The Rainbow Project

IMPACT REPORT

2024-25

Working for a better Northern Ireland for LGBTQIA+ people and their families

ZERO
HIV
TRANSMISSIONS
BY 2030
ZERO
HIV
BY 2030
BAN
CONVERSION
PRACTICES
The Rainbow Project
RainbowProjectNI

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Rainbow Project's Impact Report for 2024/25.

Together, as Chair and CEO, we are proud to share a year in which The Rainbow Project continued to grow and strengthen its role as a vital organisation working toward a better Northern Ireland for LGBTQIA+ people and their families.

Despite an increasingly challenging environment – marked by emboldened anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric – we have continued to deliver high-quality, life-changing services, while remaining a strong, trusted, and visible voice for equality and human rights.

We are deeply grateful to our staff, volunteers, trustees, partners, and most importantly – the people who entrust us with their stories. We also extend our sincere thanks to the funders, donors, and partners whose financial support made this impact possible.

Even in challenging times, The Rainbow Project continues to strengthen its foundations, adapt to change, and prepare for the future – ensuring we remain here for the LGBTQIA+ community which places its trust in us every day.

Karen McShane
Chair of the Board

Scott Cuthbertson
Chief Executive Officer

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OUR SERVICES

Cancer Champions

Counselling

Hate Crime Advocacy

Peer Social Groups

Ethnic Minorities Advocacy

Sexual Health Service

Training

Rainbow Youth

AT-A-GLANCE

In 2024/25, our team of 30 staff working across Northern Ireland delivered more services than ever before, with activity taking place in all six counties. Over the year, we:

Delivered **1,326** co-cultural counselling sessions

Supported **100** young people through Rainbow Youth

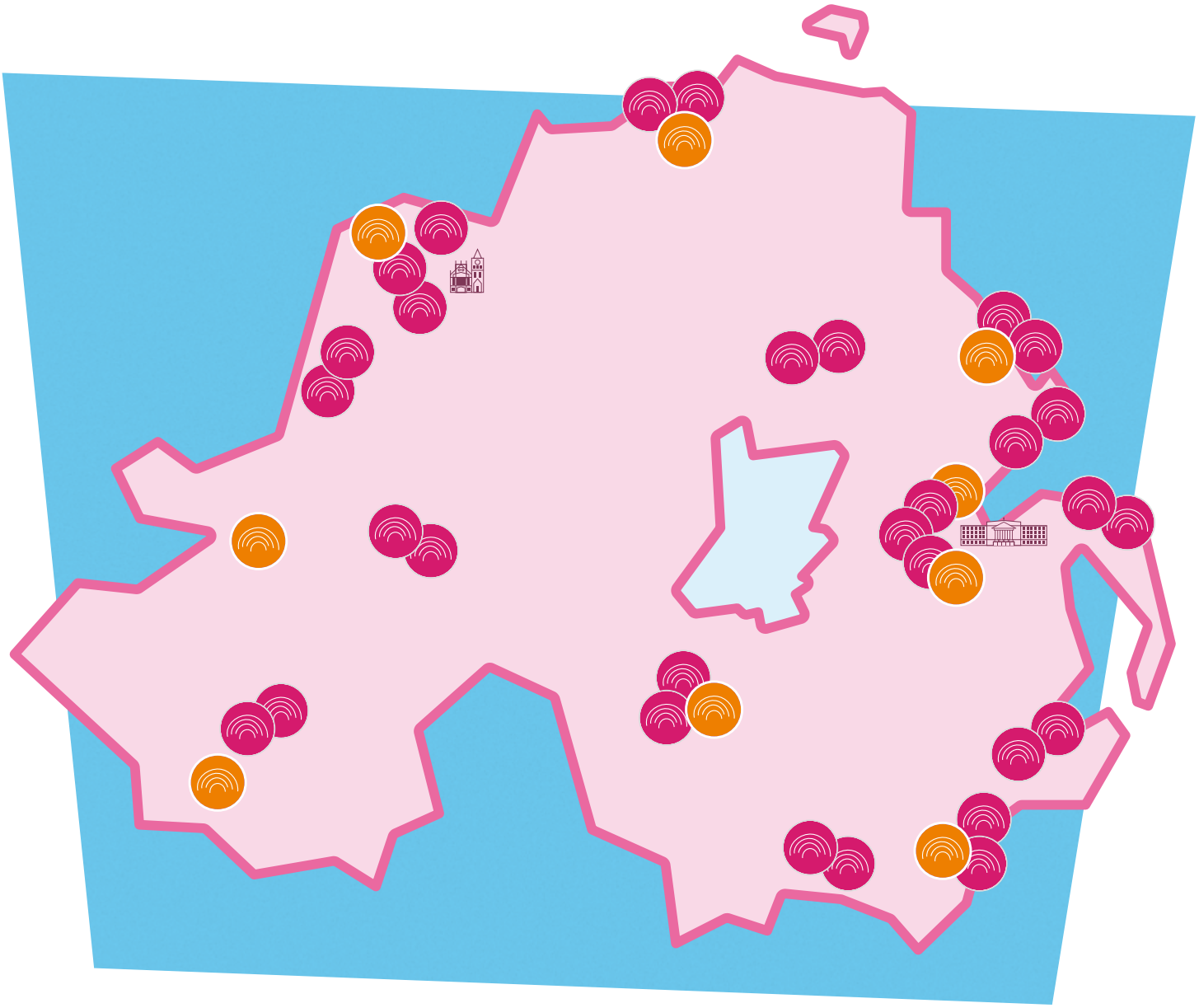
Provided **47** victims with Hate Crime Advocacy

Launched our pioneering Cancer Champions Programme in August, with the support of Macmillan Cancer Support

Supported over **70** people through our Ethnic Minorities Advocacy Service

Distributed **20,000** safer-sex packs and delivered rapid testing with follow-up support

Reached over **230** professionals through training, helping to shift practice across health, education, and community sectors



Events we organised

Events we attended

Changing lives.

