groupwork in person and online for parents of young people aged 10 to 19, or up to 25 for those with SEND.

The parenting programme is delivered by METRO within the Young Greenwich programme led by Charlton Athletic Community Trust with partnership and funding from Oxleas NHS Trust and the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

<https://metrocharity.org.uk/young-greenwich-parenting-support>

<https://www.young-greenwich.org.uk/parentscarers>

# Appendix 1

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## **Proud and Well: Lewisham**

A wellbeing service for LGBTQ+ adults, offering individual support in person, by phone and online with access to group-based support and activities, and wider community connections & advice.

Funded by Lewisham Council's Main Grants Programme.

## **Well Proud: Lewisham**

A film project focused on identity and mental health through intersections of race and LGBTQ+ identities. Well Proud produced a docu-series in 2023, featuring video portraits of Lewisham residents who identify as both LGBTQ+ and Black or global majority.

The series is available on our You Tube channel:  
<https://www.youtube.com/c/METROCharity>



# Appendix 1

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## Youth

### Counselling for LGBTQ+ young people

See MHWB

### LGBTQ+ youth groups

Our specialist youth groups provide holistic support and a safe space for young people, focused in south London with a virtual service for trans and gender diverse young people:

**METRO Shine for LGBTQ+ young people aged 16 to 25 in Greenwich**

**METRO Spark for LGBTQ+ young people aged 13 to 25 in Southwark**

**METRO Transcend for young people aged 13-25 who identify as trans or gender diverse – online.**

**METRO Zest for LGBTQ+ young people aged under 16 in Bexley**

### Mulberry Hub

Young people's health centre for residents of Deptford or New Cross aged 13 to 25, offering GP and/or counselling support for a range of mental, physical, and sexual health issues as a primary care service.

Partnership led by NHS South London and Maudsley with METRO and North Lewisham Primary Care Network.

<https://www.northlewishampcn.nhs.uk/the-mulberry-hub/>

## Risk and Resilience

Our early intervention programme for at-risk young people aged 13 to 19 providing sex, relationships, and identity-related mentoring in Greenwich and Lewisham. This programme offers both one-to-one and group-based support to young people.

### Sexual health

See above section.

### SOGI in Schools

A free package of training and support available to all primary and secondary schools in RBG on equality, diversity and inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity.

This work supports the school to start or continue a whole-school approach in line with the Department of Education's statutory guidance on health, relationships and sex education, Ofsted requirements and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

#### The programme offers:

- A needs assessment to tailor content to the school's specific context
- All-staff training on inclusion of LGBTQ+ identities in schools
- Policy and procedure development with senior leadership team
- Knowledge reinforcement and training on specific areas such as tackling homo-, bi- and transphobic language and behaviour

# Appendix 1

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## HIV

### **Bridges Partnership: Lambeth, Lewisham, and Southwark**

A partnership led by METRO to support people living with HIV across Lambeth, Lewisham, and Southwark. Bridges includes our partners Positively UK, Africa Advocacy Foundation, Catholics for AIDS Prevention & Support. The Bridges Partnership delivers advice & advocacy, counselling, peer support, a living well with HIV and positive faiths programmes, and a parents' group (see Stay & Play).

<https://bridgeslondon.org.uk>

### **Counselling for PLWHIV: Kingston upon Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Richmond upon Thames, Southwark, Sutton, and Wandsworth**

Service for adults aged 18+ living with HIV included in our commissioned services. We provide a free service (or donations) of 12 counselling sessions for eligible people. Counselling is delivered by METRO's counsellors who are accredited by the BACP, and supervised volunteer (trainee) counsellors.

### **GMI Partnership: Pan-London services**

GMI delivers a range of community outreach and engagement activities as part of the London HIV Prevention Programme and other funded HIV prevention and awareness-raising initiatives with our partners Positive East and Spectra. The partnership collaborates with Freedoms and The Love Tank.

