



# Transition Support Service (2012 – 2014) Impact Report



## Introduction

The trans population is a severely disadvantaged, yet largely invisible minority which receives almost no specific recognition or support. A recent Trans Mental Health Study (Scottish Transgender Alliance, 2012) – from which figures in this report are taken – showed that trans people often live in fear of discrimination and harassment on a daily basis, not only from the general population but also from within the LGBT community. This can result in individuals leading hidden, very isolated lives. Many have reported being the victims of hate crime, violence, bullying, and discrimination within the workplace, in healthcare settings and from other service providers. These factors have led the trans community to experience acute health inequalities, with rates of suicide, self-harm and mental ill health being significantly higher than in the general population.

## Delivery Model

The Transition Support Service (TSS) was a holistic programme of support aimed at addressing the support needs of transgender people in Scotland. The Project was originally launched as a three-year programme by the Equality Network and Scottish Transgender Alliance (STA) in 2009, with funding from the Big Lottery Fund. The Project was later subcontracted to LGBT Health and Wellbeing for its final two years.

LGBT Health is a community-based organisation that promotes the health, wellbeing and equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Scotland. Founded in 2003, we have become well-established in the field, and while many LGBT organisations have historically focussed predominantly on sexuality, we have consistently put the trans community at the centre of the work we do.

LGBT Health thus re-launched TSS in spring 2012, with a range of services which were delivered by two Development Workers, one full-time and one part-time. This Impact Report, produced by LGBT Health, looks at service delivery over the Project’s second phase from 2012 to 2014.

**“That TSS has been there to support people in this journey has been of immense value. Without it there would be a big gap in provision.”**

Alex Balsdon, Counsellor at Sandyford GIC

TSS set out to offer a specialist, holistic, responsive and affirming service to a geographically dispersed minority. The main aims of the Project were to increase the confidence, self-esteem and resilience of transgender people, and reduce their isolation by supporting and improving connections within the trans community. The original delivery model was centred on providing 10-week life skills courses. However, following the Project’s re-

## Contents

- Introduction** ..... 1
- Delivery Model ..... 1
- Community Reach ..... 2
- Ethos ..... 2
- Tackling Isolation** ..... 3
- T time ..... 3
- T time on the Road ..... 4
- T monthly ..... 4
- Community Groups ..... 5
- Community Group Leaders ..... 5
- Trans Masculine Gathering ..... 6
- ReconnectTions ..... 6
- Ceilidh ..... 7
- Developing Confidence and Resilience** ..... 7
- Individual Support ..... 7
- Peer Support ..... 8
- Workshops ..... 8
- Residentials ..... 9
- Case Studies** ..... 10
- Sally ..... 10
- Marjory ..... 11
- Angela ..... 12
- Next Steps** ..... 12
- Key Learning** ..... 13

**“This is a brilliant and unique service, I have not come across another similar service within Scotland or the UK.”**  
TSS Service User

launch this model was felt to lack the flexibility required to responsively address the needs of a range of trans people at different stages of transition. A new programme was therefore put together, consisting of shorter life skills workshops, residential events, individual support and community development, which was relevant to a much broader spectrum of individuals.

## Project Aims

Increased **confidence, self-esteem and resilience.**

Increased **social networks** that provide **support** and promote **wellbeing.**

Increased **knowledge and self-help** skills.

Increased awareness of and ability to effectively use **community-based and mainstream support services.**

Increased **support and confidence to plan for their future** and advocate for themselves.

Community group leaders report **increased sustainability** for their groups.

Increased **life skills, active citizenship,** report knowing more about, and feeling more part of, their **community.**

## Ethos

Transgender, or trans, is an umbrella term used to describe the range of ways in which a person's gender identity can differ from the assumptions and expectations of the society in which they live. There are many different versions of the transgender umbrella, and in order to remain inclusive of the diverse lived experiences of trans individuals the Project was clear in recognising that there is no definitive or exhaustive version of the term.