Changing society.

All over Northern Ireland.

MENTAL HEALTH & COUNSELLING SERVICES

Thanks to The Rainbow Project's co-cultural counselling model, LGBTQIA+ people across different life stages moved from crisis toward stability, self-acceptance and resilience – often after avoiding mainstream mental health services altogether.

Through this work, **The Rainbow Project provides affirming, culturally competent counselling support to both young people (through Rainbow Youth) and adults aged 18+**, ensuring continuity of care from adolescence into adulthood. Over the past year, our team delivered **1,326 counselling sessions**, supporting individuals navigating identity-related distress, trauma, family rejection and mental health crisis.

Voices of Our Service Users

Service Overview

- **Age range supported:** LGBTQIA+ young people (via Rainbow Youth counselling pathways) and adults aged 18+
- **An average of 12 sessions per client:** demonstrating sustained demand for LGBTQIA+ specific mental health support
- **Client satisfaction:** 100% of respondents reported satisfaction with the service
- **Counselling team composition:**
  - 5 salaried counsellors (4 part-time, 1 full-time counselling manager)
  - 3 volunteer counsellors
  - 3 student counsellors
  - Embedded co-cultural counsellors with lived experience

These experiences reflect a core outcome of our counselling service: not only symptom relief, but restored identity, dignity and emotional safety.

The Rainbow Project

RAINBOW YOUTH

How The Rainbow Project builds safety, confidence and belonging for young LGBTQIA+ people.

LGBTQIA+ young people across Northern Ireland continue to experience high levels of isolation, bullying, mental distress and exclusion from mainstream youth provision. Many lack safe spaces where they can explore identity, build confidence and form supportive peer relationships.

In response, **The Rainbow Project delivers a youth-led, identity-affirming youth service, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, combining community spaces, peer leadership and access to specialist support.** By integrating structured youth work with trauma-informed practice and counselling pathways for under 18s, we have built an environment where LGBTQIA+ young people can thrive and feel safe to be themselves.

What we do (our model and reach)

Over the past year, The Rainbow Project's Rainbow Youth service:

- Supported **100 young people aged 12–25**
- Delivered **82 drop-in sessions** across Derry/L'Derry, Strabane and online
- Maintained **58 active members** engaged in social spaces and peer-led workshops

Young people are not passive recipients of support. Through Rainbow Youth, they actively **co-create programmes**, **contribute to staff recruitment**, **design creative sessions and shape service priorities**, ensuring the service reflects lived experience.

What changed because of this work?

Because of The Rainbow Project's Rainbow Youth programme:

Isolation was reduced and belonging increased.
Young people gained access to consistent, affirming spaces where they could connect with peers who share similar experiences, helping combat loneliness and social exclusion.

Confidence and self-acceptance grew.
Giving opportunities for young people to design and co-ordinate activities developed their leadership and communication skills, and helped them build pride in their identities – protective factors that strengthen long-term wellbeing.

Mental health support became more accessible.
Through integrated counselling pathways, young people were able to access specialist LGBTQIA+ affirming therapy earlier, reducing crisis escalation and improving emotional resilience.

Engagement with education and community life improved.
By providing stability, routine and trusted adult support, Rainbow Youth helped young people remain connected to school, relationships and wider community participation.

Young people's voices shaped organisational decision-making.
Youth involvement in programme design and recruitment ensures The Rainbow Project remains accountable and responsive to emerging needs.

Real difference – young people's voices

This quote reflects a core outcome of the service: not just attendance, but the creation of spaces where young people feel safe enough to be themselves.

Why The Rainbow Project's youth work is distinctive

Rainbow Youth combines youth-led governance, trauma-informed care, and integrated mental health pathways to create a programme shaped by lived experience at every level.

This approach allows The Rainbow Project to operate not only as a service provider, but as a trusted infrastructure for **LGBTQIA+ youth wellbeing**, shaping safer systems and setting standards for inclusive youth provision across Northern Ireland.

