



Organisation Name	The Healthy Living Centre
Project Name	LGBT+ Friends and Family Hub
Funding Stream	Health & Wellbeing
Total Cost of project	£6,975
Amount of Match Funding	£2,600
Amount being applied for	£4,375
Amount suggested	£4,375

Project Summary

The [Healthy Living Centre](#) (HLC) in partnership with the Aylesbury Vale LGBT Social Group have the aim of establishing a LGBT+ families and friends hub based at The HLC, providing a safe environment for the LGBT+ community to meet on a regular basis. HLC had established a regular meeting on the first Tuesday of each month from Feb 2020, unfortunately shortly after the launch of this activity HLC was forced to close under the Covid-19 restrictions. HLC has now reopened and the group have held their first and second meeting since the Lockdown on 1st September and 6th October. HLC now wish to recommence this LGBT+ social group on a weekly basis for a pilot programme for 6 months and are seeking funding from the Aylesbury Community Board to achieve this.

Aim:

- To provide a specialist LGBT+ Café club - providing a safe space for the LGBT+ community of Aylesbury and the surrounding area to meet on a regular basis in a closed environment in the Café area (Closed group) on a weekly basis
- Provide a specialist [C-card](#) clinic for the LGBT+ community to be held at the same time as the Café activity, hosted by a C-card trained member of staff
- At the same time as the Café club, the HLC would host a range of talks, interactive sessions, healthy living seminars and creative activities to encourage social interaction and encourage befriending to reduce social isolation

How the need has been identified:

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the LGBT community. More than 220 pride celebrations around the world have been cancelled or postponed leaving members of the LGBT+ community isolated. LGBT Asians have faced increased discrimination in line with xenophobia and racism related to the pandemic. LGBT seniors are also more likely to encounter isolation and therefore other health issues. National health organizations have warned that some members of the LGBTQ community may be "particularly vulnerable" to the effects of the disease. Reasons for the increased risk include higher rates of cancer, HIV, and smoking, as well as health care discrimination. There are also concerns about reduced support for LGBTQ people, particularly those who are homeless, and unsafe family environments.

The HLC have held group discussions with partners and interested parties over the last 12 months, these discussions have unanimously given support for a LGBT+ Friends and Family hub to be held in Aylesbury at the HLC. We have identified the needs for a support group open to the Trans community as there is currently no support group for this community in Aylesbury. We are therefore keen to position our meeting as open to all of the LGBT+ community plus any friends or family members. We have recently held sessions on 1st Sept and 6th Oct adhering to the Covid-19 rule of 6 , and have asked attendees to complete a short survey of their needs. There is strong support to hold the LGBT+ Friends and Family hub on a weekly basis and the current participants have indicated the types of activities and interactive sessions that they would like to see in the future.

Representatives from the following groups have offered their support for session held at the Healthy Living Centre and support the LGBT+ community in Aylesbury and the surrounding area Aylesbury Vale Transgender and friend's community including Aylesbury Vale Transgender and friend's community, Aylesbury Vale LGBT social group, Terrance Higgins Trust, SWITCH, Oasis and Healthwatch Bucks.

Beneficiaries:

Going outside without fear is important for mental wellbeing in particular LGBT people of colour (PoC) are more likely to experience discrimination. While they're twice as likely to attend LGBT-specific venues or events as white LGBT people, they have now lost vital safe spaces. HLC will offer a safe space for all members of the LGBT+ community plus their friends and family to meet regularly in a safe environment, we will offer a closed door meeting where individuals can build new friendships and offer support to each other. Together with partner organisations HLC will offer activities and informative talks on the topics of interest raised in the survey. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender people may be more susceptible to mental health problems than heterosexual people due to a range of factors, including discrimination and inequalities. Evidence suggests people identifying as LGBT are at higher risk of experiencing poor mental health with members of the LGBT community being more likely to experience a range of mental health problems such as depression, suicidal thoughts, self-harm and alcohol and substance misuse. This higher prevalence of mental ill health among members of the LGBT community can be attributed to a range of factors such as discrimination, isolation and homophobia. The HLC want to support the LGBT+ community and their families though the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

How does the project address local priorities?