Core to the delivery of the Project was recognising that transitioning is an individual process and means something different to every person. As individuals explore and come to terms with the gender identity, they move at different speeds and have different priorities. We therefore had a policy of not seeking to define, or requiring individuals to define, what their trans identity is. We promoted an inclusive and welcoming space that allowed those who had concerns or questions about their gender identity the opportunity to explore it in a non-judgmental environment.

We also did not require service users to attend an appointment at a GIC, or have a diagnosis of any sort, because we recognised that no two trans people are the same. By being

## Community Reach

LGBT Health has a good reach into the community in Lothian and increasingly beyond. Through the delivery of a long-standing programme of trans-specific support in Lothian, including a regular transgender drop-in, the organisation had already built up a strong reputation in the trans community when we re-launched TSS.

The Project worked hard at ensuring it reached trans people right across Scotland and at different stages of transition. We worked closely with allied organisations such as LGBT Youth Scotland and the STA, as well as local trans community groups.

The Project's development was guided by an Advisory Group made up of community members, most of whom ran or were involved in local trans community groups. The involvement of the Advisory Group was crucial in ensuring the project had wide community buy-in and good links across Scotland. The local contacts of its members enabled key partnerships to be quickly established across Scotland.

Also key to ensuring good community reach was the Project's positive relationships with the four Gender Identity Clinics (GICs) across Scotland. The Project worked particularly closely with Sandyford, the Glasgow clinic, with the TSS Development Worker invited to co-host their 6-monthly information evenings. These evenings, held for people waiting to be seen for their first appointment, were crucial in enabling us to promote the Project to a key audience in a timely manner. The Aberdeen clinic helped us recruit most of the participants for the first residential event, which was particularly aimed at individuals living outside Scotland's central belt.

**88%**  
of trans people  
have experienced  
depression

**1 in 5**  
trans people have  
been homeless

**Over  
Half**  
of trans people  
have self-harmed

**62%**  
of trans people  
have had alcohol  
dependency or  
substance misuse  
issues

**1 in 3**  
trans people have  
attempted suicide

deliberately open and flexible we helped those who were struggling to make sense of their feelings, enabling participants to understand the range of possible transition pathways open to them.

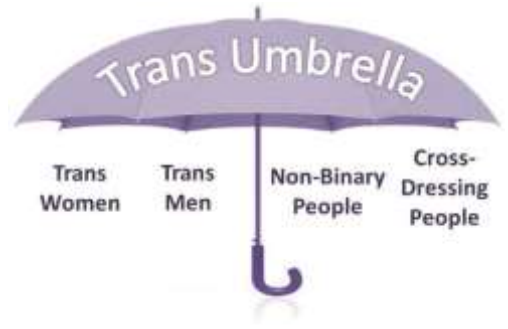
Another essential element of the Project was the understanding that some people have a non-binary or queer gender identity, which refers to people who identify their gender as not conforming to the traditional model of exclusively male or female. They may identify their non-binary gender as a combination of aspects of men and women, or alternatively as being neither male nor female.

We were equally clear that including a wide range of possible trans identities in no way diminishes the right or needs of the group of individuals who identify as transsexual – those who identify as the opposite gender to that which they were assigned as birth.

TSS thus set out to respond to the needs of a wide range of individuals in a non-prescriptive and affirmative way. We wanted to reach a broad range of individuals and allow people the space, time and support to decide which path of transition feels right for them.

**"I found friends, confidence, comfort, knowledge, better mental health and support."**  
TSS Service User

**"This sort of help is a lifeline, sometimes literally."**  
Young TSS Service User



**One variation of the transgender umbrella, used by the STA.**

## At a Glance

### Service Users

- 167 attending T time and T time on the Road
- 135 attending events and workshops
- 50 receiving one-to-one support
- Over 400 signed up to T monthly e-bulletin
- Ages ranged from 16 to 91

### Impact of TSS

- 52% felt less lonely
- 63% felt more connected to their community
- 50% were more aware of support services

# Tackling Isolation

One of the main functions of TSS was to address the issue of isolation within the trans community. This was achieved by creating positive social environments, supporting the development of community groups and making efforts to connect and include trans people across the country.