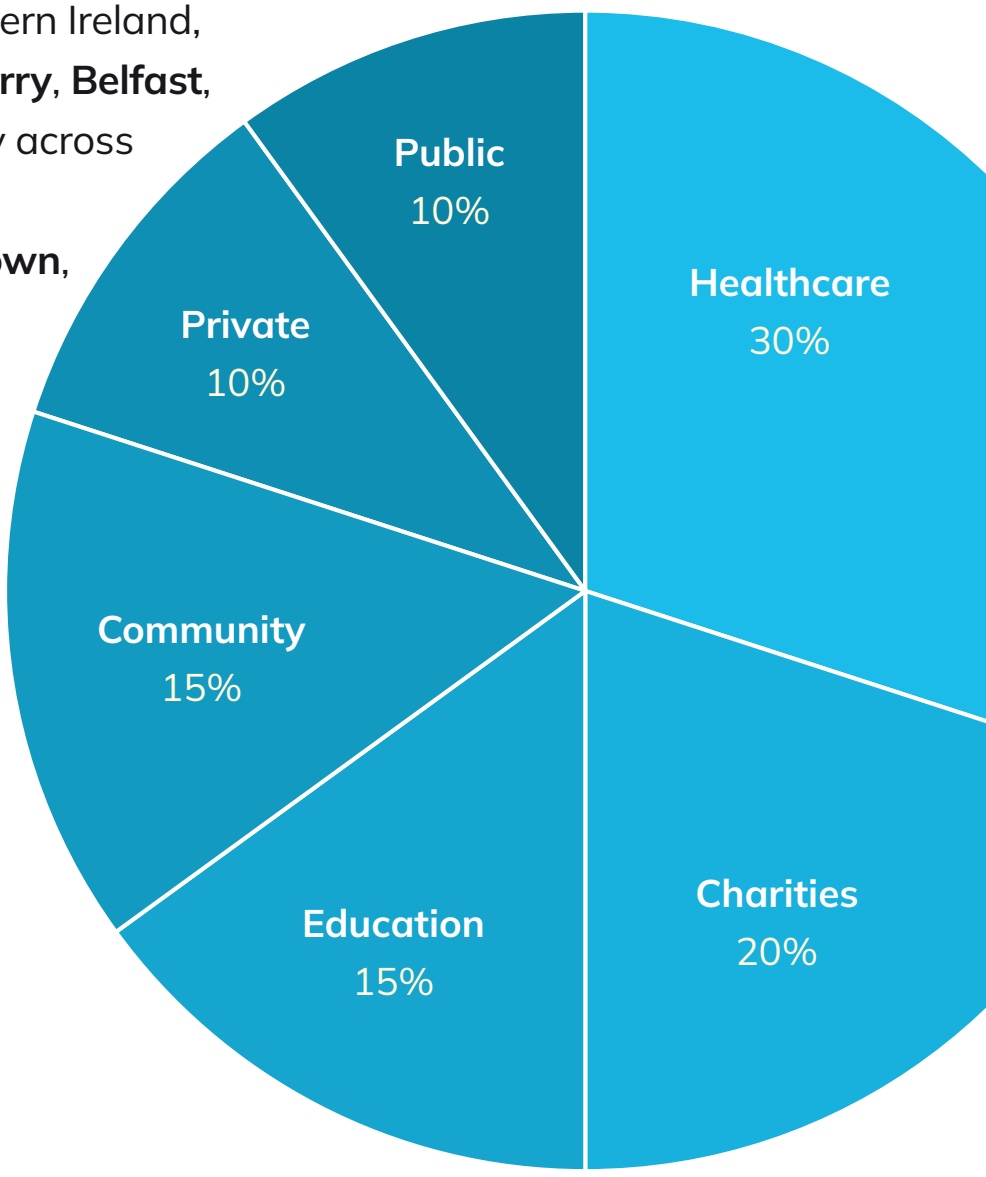
TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

From April 2024 to March 2025, our training programmes reached **230+ individuals**, equipping professionals and community members with the tools to support LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

Service Overview

- Delivered across Northern Ireland, including in **Derry/L'Derry**, **Belfast**, **Coleraine**, and virtually across **Bangor**, **Downpatrick**, **Lisburn**, **Ards**, **Cookstown**, **Dungannon** and **Magherafelt**.
- **Sector breakdown:**

Healthcare	30%
Charities	20%
Education	15%
Community	15%
Private	10%
Public	10%



Impact Metrics

99% would recommend our training

98% found it enjoyable

94% said it helped them be stronger allies of LGBTQIA+ people

Our training focuses on shifting perspectives and creating meaningful change, not just delivering information.

Across Northern Ireland, we've seen how meaningful, inclusive training can open minds and change behaviours. In workplaces, schools, healthcare settings, and community spaces, our sessions help people understand the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals and ethnic minority communities often for the first time.

In a society that's still grappling with inequality, fear, and division, this kind of learning matters. It helps people move beyond assumptions, ask better questions, and show up with empathy. It's not always easy, but it's always worth it.

We've watched participants leave our sessions more confident, more aware, and more committed to creating safer spaces. That ripple effect – from one person to their team, their organisation, their community – is how change takes root.

SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES

Protecting health. Reducing stigma. Saving lives.

For many LGBTQIA+ people, accessing sexual health care still comes with fear – fear of being judged, misunderstood, or treated without dignity. These barriers delay testing, increase health risks, and deepen mistrust of healthcare systems.

The Rainbow Project exists to remove those barriers. Through LGBTQIA+ specific, community-rooted sexual health services, we create environments where people can access care early, safely, and without shame.

What changed this year because The Rainbow Project was there?

Because of our sexual health services:

People accessed care earlier – and outcomes improved.

200 individuals received rapid testing and immediate follow-up support.

21 reactive HIV results and **32** reactive syphilis results were identified early and linked into care pathways, reducing onward transmission and improving long-term health outcomes.

Safer sex became easier and more accessible

20,000 condoms were distributed across Northern Ireland, supporting prevention and harm reduction at scale.

Trust in services increased

Over **400** confidential online sexual health enquiries were answered, giving people safe entry points into care – often for the first time.

How The Rainbow Project delivers this impact

Our sexual health model is built on three pillars:

1. Accessibility

We bring services into spaces people already trust – clinics, outreach settings and online platforms – reducing practical and emotional barriers to care.