<https://gmipartnership.org.uk/>

### **Greenwich HIV prevention and support**

Advising and advocating for people living with HIV and providing support with physical and mental health, wellbeing support, and social welfare benefits.

### **Peer mentoring: Opt-out emergency department testing**

We deliver a peer mentoring and support programme in collaboration with seven clinical partners. This serves people living with HIV who are newly diagnosed and who have been identified through opt-out testing in accident and emergency departments in hospitals.

**Peer mentoring is currently available in the following hospitals that offer clinical HIV services, and is funded by these NHS Trusts**

- Croydon University NHS Trust
- Epsom & St Helier's NHS Trust
- Kingston NHS Trust
- Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Trust
- King's College NHS Trust
- Lewisham & Greenwich NHS Trust
- St George's NHS Trust

# Appendix 1

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## **South-west London HIV support: Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Richmond upon Thames, Sutton, and Wandsworth**

METRO delivers HIV support within our integrated sexual health services contract for this region (see SRH), including advice and advocacy, counselling, family support, peer mentoring and peer support. This service is complemented by HIV prevention provided by our partners, Spectra.

### **Peer support groups**

METRO offers a range of groups encompassing diverse, intersectional identities of people living with HIV.

#### **Positive People's Network**

Lambeth, Southwark, and Lewisham

Monthly support groups for gay and bisexual men, young people and families living with or affected by HIV, men and women from Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds, and different faith groups. These groups are delivered within our commissioned HIV services in LSL with partners, Africa Advocacy Foundation, Catholics for AIDS Prevention and Support, and Positively UK. <https://metrocharity.org.uk/hiv/positive-peoples-network>

#### **Positive Journeys: Peer support group for HIV+ migrants in south London boroughs**

<https://metrocharity.org.uk/hiv/positive-journeys>

#### **+Positive Pals: A peer-led social group for gay and bisexual men in London**

<https://metrocharity.org.uk/hiv/plus-pals-hiv-support-group>

## **Pitstop Clinic**

A nurse-led LGBTQ+ walk-in service offering STIs screening, free condoms and PrEP advice.

## **Pitstop PLUS**

Our HIV prevention work is linked to and complements our Greenwich Sexual Health services, Pitstop Clinic and PitstopPLUS.org services (see Sexual and Reproductive Health section above).

## **PrEP Para Todos: Lambeth & Southwark**

A targeted public health information programme for Latin American communities, delivered in Portuguese and Spanish with physical and digital public engagement.

This project was a time-limited campaign delivered during 2023, yet building on METRO's work in serving Polish and Latin American communities' in London living with or at risk of HIV.

<https://metrocharity.org.uk/hiv/prep-para-todos>

## **Stay & play**

A parent, baby/under 5s group for people who are living with or affected by HIV as part of our Bridges programme in LSL. This monthly group provides holistic health and wellbeing support.

# Appendix 1

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## Core services

### Communications, policy, and research

The creative digital content we produce and communicate across our social media channels supports and amplifies engagement with our services, service users, and relevant policy areas.

METRO’s in-house filmmaker creates content as an integral element of many of our programmes, working collaboratively with our staff, volunteers, and partners. In 2023 and 2024, we were nominated for a Smiley Charity Film Award. See METRO’s You Tube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/METROCharity>

### Social media accounts:

Facebook	METRO Charity
Instagram	@METROcharity
LinkedIn	METRO Charity
TikTok	@metrocharity
X	@METROCharity

### Research

METRO has delivered high profile research projects including National Youth Chances and international research for the SHIFT project on over 45s sexual health (see links below). We work with a range of academics to involve people who use our services in research and have a Research

Working Group within the charity. Current partnerships include King’s College London’s Department of Global Health and Social Medicine, as mentors to undergraduate and postgraduate students.