## T time

T time was a monthly social drop-in space, run both in Edinburgh and in Glasgow. Open to anyone who identified as trans, as well as their family and friends, its aim was to tackle the social isolation that affects so many in the trans community. It was designed as a safe and welcoming space, and it took the format of a relaxed, café-style forum with an optional activity each month. Changing space was provided for those who were not able to come to the venue dressed as they would wish. Activities were diverse, ranging from Zumba to creative writing, and the events were a good opportunity to discuss trans issues and relevant information.

T time Edinburgh had been meeting in for many years and was the first part of TSS to be delivered after the 2012 re-launch. TSS significantly developed T Time Edinburgh, increasing attendance and introducing themed activities



and workshops for the first time. T time Glasgow was set up with the support of The Terrence Higgins Trust, who provided space for the monthly event to take place. T time Glasgow proved hugely successful, regularly attracting trans people from across the Greater Glasgow area. The resulting increase in number meant that T time Glasgow had to relocate to a larger venue.

**81%**

of trans people avoid social situations due to fear

**191**

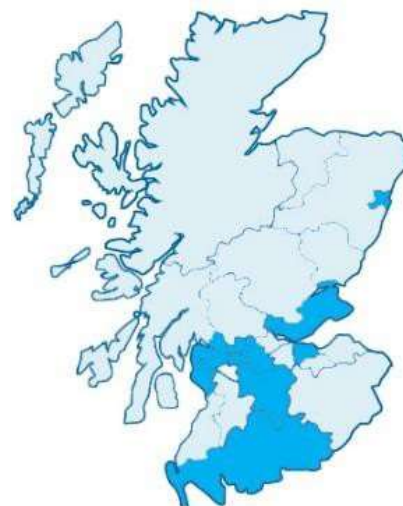
unique individuals benefited from T time

**4 out of 5**

attendees felt more confident and less isolated afterwards

**3 out of 5**

attendees gained knowledge which helped them come to terms with their gender identity



T time benefited individuals in at least **14** local authorities

## T time on the Road

The success of the T time format in Glasgow led us to decide that we could run one off T time events in different areas, and reach more of the trans community located throughout the country. Working in partnership with local community support groups in Dumfries, Aberdeen and Dundee, we created spaces for people to socialise and engage with TSS around Scotland. The STA provided money to support people who attended Glasgow T time to travel round the country, linking up trans people from different areas. This allowed socially isolated trans people to form new friendships and lasting networks of support.



**"[TSS gave me] the ability to meet in a 'safe space' and socialise with people who understand. A welcome place to discuss/vent trans issues that I don't otherwise have."**

Respondent to LGBT Health Service Evaluation 2013

**"This was a great opportunity to meet folks and to help me understand what my friend is going through."**

Attendee at T time on the Road Aberdeen

## T monthly

The T monthly e-bulletin was the first newsletter of its kind in Scotland, and became a vital tool for connecting the trans community and communicating information about trans services and opportunities. The majority of recipients were people who identified in some way under the transgender umbrella, and this enabled us to forge a direct link with individuals and support groups, creating a channel of communication that gave them both a voice and a system for connecting them with others and the support they needed. The e-bulletin was also used by allied professionals and the family and friends of trans people, allowing them to distribute information and gain an understanding of the community in a way they had never been able to before.

**"It's a reminder of a base, a trans community all over Scotland. It is informing and comforting."**  
T monthly Reader

**"Without [T monthly] I wonder how we would manage to disseminate information effectively."**  
Alex Balsdon, Sandyford GIC

The impact of T monthly was assessed through an online consultation in 2013, to which 56 people responded. The benefits highlighted by readers

**Over  
Half**  
of T monthly readers  
felt more connected  
to their community

included feeling more represented and connected to the trans community (60% felt less isolated), and becoming more knowledgeable about available support. This had an impressive knock-on effect – as well as 80% of respondents saying that they had become more aware of support and resources through T monthly, over two thirds also said that they were now more likely to signpost others to support.