2. Cultural competence

Our team understands LGBTQIA+ specific health needs, including PrEP, PEP, and inclusive sexual health education. This ensures people receive care that reflects real lives.

3. Human connection

We prioritise dignity, respect and non-judgmental engagement – turning clinical interactions into supportive, affirming experiences.

These aren't just positive experiences – they represent something deeper: people feeling safe enough to seek care.

Why this work matters beyond the clinic

LGBTQIA+ people remain disproportionately affected by stigma, misinformation and barriers to sexual healthcare. When these barriers persist, the consequences ripple outward – into poorer mental health, increased transmission rates, and long-term strain on public health systems.

By delivering LGBTQIA+ specific sexual health services, **The Rainbow Project strengthens the wider healthcare ecosystem**:

- Earlier intervention reduces future demand on acute services
- Better health literacy supports long-term wellbeing
- Trust-building improves engagement with mainstream healthcare providers

This is how frontline care becomes systems impact.

THE RAINBOW PROJECT DIFFERENCE

Our sexual health services don't sit in isolation. They are embedded within a wider organisational network – linked to counselling, youth work, training, community outreach and policy advocacy.

This integrated approach positions The Rainbow Project as a trusted voice in shaping safer, more inclusive healthcare practices across Northern Ireland.

CANCER CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

Launched in August 2024, the **Cancer Champions programme** has quickly become a vital part of our outreach and support services across Northern Ireland. Designed specifically for LGBTQIA+ individuals affected by cancer; the programme responds to a set of **unique needs** that are often overlooked in mainstream cancer care.

For many LGBTQIA+ people, navigating a cancer diagnosis can be complicated by experiences of stigma, isolation, and a lack of culturally competent care. These challenges can affect everything from how someone accesses treatment, to how they're supported emotionally, to how safe they feel disclosing their identity in healthcare settings.

This programme is not just about support, it's about visibility, advocacy, and ensuring that no one faces cancer alone or unseen. In a healthcare system that's still learning how to meet diverse needs, Cancer Champions is helping to close the gap and build a more inclusive future.

Key Achievements

536
event attendees across outreach, virtual, and internal events.

422
written communications and promotional packs distributed

100+
resources sent to hospitals, screening units, and GP practices.

8
service users receiving long-term support

3
LGBTQIA+ Death Cafés delivered in Belfast, Derry/L'Derry, and Enniskillen.

Professional Recognition

"It really was so fantastic and pitched just right, the presentations were so powerful and impactful. Well done on having some of the political representation there too especially the health minister – that's not always an easy feat. I really am very privileged to be working alongside you."

—Claire Murphy, Macmillan Partnership Quality Lead

Direct Impact

"Just glad you both were there for support as you were both brilliant when it came to getting the people that showed up, the precise help they needed."

—Jane, Patient Client Counsel (regarding a service user's first time disclosing a colon cancer diagnosis)

LGBTQIA+ DEATH CAFÉS & END-OF-LIFE INCLUSION

In partnership with the All-Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care (AIIHPC), we delivered three LGBTQIA+ Death Cafés, creating safe spaces for open dialogue around grief, loss, and end-of-life care.

Themes Identified

- Complicated and disenfranchised grief
- Cancer bereavement and medical trauma
- Discrimination in healthcare
- Lack of inclusive funeral planning and advance care options

Outcomes

- Recommendations submitted to the Public Health Agency for LGBTQIA+ inclusion in palliative care
- Formation of peer support networks
- Engagement of a Death Doula to deliver future workshops

Participant Reflections

"As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, the opportunity to speak of pre-bereavement and loss is not a common experience... I welcomed the chance to be heard and understood."

—Derry/L'Derry Death Café Participant

"There are very few spaces where such courageous conversations are being had so sensitively and honestly... I left with a sense of hope, gratitude and connection amidst my grief."

—Participant, Belfast Death Café & EOL Workshop

These sessions have not only supported individuals through grief but have also informed systemic change in how end-of-life care is delivered to LGBTQIA+ communities.

AIIHPC
All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care

The Rainbow Project
CANCER
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upported by Macmillan.
Rainbow Project's Cancer Cha s team
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ETHNIC MINORITIES ADVOCACY SERVICE

Building safety, stability and belonging at the intersection of race, migration and LGBTQIA+ identity

For LGBTQIA+ people from ethnic minority, refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds, exclusion often happens on multiple levels at once – through racism, homophobia, transphobia, language barriers, insecure housing and immigration systems that are difficult to navigate alone.

The Rainbow Project exists in this space of compounded inequality. Through our Ethnic Minorities Advocacy Service, we provide culturally competent, trauma-informed support that helps people stabilise their lives, rebuild trust and form community in Northern Ireland.

What changed because this project exists?

Because of The Rainbow Project's Ethnic Minorities Advocacy Service:

People moved from isolation to community.
71 service users from countries including Ukraine, Iran, Somalia, Pakistan and Ghana accessed safe, consistent spaces where they could connect with others who shared lived experience. For many, this was the first time they felt able to be fully themselves.

Immediate survival needs were stabilised.
Through coordinated referrals and direct advocacy, individuals accessed food support, healthcare registration, housing advice, sexual health services and counselling – creating safety at moments of crisis.