<https://shift-sexual-health.eu/>

<https://metrocharity.org.uk/research/national-youth-chances/>

### Human resources and volunteering programmes

#### Training

METRO delivers sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) awareness training, and gender identity-specific training as a paid service across the public, private, and voluntary sectors, both in person and virtually. ([development@metrocharity.org.uk](mailto:development@metrocharity.org.uk)).

#### Volunteering

We have over 80 volunteers supporting delivery across our service domains and as trustees. There is a METRO Associates volunteering programme for people who want to offer specific professional services.

For recruitment and volunteering, see <https://metrocharity.org.uk/jobs>

You can learn more about our trustees here: <https://metrocharity.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are>



## Appendix 2: A brief history of METRO

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Originating in the Royal Borough of Greenwich in the mid-1980s through political activism and community development, METRO initially focused on serving the needs of LGBTQ+ communities. The organisation expanded during the 1990s with the needs of the HIV epidemic. In the 2000s, we diversified and grew from two mergers with Black and people of colour-led organisations that specialised in HIV support. The first merger was with The Harbour Trust (2010) that worked mostly with African migrant communities in Greenwich and surrounding boroughs. The second was Lambeth-based Positive Parents and Children (2016), that worked with families living with, or affected by, HIV.

Through these mergers and our growing local services, we gradually expanded in a range of south and south-east London boroughs. In 2008, we joined the GMI Partnership for HIV prevention with two other charities, Positive East and Spectra, to create a pan-London offer as part of the London HIV Prevention Programme.

METRO also developed services outside of London, including Essex, Kent, Medway, Surrey and Sussex, and most recently with a new sexual health service in Hertfordshire.

More information about the charity's LGBTQ+ history is available on our website, produced through a programme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The charity's physical and digital archive is, preserved at the Bishopsgate Institute's library.

For further details on METRO's history, see: <https://metrocharity.org.uk/community/our-history>

Archive:

<https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/collections/metro-charity>

# References

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- <sup>1</sup> Service User Forum feedback, October 2022.
- <sup>2</sup> METRO Annual Accounts, year ending 2023.
- <sup>3</sup> See METRO's concluding press release on the SHIFT project for a summary with links to further information and resources: <https://metrocharity.org.uk/news/2023/apr/18/sexual-health-care-for-the-over-45s-must-change-says-local-charity> (published 18 April 2023).
- <sup>4</sup> See METRO Charity Race Audit (Jedi Consultancy 2023), page 7, downloadable from <https://metrocharity.org.uk/news/2023/mar/08/race-audit-report> (accessed 17 October 2023).
- <sup>5</sup> See <https://metrocharity.org.uk/news/2023/mar/08/race-audit-report> (accessed 12 February 2024).
- <sup>6</sup> METRO Service User Forum report, November 2022 – internal publication.
- <sup>7</sup> Monitoring data for LGBTQ+ adult counselling services 2022-2023.
- <sup>8</sup> Theresa Ley RIP d. January 2024.
- <sup>9</sup> See, for example, The Social Model of Disability webpage, Inclusion London: <https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/about-us/disability-in-london/social-model/the-social-model-of-disability-and-the-cultural-model-of-deafness/> (accessed 17 October 2023).
- <sup>10</sup> Disability Living Allowance is also a benefit for those born before 8 April 1948 which is being replaced by PIP for most adults; see Personal Independence Payment (PIP): <https://www.gov.uk/pip> What PIP is for - GOV.UK – accessed 3 July 2023.
- <sup>11</sup> See Inclusion London - Promoting equality for London's Deaf and Disabled people (accessed 3 July 2023).
- <sup>12</sup> See <https://debtfreeadvice.com/>
- <sup>13</sup> See SELCE; Home Page - SELCE (Registered Society number: 32417R) (accessed 3 July 2023).
- <sup>14</sup> Hate crime service user feedback, 2023.
- <sup>15</sup> Royal Borough of Greenwich (2023). Hate Crime (VCS Grant Funding 2024-27): Service specification. Page 1.
- <sup>16</sup> See <https://nationalhcaw.uk/> (accessed 12/10/2023).
- <sup>17</sup> See, for example: Attendance matters, Dr Asma Benhenda, 18 May 2023 (University College London); Rise in school absences since Covid driven by anxiety and lack of support. Adams R, Aguilar Garcia C. 23 April 2023. The Guardian (accessed 16 October 2023).
- <sup>18</sup> Recorded anonymously in two Mentimeter surveys – METRO reports to CACT as co-funders of LGBTQ+ youth groups in Bexley and Greenwich.
- <sup>19</sup> The My London Youth Social Action Partnership is led by Lewisham Youth Theatre with METRO Charity, Trinity Laban, Tramshed, and Charlton Athletic Community Trust. See also What is Youth Social Action: <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/volunteering/what-team-london/my-london-enabling-youth-social-action> (access 13 July 2023).