By the end of the TSS Project the recipient list consisted of over 430 people across 10 regions in Scotland, with a diverse age range from under 25 to over 65. It was also forwarded to members of support groups, friends and family members.

## Community Groups

Across Scotland there exists a growing network of support groups providing safe and friendly spaces for trans people, their family and supporters to meet, socialise and participate in activities. These groups meet regularly in a variety of venues across the country, catering for a wide spectrum of identities and each functioning independently in its own unique way. We immediately understood the important role these groups could play in enriching and sustaining the work of TSS, and directed a significant amount of resources into facilitating the development of new and existing groups.

Initially our primary focus was to identify the key contacts for these groups and introduce them to TSS. This allowed us to share information about our services more effectively, reaching individuals who otherwise would have been difficult to access, particularly those in rural and isolated areas. As relationships became established, we were able to develop our engagement with group leaders and deliver services such as T time on the Road in partnership with them. Community groups provided us with welcoming bases for satellite events, giving trans people the opportunity to travel to different cities around Scotland, and connect with like-minded people. These events helped to reassure both group leaders and attendees that they were not alone and were part of a much wider trans community than they might previously have perceived.

We also aided the establishment of two new community groups in Edinburgh, providing them with meeting space, publicity and guidance over the first few months that they ran. Edinburgh Trans Women is a support group aimed at transsexual women, regardless of what stage in the transition process they are at. Me and T Monthly is a pioneering new group aimed exclusively at the family and friends of trans people. Both continue to this day, and the Me and T Monthly model has been replicated in other parts of the UK.

### Highlights of Running a Community Group

Supporting people through their journeys

Giving confidence

Giving mental health support

Supporting people to come out

Creating a safe, supportive space

Running trans activities

Attracting a diverse range of people

Creating community

Making up for negative experiences

Offering innovative support

*Feedback from Community Group Leaders*

## Community Group Leaders

The many unique challenges faced by community group leaders often made it difficult to sustain and nurture the relationships made through the service. Some leaders had work and family commitments that competed for their time and energy, while others were forced to travel considerable distances to run the groups. The demands on individuals could be exhausting and the barriers to sustaining groups were often disheartening. A key role for us was encouraging group leaders, and providing email and phone support when needed.

In February 2014 we organised an event to draw together the network of connections we had made with individuals, and give trans community group leaders the opportunity to meet each other face-to-face, share skills and experience and build useful connections of their own.

Seventeen individuals from ten groups across the country came together for the day of discussion and networking, each bringing with them a unique set of aspirations to share for the future of the trans community in Scotland. Time was spent discussing these, before moving on to an examination of the biggest challenges and concerns they faced as community group leaders. Although many of these were unique, others were common across a number of groups, and through the sharing of inspiring testimonies and practical advice from their peers, many participants were able to leave encouraged that they could overcome the obstacles their group faced. There was a consistently strong focus on the individual strengths of each group leader, and attendees reported afterwards that they left the event feeling focused, determined, inspired and rejuvenated.



**Community Group Leaders Day Activity**

**"We are a diverse group of people and it is great to come together to celebrate our common cause."**

**"Feeling inspired by all the work happening in Scotland. People care and are dedicated."**

Community Group Leaders

## Trans Masculine Gathering

Trans masculine is a term used to describe trans people who identify as more male than female, or 'masculine-of-centre' on the gender spectrum. Although trans men – who were assigned female at birth but identify completely as male – are a subset of the trans masculine population, others under the umbrella do not consider themselves wholly men but identify more closely with maleness than femaleness, and often desire a physical appearance which reflects this.

We found it very hard to get engagement from the broader trans masculine populations over the course of TSS, with only occasional enquiries and attendance at events. After a consultation with members of the trans masculine community, we set up a working groups to plan an event which would welcome a wide range of people with differing masculine gender identities, all of whom were at differing stages of transition.