Legal and housing outcomes were strengthened.
Six formal advocacy letters to the Home Office and Mears supported vulnerable individuals navigating asylum claims and housing instability – interventions that often make the difference between security and displacement.

Confidence and wellbeing improved.
Creative workshops, mental health programmes and peer-led gatherings gave people tools to process trauma, express identity and rebuild hope.

What this looked like in practice

Rather than one-off interventions, The Rainbow Project created **ongoing, relationship-based support:**

- Bi-weekly online and monthly in-person GEG meetings providing continuity and peer connection
- Mental health, yoga, creative writing and photography workshops supporting recovery and self-expression
- Community activities – walks, picnics, concerts, city tours and bowling – helping people build familiarity and belonging in their new home
- Referrals into essential services including GPs, dentists, Rainbow Refugees, foodbanks, co-cultural counselling and sexual health clinics

These voices reflect the deepest outcome of the project: not just service access, but restored dignity and human connection.

Why this work is different – and why it matters

What makes this project distinctive is The Rainbow Project's intersectional delivery model. We do not separate sexuality, gender, race, migration status or trauma – we respond to the full reality of people's lives.

This approach allows us to:

- Address overlapping forms of discrimination in one coordinated service
- Build trust with communities who often feel excluded from mainstream provision
- Design support that reflects cultural context and lived experience
- Feed frontline insight into wider organisational advocacy and policy work

Impact beyond individuals

This project does more than support people in crisis – it strengthens community infrastructure.

By building peer networks, improving service access and creating culturally competent pathways into healthcare and support systems, **The Rainbow Project reduces long-term dependency on emergency services and helps people establish stable, independent lives**.

This is how community support becomes systems change.

THE RAINBOW PROJECT DIFFERENCE

At its core, the Ethnic Minorities Advocacy Service is about one thing: **belonging**. Not temporary support. Not box-ticking inclusion. But building spaces where people who have been displaced, marginalised and silenced can finally feel safe, seen and supported.

That is organisational impact.

HATE CRIME ADVOCACY SERVICE

Reducing harm, increasing reporting, and improving access to justice

Hate crime has a profound impact on LGBTQIA+ people – often leaving individuals feeling unsafe, isolated and unsupported by systems that should protect them. Many victims do not report incidents due to fear, previous negative experiences with authorities, or lack of confidence that action will be taken.

The Rainbow Project exists to close this gap. Through the Hate Crime Advocacy Service (HCAS), managed by Victim Support NI and delivered through partner organisations including ourselves, we provide trauma-informed, identity-affirming advocacy that helps people navigate reporting processes, access protection and regain a sense of safety.

What changed because this service exists?

Thanks to the HCAS delivered through The Rainbow Project:

Victims were supported to navigate justice and recovery.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, **47 individuals received specialist hate crime advocacy**, with a 100% engagement rate – demonstrating both the demand for the service and the trust placed in our team.

- 33 cases were supported from initial disclosure through to resolution
- 14 complex cases required longer-term advocacy, extending beyond the year or remaining active into 2025

This reflects the reality that hate crime recovery is not a one-off intervention – it requires sustained, trusted support.

Barriers to reporting were reduced.

By offering LGBTQIA+ specific advocacy, The Rainbow Project created safer pathways for individuals who may otherwise have remained silent – increasing access to protection and accountability.

Emotional safety and stability improved.

Advocacy support helped individuals feel believed, supported and less alone, reducing the psychological harm caused by hate incidents.

How The Rainbow Project strengthens systems – not just individuals

Alongside our one-to-one advocacy, The Rainbow Project works at a systems level to improve how institutions respond to LGBTQIA+ victims of hate crime.

The Hate Crime Advocacy Service (HCAS) combines direct support with strategic partnership-building, training and sector engagement to strengthen frontline responses across Northern Ireland.

Between 2024 and 2025, we:

- Built partnerships with PSNI Training School Garnerville, Victim Support and multi-agency safeguarding networks
- Delivered hate crime awareness sessions for young people and community spaces
- Participated in regional and national forums including the Stalking Consortium, PSNI Conference and NHCAW events

These activities are not outreach for visibility – they are strategic interventions that improve frontline response, increase professional competence and strengthen cross-sector collaboration.

Why the Hate Crime Advocacy Service is distinctive

Our approach is grounded in **trust, cultural competence and trauma-informed advocacy**. We understand the additional barriers faced by LGBTQIA+ victims – including fear of being outed, discrimination and previous institutional harm.

This allows The Rainbow Project to:

- Provide safer reporting pathways
- Support victims through complex legal and emotional processes
- Feed frontline insight directly into national hate crime policy reform

The service is managed through Victim Support NI and delivered through a consortium of partner organisations, including:

- The Rainbow Project
- Migrant Centre NI
- Disability Action

Organisational impact

The Hate Crime Advocacy Service positions The Rainbow Project as both:

- A **safety net for individuals in crisis**, and
- A **system actor working to improve how Northern Ireland responds to hate crime**

By combining direct advocacy with institutional engagement, we are not only responding to harm – we are helping to build a fairer, more accountable justice system for LGBTQIA+ communities.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES

Across Northern Ireland, **The Rainbow Project expanded access to LGBTQIA+ community spaces, peer support and trauma-informed group programmes**, addressing isolation in areas with limited specialist provision. Because of this work:

2 adult programmes supported 20 participants
creating space for healing, growth and peer connection.

3 women's group programmes engaged 15 participants
providing safe spaces for shared experience and empowerment.