# References

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- <sup>20</sup> See <https://www.greenwichsexualhealth.org/>
- <sup>21</sup> Pitstop Clinic promo, METRO Charity You Tube channel <https://m.youtube.com/shorts/0CMui2Nid9Q> (accessed 3 July 2023).
- <sup>22</sup> <https://pitstopplus.org/>
- <sup>23</sup> <https://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-5408838836>.
- <sup>24</sup> Funded initially by a former agency, Bexley and Greenwich Health Promotion; see *Our History, 1983-2020*, pages 20-24 (METRO Charity, 2020): Booklet downloadable from <https://metrocharity.org.uk/community/our-history> (accessed 16 October 2023).
- <sup>25</sup> Nationally, this work extends within our work as a key agency in the GMI Partnership. GMI works with MSM populations across London with our partner agencies Positive East and Spectra, along with contracted Partners The Love Tank CIC and Freedoms in delivering projects within the London HIV Prevention Programme under the 'Do It London' brand.
- <sup>26</sup> See Baker D, Durr P, Scott P (2016) *National Youth Chances*. London: <https://metrocharity.org.uk/research/national-youth-chances/> (accessed 11 July 2023).
- <sup>27</sup> 'The NHS South East London Integrated Care Board is an NHS statutory organisation. We bring together partners involved in planning and providing NHS services, working together to meet the health needs of the population within south east London and deliver the Integrated Care Partnership's strategy. We are responsible for allocating NHS resource to deliver this plan.', quoted from <https://www.selondonics.org/icb/> (accessed 17 October 2023).
- <sup>28</sup> See BACP accreditation: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/membership/accreditation/> (accessed 17 October 2023).
- <sup>29</sup> See METRO Charity You Tube channel's playlists, *Mental Health Awareness Week 2019: METRO Charity's LGBT Mental Health Drop-In - YouTube* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XP495le2mFE>.
- <sup>30</sup> See Lewisham Council, Borough of Sanctuary Lewisham Council - Borough of Sanctuary (accessed 4 July 2023).
- <sup>31</sup> See Home Page - SELCE (Registered Society number: 32417R) (accessed 4 July 2023).
- <sup>32</sup> See <https://www.southlondonfilmfest.co.uk>; Well Proud playlist on METRO's You Tube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@METROCharity>
- <sup>33</sup> See METRO news release, <https://metrocharity.org.uk/news/2023/jun/01/well-proud-films> (1 June 2023).
- <sup>34</sup> *Five ways to wellbeing* | New Economics Foundation (accessed 4 July 2023) <https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing>.
- <sup>35</sup> Contracted by London Borough of Lambeth Public Health for Lambeth, Southwark, and Lewisham (LSL).
- <sup>36</sup> *Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham (2023) Providing for the needs of people with HIV in the London Boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham. Specification for the delivery of non-clinical HIV Liaison and Support Services. Page 4, section 2.1.*
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<sup>39</sup> <https://fasttrackcities.london/about-us/> (access 23/06/2023).