The event was designed to be as open and supportive as possible for the widest range of people, including partners and families. A number of optional workshops were offered by a range of external organisations: TransBareAll, an organisation which helps trans people accept their bodies and live more fulfilling lives; Non-binary Scotland, a peer-support and social groups for those who identify outside the gender binary; and Me and T Monthly, a support group for the family and friends of trans people. Themes included notions of masculinity, gains and losses in transition, non-binary identities and how to support a loved one as they transition.

**"I was anxious I might be excluded, but I really appreciated the diversity and non-macho vibes. The organisers made me feel very welcome."**

Trans Masculine Gathering  
Attendee

**17**  
trans  
masculine  
people  
attended

**16**  
felt less  
isolated  
afterwards

**15**  
learned  
something  
from the  
event

## ReconnecTions

Although TSS was open to all trans people, regardless of the stage of transition they were in, the majority of attendees at other events were people in the process of undergoing or who had yet to undergo gender reassignment. We therefore ran this informal event in November 2013 to address the needs of those who had transitioned some time

**“Sharing experiences of post transition and having the opportunity to reflect on those experiences in a meaningful way.”**

**“Having a safe space to speak honestly with people who understand. As I am living ‘stealth’ as trans, it’s been good to have an outlet.”**

ReconnectiOns Attendees on Main Benefits

previously. As we did not seek to define what transition might mean, this event was able to welcome people with a range of gender identities, including those who may have opted for minimal or no medical treatment.

On the day, attendees came along to the Serenity Café in Edinburgh, and after an informal lunch took part in a range of facilitated table based discussions on issues such as mental wellbeing, sexual and physical health, and ongoing issues that trans people face in relationships. Many of the participants fed back that it had been hugely helpful for them to have a space where they could be ‘out’ about having transitioned, and meet up with people who understood the process and how it felt.

## Ceilidh

At the end of the TSS project we organised a traditional Scottish ceilidh for all the people who had participated in the service, along with their friends, family and members of the wider LGBT community. The aim was to bring together the trans community in a positive way, and to celebrate the ground breaking confidence building work which had taken over the past two years.

The event took place in the beautiful Augustine Reformed Church in Edinburgh, donated for our use by the Christian LGBT congregation ‘Our Tribe’, and the band made sure to respect all attendees’ gender identities when directing people to dance. It truly was a unique event – it is rare for such a significant portion of the trans community in Scotland to come together, and it was made particularly special by the specific focus on the successes of trans people, many of which were on display that night.



# Developing Confidence and Resilience

The incredibly high incidence of mental ill health within the trans community made it a priority for TSS to increase resilience amongst trans people. This was achieved through individual support and through a variety of workshops and residentials. These was designed to improve the life skills and confidence of trans people, empowering them to live their lives as active citizens.

## Individual Support

Every trans person who used TSS was able to meet with a development worker one-on-one to discuss their needs and identify the best strategies and sources of support open to them. Although many of these meetings took place in person, support was also available via email and telephone.

People who made contact were consistently dealt with in an encouraging, positive and inclusive manner. Having access to someone non-judgmental who could offer

**Half**  
of trans people are  
afraid to use gyms  
or public toilets

**1 in 4**  
trans people avoid  
clothes shopping

**50**

trans people accessed one-to-one support

practical support and advice, was a real confidence booster for many trans people and it allowed them to take meaningful steps forward in their lives.

Many recipients of individual support were signposted to other TSS and LGBT Health services, including T time and T monthly. Some required other specialised support, and were directed to a variety of different agencies. These included community-based mental health services, social work departments, homelessness organisations, women's aid charities, volunteer centres and student advisory hubs.

Having access to someone non-judgmental, who could offer practical support and advice, was a real confidence booster for those accessing TSS, and helped reduce the sense of isolation so prevalent in the trans community.

## Peer Support

Peer support was an experimental service offered by TSS. It took the model of short-term one-to-one support, with people in transition being matched up with a trained volunteer. Nine volunteers were recruited from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Perth, Dundee and Inverness, all representing different gender identities and members of the wider trans community (e.g. non trans partners of trans people, trans men/women, non-binary people).