1 intergenerational programme connected 15 participants
strengthening understanding across age groups and reducing social isolation.

36 BeU sessions and 44 social drop-ins across Belfast & Foyle
created consistent access points to community connection, creativity and wellbeing support.

10 Trans Swimming sessions a year
with an average of 14 people per session

650 individuals referred into our services across Northern Ireland
providing timely information, reassurance and referral pathways.

These programmes do more than reduce isolation – they **build confidence, strengthen informal support networks and create lasting community connection**.

By delivering this work across Northern Ireland, **The Rainbow Project reduced geographic barriers to support and ensured LGBTQIA+ people outside major urban centres were not left behind**.

BAN
CONVERSION PRACTICES
ZERO HIV
PRIORITISE
GENDER
AFFIRMING
CARE
BAN
CONVERSION PRACTICES
Barnardo's

POLICY, CAMPAIGNS & COMMUNICATIONS

At The Rainbow Project, we're relentlessly focused on our mission of changing lives and changing society for LGBTQIA+ people and their families. While our aforementioned services are doing the work to improve and change individual LGBTQIA+ people's lives, our policy, campaigns and communications work is all about changing hearts, minds, laws, and ultimately, society, tackling the root causes of discrimination and bias.

Every day, we lobby, campaign, and develop the evidence basis for challenging inequality. Throughout this work we seek to amplify the experiences of our community, create positive visibility and help build a Northern Ireland that works for everyone.

Over the past year, we've seen growing hostility toward LGBTQIA+ people, particularly trans and non-binary individuals. But we've also seen something stronger – our community's courage, solidarity, and determination to stand up against it.

Through our media and communications work, we've sought to provide a voice for LGBTQIA+ people and change the hearts and minds of people across Northern Ireland. Appearances in print, TV and radio has focused on changing the narrative on the rights and dignity of transgender people, their access to care, and their visibility within our society.

Whether through our media work, direct lobbying, or grassroots campaigning, we've made sure LGBTQIA+ voices have been heard where it matters most. This year, our work centred around five key priorities – shaped by what we hear directly from our service users and community:

These priorities guide everything we do – keeping us focused on creating lasting, meaningful change.

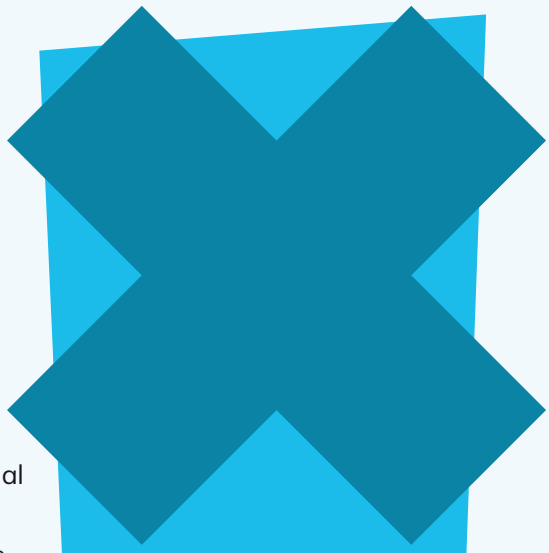
BANNING CONVERSION PRACTICES

This year we worked closely with our partners in the Banning Conversion Practices Coalition and across the LGBTQIA+ sector to deliver a comprehensive ban on conversion practices.

We worked with Professor Fidelma Ashe and Dr Danielle Mackle to publish "A Study of Conversion Practices in Northern Ireland," commissioned by The Rainbow Project, HereNI and Cara-Friend, which explored the ways in which conversion practices were carried out in Northern Ireland and the impact they had on victims and survivors.

We used this evidence base to continue our work across the piste, with the Department for Communities, the UK Government and individual MLAs and political parties to progress a ban through any possible avenue. We worked particularly with Eóin Tennyson MLA to support the development of his Private Members' Bill which seeks to implement a ban, the proposal for which went out for public consultation in early 2025.

Together with the Banning Conversion Practices Coalition, we produced a public response guide that helped generate over 1,000 submissions, with almost two-thirds showing support for banning these harmful practices. Behind the scenes, we've continued working alongside Eóin and others across the Assembly to keep the Bill moving forward –and we expect to see it brought before the Assembly in early 2026.



"Every LGBTQIA+ person deserves to live free from harm and shame – we'll keep fighting until conversion practices are consigned to history."

ENDING NEW HIV TRANSMISSIONS BY 2030

Marrying the knowledge and expertise developed within our Sexual Health service with our impactful policy and campaigns work, we continue to push the Executive and UK Government to end new HIV transmissions by 2030.

Through public campaigning, policy engagement, and awareness raising, we've been tackling stigma and pushing for better access to HIV testing, PrEP, and treatment – ensuring people get the care and respect they deserve.

Our work on World AIDS Day 2024 focused on an exhibition of AIDS memorial quilts made in Northern Ireland and put on display for the first time since 1996 – through this, we were able to share the story of one family who was reunited with the quilt they made for their mother for the first time in almost 3 decades.

Ending new HIV transmissions and reducing stigma aren't just public health goal; it's a promise to build a society where no one is defined or excluded by their HIV status.

"We can end HIV in Northern Ireland – but only if we do it together."

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Education should empower every young person – but too often, LGBTQIA+ pupils are left feeling unseen, unsafe, or unsupported.