Health & Wellbeing (including Covid-19 social recovery) and Community Safety: The project offers a support service specifically to the LGBT+ community, offering a safe space to meet on a Tuesday evening which is accessible to those who are working during the day. HLC offer the opportunity to come along with friends or family or to simply come along to make new friends and build a local support network. HLC will be open to the whole LGBT+ community in the Aylesbury area. One of HLC's key partnerships in establishing this group is with the Aylesbury Vale LGBT Social Group, who have been seeking a partner and venue to enable the support described above. Using their network of partners HLC can specifically promote this new group to the LGBT+ community and offer a range of specific information sessions for this group. HLC believe it is also important to simply offer a place to meet and catch up, therefore specific talks and activity sessions may be offered in a separate room so that individuals can choose to attend the sessions of interest whilst still offering a relaxed meeting place to those who simply want to come for a coffee.

How does the project align with the values, objectives and corporate priorities of Buckinghamshire Council?

Supporting the Vulnerable:

In May 2020, the [LGBT Foundation](#) published findings from the largest and most substantive research into the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on LGBT communities in the United Kingdom to date. This research has uncovered some of the wide-ranging and profound effects the pandemic has had on the lives of LGBT people in areas such as mental health; isolation; substance misuse; eating disorders; living in unsafe environments; financial impact; homelessness; access to healthcare; and access to support. The data revealed: 42% would like to access support for their mental health at this time, 8% do not feel safe where they are currently staying, 18% are concerned that this situation is going to lead to substance or alcohol misuse or trigger a relapse, 64% said that they would rather receive support during this time from an LGBT specific organisation.

The HLC LGBT+ Friends and Family Hub offers some of our most vulnerable residents the opportunity to meet in a safe space together with friends and family creating a local community where new friendships can develop. In this safe environment we will offer support from local organisations to improve mental health by promoting specialist support services, healthy lifestyles and wellbeing activities thereby reducing social isolation and loneliness.

How does the project achieve value for money?

This project represents good value for the outcomes that can be achieved through providing a new service that engages a minority group and works collaboratively with a number of other local partners.

Cost for elements to be funded by the Community Board can be broken down as follows:

- Oasis Workshops (once per month @ £50 per session) = £300
- Receptionist to open up the HLC out of hours (3hrs per week @ £9/hr)= £675
- Café facility hire (2 hours per week @ £20/hr) =£1000
- Room hire for C card clinic (2 hrs per week @£10/hr)= £500
- HLC project management, organisation of activities and speakers, maintenance and administration overheads (10% of overall project costs)= £400
- Recreational activities, tuition fees for facilitators (2 sessions per month @ £50 per session)= £600
- Arts and craft materials= £500
- Professional fliers for wide distribution - design and print= £400

Match funding in kind compromise of:

- LGBT+ C- card clinic host (THT provide training for HLC staff to host these sessions), Staff costs to be covered by the HLC match funding= £700
- Management coordinator - CEO will supervise sessions on a voluntary basis- HLC match funding= £1100
- Regular Yoga / mindfulness and relaxation (2 sessions per month provided on a voluntary basis) estimated value £300
- Third meeting room to be provided by the HLC for separate sessions/workshops to be held= £500

HLC will be required to provide financial evidence to show that the funding has been as agreed.

Community Board Coordinator comments

This application has been fully assessed in line with the Community Board funding criteria and is recommended as a project which is suitable to receive funding from the Aylesbury Community Board. A representative from The Healthy Living Centre presented at overview of the project at the Aylesbury Community Board's Health & Wellbeing subgroup where it was agreed that the aims of the project did meet the priorities of the group which provides an additional indicative view that this project should be funded.

This report has been reviewed by Buckinghamshire Council's Unitary Members and the majority have voted in favour of allocating £4,375 of community board funding to towards this project.

The project has therefore been agreed, and the decision will be formally ratified at the Aylesbury Community Board meeting on 17/11/20.

Funding is conditional on HLC providing a Covid-19 risk assessment that details how the project will be delivered in line with national lockdown restrictions and any subsequent localised tiered restrictions that are put in place for Buckinghamshire. The start date of this project may need to be delayed but it is still currently viable to be delivered and completed before 31 March 2022.

The applicant will be required to agree to terms and conditions, which include a monitoring agreement, as discussed with the Community Board Coordinator before the fund will be formally awarded.