Volunteers offered a range of person centred support both face-to-face and via email contact. These included helping people to attend social events, go to GIC appointments, or feel more confident shopping for clothing that reflected their preferred gender expression. Volunteers were also able to signpost people to other support services and community groups, and helped service users to understand more about the practicalities of transition.

**60%**

had more friendships and better social connections

**3 out of 5**

had greater confidence and self esteem

**100%**

of peer support users felt more connected to their community



## Workshops

We delivered a diverse series of workshops throughout TSS to develop key life skills amongst the trans population, and subsequently increase their confidence and resilience. There was strong focus throughout on physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Many of the workshops were the outcome of partnerships with other professionals, such as beauty therapists and the British Transport Police, and they took place in locations across the country. In particular, they were combined with T time in an effort to develop the event and offer trans people more opportunities to benefit from attending.

**“Gained a sense of self – I have always felt disconnected but now feel part of a community.”**

**“The workshops allowed me to gain new skills that are not normally available.”**

**“I feel more comfortable in my own heart and mind.”**

**“[I appreciated] the freedom to be loud and assertive.”**

Workshop Attendees

## Events & Workshops

Building confidence through voice and movement

Shopping nights to help people feel more confident shopping for clothing

Mental and emotional wellbeing

Personal safety

Feeling confident using public toilets

Coming out to family/at work

Personal presentation and appearance

Information about transition options

Information about legal rights



## Finding Your Voice Workshop

Facilitated by a drama coach and theatre producer, the aim of this event was to help trans people (all attendees identified as trans feminine) build confidence in self-expression using their voice. The intention was to help them to feel that there was no right way for them to talk as a transgender woman, and that the most important thing was that they felt fully themselves.

The immediate feedback from participants made it clear that they had found the workshop to have been a remarkable and unique experience in helping them to be both relaxed and assertive, and to connect to each other and to themselves. All of the participants agreed that the event had made them feel more confident about themselves, that it had made them less isolated, and that they had gained skills and knowledge that would help them with their transition.

## Residentials

In order to try to reach isolated trans people living outside the central area of Scotland, we ran two successful residential events at the Badaguish Outdoor Resource Centre in the beautiful Cairngorms. We rented two comfortable lodges within which we were able to create a safe, welcoming and inclusive space for transgender people from a range of identities and at different stages of their own journeys.

A lot of work was put into preparing participants for the intensive experience of being away from the security of their own space and sharing with a group of strangers. In many cases it was people's first time being amongst trans people and having the freedom to be themselves for an extended period. We communicated with people repeatedly over email and telephone from the moment they first enquired about attending up until the day before the residential, ensuring all their support needs were met and that there were no last minute drop-outs. Immense effort was put into creating welcoming social spaces at Bagaduish, and ensuring everyone was able to share their feelings and experiences in a positive way.

Supported by staff from the STA we ran a selection of optional workshops on themes common to transgender people as they consider what their next step might be. These covered identity and self-confidence, legal rights under the Equality Act 2010, options available under the NHS protocol, mental and emotional wellbeing and practical skills in use of make-up, presentation and appearance. With space to relax and be themselves away from the pressures of their own home community the workshops offered a chance to build new connections as well as build self-confidence. For many participants the workshops allowed them their first opportunity to express themselves as they wanted to appear.

**94%**  
of residential attendees had more information about options open to them

**82%**  
felt more confident and resilient

**88%**  
felt better about themselves

**82%**  
felt more confident expressing needs and feelings



**"The feeling I am better able to express needs and feelings and feeling better connected to other trans people."**

**"Being able to talk about my experiences, thoughts and feelings."**

**"More confidence, better understanding of hormones, services, rights, make up tips."**

**"While I am still not 100% sure of my identity, I am on my way to working it out. I am not as messed up as I thought and things will be alright."**

**"More knowledge to go about my transition and communicating more effectively."**

Residential Attendee Feedback



**"Even if I did nothing after this, my mind has advanced to a new understanding about myself."**

**"Confidence and acceptance of self."**

**"Beautiful quiet place where you can be yourself and be with your thoughts and process them."**

## Case Studies

Hundreds of people made use of TSS, and each of their stories is unique. These three individuals, however, exemplify some of the life-changing impact TSS had on people, and their stories outline how that was achieved for them.