Through written and verbal evidence to the Education Committee's RSE mini-inquiry, we made sure these realities couldn't be ignored. We shared the impact that a lack of visibility and representation for LGBTQIA+ pupils can have on those individuals and their educational outcomes.

We sought to directly platform the views and experiences of our Rainbow Youth members, which we had gathered via a focus group held ahead of the Committee's evidence session, ensuring that LGBTQIA+ young people's voices were heard directly by those in power.

The message from those young people was clear: education has failed LGBT pupils. Our work continues to focus on creating classrooms where every child feels safe to be themselves – because inclusive education changes lives.

Education has failed LGBT pupils, politicians told

Alexa Moore from the Rainbow Project addressed Stormont assembly members

Robbie Meredith

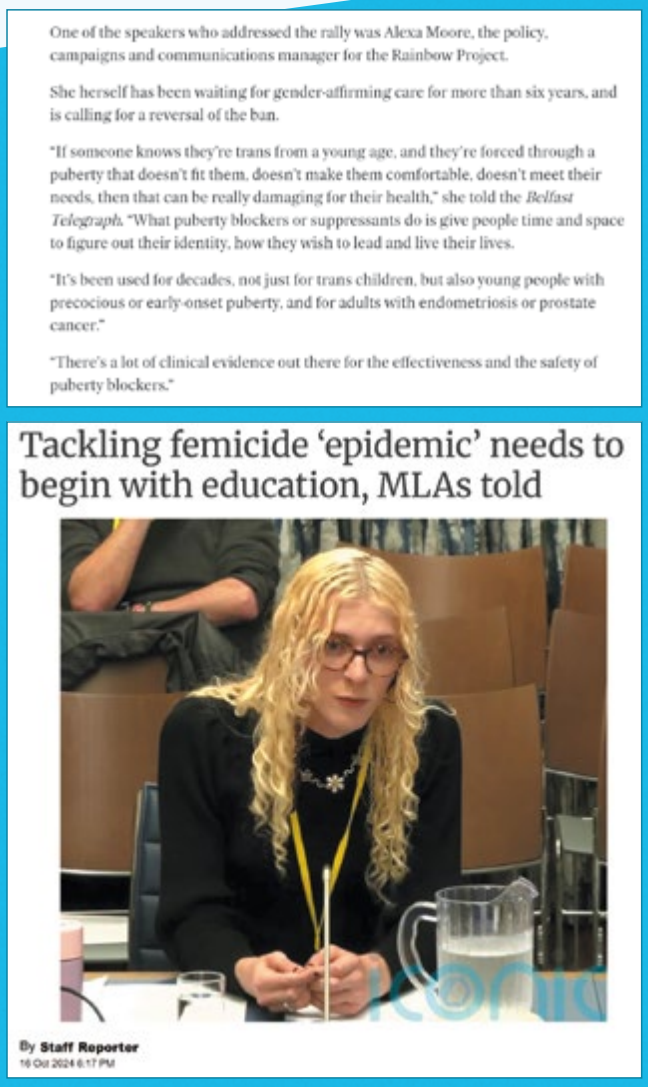
BBC News NI education and arts correspondent

"This is a ban specifically on the use of puberty blockers to treat gender dysphoria. These medications are used to treat a vast variety of other condition as well, including endometriosis. They're not being banned in those cases, they're just being banned specifically for use by trans young people."

They added: "The only way that people could access gender affirming care right now in Northern Ireland was by going privately to access that care, and we know countless families and young people who have gone privately because they've been abandoned by health care services in Northern Ireland and even that route is now being shut down."

They called for Stormont to reverse the decision and commission and reform gender affirming health care services.

"Trans people in Northern Ireland have been languishing on waiting lists for far too long, and we need to see urgent action taken to address what is, in fact, a crisis."



One of the speakers who addressed the rally was Alexa Moore, the policy, campaigns and communications manager for the Rainbow Project.

She herself has been waiting for gender-affirming care for more than six years, and is calling for a reversal of the ban.

"If someone knows they're trans from a young age, and they're forced through a puberty that doesn't fit them, doesn't make them comfortable, doesn't meet their needs, then that can be really damaging for their health," she told the *Belfast Telegraph*. "What puberty blockers or suppressants do is give people time and space to figure out their identity, how they wish to lead and live their lives.

"It's been used for decades, not just for trans children, but also young people with precocious or early-onset puberty, and for adults with endometriosis or prostate cancer."

"There's a lot of clinical evidence out there for the effectiveness and the safety of puberty blockers."

Tackling femicide 'epidemic' needs to begin with education, MLAs told

By **Staff Reporter**

16 Oct 2024 6:17 PM

Clockwise from top-left:

BBC tinyurl.com/5xvhujyv
Belfast Telegraph tinyurl.com/2w2bamad
Limerick Live tinyurl.com/3mk9ppae
ITV tinyurl.com/ydbkxd6u

ENDING ANTI-LGBT HATE CRIME

Alongside providing direct support to victims through our Hate Crime Advocacy Service, we've been campaigning for stronger, more inclusive hate crime laws. We've been pushing all Executive parties to fully implement the recommendations made by Judge Marrinan in his 2019 Hate Crime law review, keeping attention and focus on this vital issue.

We've worked with the Justice Minister and parties across the Assembly to build support for reform – pushing for a 'statutory aggravation' model and for trans identity to be recognised as a protected characteristic.

