

ACTIVE TOGETHER

Stride with Pride

Case Study

A collaborative pilot programme aimed to get members of the Leicester LGBT+ community active in the form of a walking group.

Stride with Pride Project – Case Study

Here we have spoken to, Kim Angell, Running and Walking Activator for Active Together, and the Leicester LGBT+ Funding and Development manager, Zoe Hill, to hear their thoughts and reflections on the programme with the aim to share learning and promote inclusive activity moving forwards.

Why Stride with Pride?

The LGBT+ centre wanted to introduce a programme which would get members more active out in the community, to help them to build some confidence around exercising in public. With June being Pride month, the centre also wanted to create a stand-alone event which would be different to those ran in previous years, whilst also adhering to Covid guidelines, so a walking group seemed a good fit.

What was the uptake like for the sessions?

Zoe: “The uptake for the sessions was really positive. This could have been down to timing, as lockdown was easing in June 2021 and walking was taken up by many. However, it could also have been down to a hunger for members at the centre to get involved with some physical activity due to this being the first time we have introduced exercise sessions.”

“We would suggest that about 75-80% of the participants were known to the centre and the other 20-25% were newly engaged individuals.”

The sessions were advertised on the centres website or members could invite friends along to the sessions. Overall, 13 participants got involved with 3 separate walking sessions during this pilot programme.



Why did you feel there was a need for a dedicated LGBT+ walking group?

Zoe: “There are intersections of the LGBT+ community who are generally less confident in public for fear of comment, judgement, or having to explain themselves so having an inclusive walking group would hopefully make them feel more at ease and much more likely to come along.”

Do you see the benefits of having a dedicated LGBT+ walking group?

Kim: “Before getting involved with these sessions I couldn’t understand why the group had to have segregated sessions from other community walking groups, however since undertaking the sessions I know understand that each individual involved needed an environment where they felt comfortable and able to build up confidence levels.”

“Plus, the sessions allowed those from the LGBT+ community to get involved with physical activity and without them we doubt many would be involved.”

How can we build better relationships and links between the LGBT+ community and the wider community?



Sustainability is key.

Zoe: "The centre is looking at getting Kim in again to train up about 5 or 6 team members to become walk leads so that we can start to run our own sessions at the centre and hopefully make activity part of the norm."

Kim: "The whole community needs to build confidence and help each other to break down stigma surrounding the LGBT+ community."

We need to improve our knowledge and awareness. Whether that be through training courses or hearing personal experiences from those within the LGBT+ community when it comes to physical activity and inclusivity and making suitable changes to wholly becoming inclusive environments.

This section provides an insight into the thoughts and feelings of Kim Angell (external walk lead) and how as a community we can learn from this in our own inclusivity development journey.

What were your pre-thoughts of this pilot programme?

I was very nervous coming into these sessions and worrying that I may say the wrong thing and potentially offend individuals, due to never really having interacted with this group of individuals before. The centre did provide 2-hours of training before the programme began to understand pronoun terminology, as well as to build general confidence to lead this group.

What are your thoughts post-programme?

It was an extremely eye-opening experience and in hindsight was definitely nowhere near as daunting as I initially thought. I'm a lot more confident and comfortable to work with this community group after getting involved with the programme. The experience also made me realise that perhaps I was naïve before becoming involved with this programme.

Do you have any pieces of advice for anyone looking to become more inclusive or work with the LGBT+ community?

Don't be afraid to ask and get things wrong! If you are empathetic and educated, then it is completely ok to get things wrong. They are just normal individuals who have the same set of goals as the rest of us – to get active in a safe, inclusive environment, so let's treat them the same way. It's all about breaking down the barriers. If more people are educated and understanding, then I don't see any reason why some of the individuals who got involved in these sessions couldn't go along to another walking group within the community.

I have found that walking is an easy way to get active and a great way to get conversations flowing. Participants were willing to chat with myself and share things with which made the sessions less intimidating for both parties and helped me to make more of a connection with each of them.

How can you use your skills learnt throughout this programme to upskill the wider workforce?

I will take what Zoe has taught me and start conversations with my other running and walking groups to start the process of breaking down barriers of culture and blame. A key take-away for me is linked with promotion. Think carefully about wording and awareness so we can all aim to be as inclusive as possible and attract every member in the community.

What are the next steps for the centre and community?

We are looking to set up monthly walks as well as getting members from the centre trained up to become walk leads.

Kim: "I want to look at getting my walk leads trained up, either by attending some sessions with the LGBT+ centre or through other means so they feel equipped to interact well with members of the centre."

Mental health was also a big topic of conversation during the sessions, so we may investigate doing some further training and equipping on this subject.

After the recent Leicester Pride weekend, we have gained some further insight to the thoughts of the LGBT+ community when it comes to physical activity.

What are the main barriers to you taking part in physical activity?

The main barrier that arose from conversations was social anxiety and the fear of not being accepted for who they are. Some discussed how they were even anxious to be at pride because their families and communities do not accept their sexuality.

How can events such as Pride be used to get the LGBT+ community involved in physical activity?

Firstly, the event was a great way to speak to members from the LGBT+ community and understand what their physical activity levels are like now. It was fairly apparent that of those the centre spoke to, very little if any do physical activity. It was also a prime opportunity for networking with organisation who offer inclusive activity catering for the LGBT+ community, such as the Leicester Wildcats and signpost individuals to join other sporting groups once they have built up confidence through the walking and running group.