<sup>40</sup> Kent County Council; Medway Council.



# Acknowledgements

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## Lead author

Emma Jones – Head of Insight

## Editors

Mark Delacour – Director of External Affairs

Hannah Eiseman – Communications Manager

Joel Robinson – Director of Services

Adam Tipping – Communications & Events  
Coordinator (illustrations)

## Co-contributors, co-editors, and producers from METRO's staff team

Olawumi Ademokun – Young Greenwich Sexual  
Health Lead

Tracey Dwamenah – Head of Mental Health and  
Wellbeing, & Youth

Sue Elsegood, Co-Chair – METRO GAD

Vicky Faminu – Head of Sexual and Reproductive  
Health (maternity cover)

Jackie Foley – Clinical Services Manager (Sexual  
health domain)

Naomi Goldberg – Director of Strategy

Phinnah Ikeji – Young Greenwich Parenting  
Support Manager

Nicola Jones – Young Greenwich LGBTQ+ Youth  
and Schools' Coordinator

Andrew Kerr – Programme Manager, Greenwich  
Hub for Voice and Influence (G-HIVE)

Jakub Krzyzynski – HIV Peer Support Services  
Manager

Thomas Line – Film Maker (Well Proud producer)

Pete Martin – Sexual Health Data Officer

Anders Neilson – GMI Partnership and HIV  
Prevention Manager

Edith Ntabyera – London HIV Support Services  
Manager

Gifty Oduro-Anyan – Kent & Medway Sexual  
Health Manager

Pauline O'Hare – Voice and Infrastructure  
Manager (METRO GAVS / METRO GAD)

Mutmahim Roaf – Development Officer, METRO  
GAVS

Catriona Scott – (former) Mental Health and  
Wellbeing Coordinator

Jaime Sylla – Head of HIV Services

Will Spiller – (former) Youth Lead Worker

Fuchsia Watson – Head of Sexual and  
Reproductive Health

Zaziah Wood – Counselling Services Manager

## Design

Crooked Door

## Commissioners (geographies within this insight report and related services)

Bexley Council

Kent County Council

Lewisham Council

London Borough of Lambeth

Medway Council

NHS South East London Integrated Care Board

Royal Borough of Greenwich

South East London Clinical Commissioning Group

Southwark Council

# Acknowledgements

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## Funders (services in this report)

Children in Need  
City Bridge Trust  
Croydon University NHS Trust  
Epsom & St Helier's NHS Trust  
Greater London Authority  
Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Trust  
King's College NHS Trust  
Kingston NHS Trust  
Lewisham & Greenwich NHS Trust  
NHS South London and Maudsley  
Peabody  
The National Lottery Community Fund  
South East London Clinical Commissioning Group  
St George's NHS Trust

The Love Tank  
Tramshed  
Trinity Laban  
Turning Point  
Positively UK  
South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust  
University of Greenwich  
Volunteer Centre Greenwich

## Partners (geography in this report)

Africa Advocacy Foundation  
CAPS (Catholics for AIDS Prevention and Support)  
Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust  
Charlton Athletic Community Trust  
Freedoms  
Greenwich Leisure Limited  
Greenwich Inclusion Project (GrIP)  
Lewisham Youth Theatre  
North Lewisham Primary Care Network  
Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust  
Spectra





### **METRO Woolwich**

1st Floor Equitable House  
7 General Gordon Square  
London  
SE18 6FH

### **METRO Gillingham**

Long Catlis Road  
Parkwood, Rainham  
Gillingham, Kent  
ME8 9PR

### **METRO New Cross**

15 Amersham Vale  
London  
SE14 6LE

### **METRO Lambeth**

78 Fitzalan Street  
Lambeth  
London  
SE11 6QU

### **METRO GAD**

The Forum at Greenwich  
Trafalgar Road  
London  
SE10 9EQ



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