We're expecting this new legislation to reach the Assembly in 2026, which would mark one of the most significant advances in protection from violence and harassment for LGBTQIA+ people in Northern Ireland in over a decade.

"Hate crimes against LGBTQIA+ people remain among the most underreported in Northern Ireland – this work is vital to rebuilding trust and ensuring access to justice."

PRIORITISING GENDER AFFIRMING CARE

This year, access to gender-affirming healthcare became one of the most urgent issues our communities faced. When the UK-wide puberty blockers ban was extended to Northern Ireland, The Rainbow Project took immediate action – coordinating the sector's response and engaging directly with the Health Minister and Executive parties to attempt to stop or reverse this ban.

Although the decision was a setback, our advocacy didn't stop there. We've continued to press for properly funded, compassionate, and culturally competent gender identity services, as well as a reversal of the targeted ban on puberty blockers.

Members of our team also contributed to the Gender Identity Service Pathway Review Group, ensuring the voices of trans and non-binary people were heard throughout the process.

A proposal for a funded service was submitted to the Minister in early 2025 – a sign that progress is possible, even in the face of challenge, and a direct result of the tireless work of this organisation and countless other trans people and organisations across Northern Ireland.

"When doors close, we don't stop knocking – because trans and nonbinary people deserve healthcare that meets their needs."

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FUNDRAISING

Income generation at The Rainbow Project is built on community, collaboration, and collective action. Throughout 2024/25, individuals, workplaces, partners, and supporters came together to raise vital funds that directly supported LGBTQIA+ people across Northern Ireland.

From regular monthly donors and one-off community gifts to corporate partnerships and fundraising events, every contribution played a role in sustaining frontline services, expanding outreach, and strengthening organisational resilience.

This year also marked a deliberate investment in strengthening our fundraising and communications capacity – helping us diversify income streams, grow supporter engagement, and build a more sustainable future alongside grant funding.

Our income generation activity reflects more than financial support. It represents solidarity, allyship, and a shared commitment to creating safer spaces and stronger services for LGBTQIA+ communities.

Income Generation Breakdown (2024/25)

■ General Donations:	£11,400
■ Regular Donor Contributions:	£8,300
■ Equalitee Partnerships: *(including corporate-linked contributions)*	£23,335
■ Corporate Partnerships:	£33,500
■ Fundraising Events (Internal & External):	£21,387
Total Income Generated:	**£97,922**

Every pound raised helped fund counselling sessions, youth services, hate crime advocacy, community programmes, and training that continues to shift practice across Northern Ireland.

FINANCIAL REPORTING

April 2024 - March 2025

Every service delivered this year began with trust. Trust from funders, donors, partners, and communities who believe in a Northern Ireland where LGBTQIA+ people are safe, supported, and able to thrive. Our finances tell the story of how that trust was carefully stewarded and transformed into real, human impact.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, The Rainbow Project received a total income of **£892,472**. Most of this funding came through performance-related grants, alongside generous support from individual donors and community fundraising. In a year marked by rising need and increasing pressure across the sector, this income ensured we could remain present, responsive, and reliable for those who needed us most.

At a Glance – Income

- **Total income:** £892,472
- **Performance-related grants:** £794,550
- **Donations and fundraising:** £97,922

At a Glance – Expenditure

- **Total expenditure:** £896,973
- **Staffing and employment costs:** £529,647
- **Charitable and operational costs:** £367,326

Our remaining expenditure supported the spaces, systems, and structures that make this work possible – from safe premises and outreach delivery to governance, safeguarding, and organisational resilience.

How This Funding Became Impact

Because of this support:

- Our counselling team delivered **1,326 sessions**, offering affirmation, stability, and healing at moments when many felt they had nowhere else to turn.
- **Three regional offices** remained open as safe, welcoming spaces where people could access community, support, and connection.
- **47 victims of hate crime** received advocacy and guidance during some of the most frightening times of their lives.
- **100 young LGBTQIA+ people** found belonging and hope through youth spaces and programmes.
- Community groups such as **GEG** and **Cancer Champions** supported over **80 individuals** through shared learning and connection.

Most of our expenditure was an investment in people. By supporting a skilled, multidisciplinary staff team across counselling, youth work, sexual health, advocacy, training, communications, and administration, we ensured that services were not only available – but delivered with care, professionalism, and dignity.

At a Glance – Financial Position

- **Total funds at year end:** £390,966
- **Unrestricted reserves:** £260,950
- **Reserve cover:** Approximately **3.5 months** of operating expenditure.

At year end, The Rainbow Project remained financially stable, with reserves held in line with best practice. This stability allows us to plan with confidence, respond to emerging needs, and safeguard the continuity of services in an uncertain funding environment.

During the year, the Board made a deliberate decision to invest in strengthening fundraising and communications capacity — a forward-looking step to diversify income and build long-term sustainability.

The story our finances tell is simple but powerful: when our community invests in us, we return that investment directly into safer spaces, stronger services, and lives supported with dignity and respect.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we move into 2025/26, our focus remains the same: Changing Lives. Changing Society. Together.

We'll continue working hard both through our campaigns and our lifesaving services to create a Northern Ireland where every LGBTQIA+ person can live openly, safely, and with pride.

Working for a better Northern Ireland for LGBTQIA+ people and their families.

The Rainbow Project
The Rainbow Project

March 2026

Working for a better Northern Ireland for LGBTQIA+ people and their families.

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