### Sally

**"I feel I have been given a second chance and if I did not have the help I was given I would be in a very dark place or worse."**

Sally, 25, lives in a rural town with her *"traditional West of Scotland Catholic"* family. Sally is on the autistic spectrum and has found that her emotional wellbeing can be affected by external stressors. It has been Sally's experience that her gender identity has not been understood or respected; she reports that it has been dismissed as *"confusion"*, a *"cognitive inability"* and a sign that she is *"unwell"* or *"letting [her]self go"*. Unwanted attention has also affected her confidence in expressing her female gender.

Sally turned to TSS after seeking support locally and finding that this did not meet her needs. Over a twelve month period Sally received support via phone, email and face-to-face. Emotional support was provided when issues felt too difficult to cope with alone. TSS has also given her tailored information and guidance about her rights and the options available to her as a transgender person.

As a result of this Sally said: *“Now I am under the gender reassignment protocol and can finally be the beautiful butterfly I was made to be for a new spring day. I feel I have been given a second chance and if I did not have the help I was given I would be in a very dark place or worse.”*

Her family have gained a better understanding and become more proactively supportive. This has strengthened Sally’s sense of belonging. She said: *“I have felt more part of a family, ‘my people’ if you will. No longer strange, weird or wrong but proud to be myself.”*

Sally has also noticed many changes in her own confidence and wellbeing: *“As soon as I received your support ... I felt valued, empowered and like a human being again ... I felt safe enough to talk about my femininity ... I was growing my hair and nails and cross dressing and not accepting mistreatment. I was seen for who I am ... I have felt emboldened to call myself Sally again in public places despite the looks I get ... My doctors and others have noticed that the effects of my autism have ‘subsided’ ... The symptoms of my ailments disappear the more I come out. I’m no longer afraid.”*



**Identity Workshop**

***“I have felt more part of a family ... no longer strange, weird or wrong but proud to be myself ... I’m no longer afraid.”***

## **Marjorie**

Marjorie is a 52 year old transwoman who attended T time for the final four months of the project. Her initial experience was a nerve-wracking one, as it took a lot of courage before finally taking the first step. She told us that she *“bottled out when I got to the door.”*

The next month, though, she attended for a Transgender Day of Remembrance event. Afterwards she commented that she *“was very nervous as this was my first time ‘out’. Although I may have seemed quiet and reserved, believe me, inside I was absolutely overjoyed to at last be among non-judgemental and like-minded people and have not stopped smiling since I got home.”*

Before coming to T time, Marjorie had difficulty finding reliable information and support. *“Because of my age, I’m quite ‘pre-internet’ and when trying to search the internet putting in words like ‘crossdresser’ I just came across things that I couldn’t relate to.”*

Marjorie has found T time to be *“somewhere you can just come and talk to people, have a cup of tea, something that isn’t fetishistic.”* She keeps coming back because of *“the friendliness and the fact it’s met my expectations. Plus it’s given me access to the Transition Support Service and Edinburgh Trans Women. Like a hub, you laid roads leading to other places.”*

Marjorie experienced a real change in herself in just a few months, saying that she is *“100% more confident in myself! I certainly don’t feel as lonely as I did in Edinburgh and I’ve had a couple of friends I meet up with. That’s changed my life completely. I used to offer to do a Saturday shift, so I wouldn’t have to walk the streets alone, so in that way it’s been priceless to me.”*

The welcoming space that allows people to be themselves has impacted on Marjorie, who appreciated *“how normal it all is, and I’m happy to find that. It’s just people expressing their identities, which I find really reassuring.”*

She concludes: *“I’ve gone from making sure all the doors are locked and curtain closed, to full-time in just a few weeks. I don’t think it’s an exaggeration to say it’s coming to T time that did that.”*



**Transgender Day of Remembrance Event**

# Angela

Angela is a trans woman in her early fifties who first heard about the service through T time Glasgow. The Development Workers first made contact with Angela about a Glasgow course in autumn 2012.

She accessed the life skills courses in both Glasgow and Edinburgh and also the practical skills workshops in both cities. Angela now volunteers regularly with T time Glasgow and trained as a Peer Support Volunteer.

Angela says that *“participating in the TSS activities has helped my self-confidence immensely, and it has given me extra skills and knowledge which are practical and difficult to pick up if you are transitioning on your own.*

**“TSS has helped me with my self-confidence immensely, given me extra skills which are practical and difficult to pick up if you are on your own.”**

*Had I not been involved with these activities I don’t think I would have had the level of confidence to start living full time this year so it has helped me tremendously.”*

When we asked her about her overall comments about TSS she said: *“This is a brilliant and unique service, I have not come across another similar service within Scotland or the UK”.*

Angela said that she particularly appreciated the *“personal touch”* of TSS, that it is *“tailored to individuals,”* the welcoming atmosphere of T Time and the opportunity for social contact that it provides.

## Next Steps

Although TSS came to an end in June 2014, LGBT Health remains strongly committed to delivering trans-specific services. We were therefore delighted to secure further funding from the Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation to enable service delivery to continue in the Lothians.

The two-year Lothian Transgender Support Programme will enable us to continue to provide a robust programme of support, including:

- Information & One-to-One Support: one-off or longer term tailored response to individuals seeking information, support, guidance and signposting in relation to gender identity issues.
- Appointments: initial meetings to discuss the support needs of individuals and ensure they are linked in to the most relevant sources of support and information, including our own counselling and mental health support, as well as services from the NHS and other providers.
- Managing Transition Courses: yearly course for those at the early stage of transition to support them to make informed choices and better manage their transition.
- Confidence Building Workshops: quarterly workshops focused on building confidence and resilience, including use of voice, personal safety, body language and movement.
- E-bulletin: continuation of T monthly to share information, promote the Programme and events run by partners (e.g. NHS Lothian, Scottish Transgender Alliance and LGBT Youth).

A monthly T time social gathering will also continue to be delivered in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

It is our intention to continue to seek funding to ensure this vital support can also be provided in other parts of Scotland, as well as to work with partners to support their work.

For more information about the work of the Lothian Transgender Support Programme please contact Jules Stapleton Barnes ([jules@lgbthealth.org.uk](mailto:jules@lgbthealth.org.uk)) or George Burrows ([george@lgbthealth.org.uk](mailto:george@lgbthealth.org.uk)). For information on T time Glasgow please contact Lynda Peachey ([lynda@lgbthealth.org.uk](mailto:lynda@lgbthealth.org.uk)).

# Key Learning

Given the groundbreaking nature of the Transition Support Service, we have been keen to capture the learning gained over the two years we have delivered this service.

**Transition is not a linear process with a fixed start and end point.**

The project has brought us into contact with large numbers of people who do not fit into a linear process of transition. We believe that gender clinics and other services for trans people need to use a flexible definition of transition and trans identities. This would enable them to benefit a broader spectrum of people and would prevent individuals from undergoing treatments that are not right for them.

**Good links with Gender Identity Clinics is crucial in reaching trans people.**

Our work with Gender Identity Clinics across Scotland meant we were able to link trans people into support in a timely manner. This meant the project was able to provide tailored information, guidance, support and contact with peers to those at the early stages of questioning their gender identity or transitioning.

**There is a requirement for post-transition support.**

Currently, there is an absence of structured support for those who have already undergone transition. Volunteer-led community groups have worked hard to provide support post-transition, but this puts a great deal of pressure on community group leaders. It is important that structures are put in place to provide ongoing social contact and support for those who are post-transition.

**There are key generational differences in the needs of trans people.**

We have found that younger people (under 25) are increasingly presenting with non-binary identities, and are looking for help and support to live in a different way from the established binary model of transition. If services use a binary model of gender identity that sees transition as a linear process, they are not able to meet the needs of the increasing number of non-binary trans people.

**The trans community is geographically dispersed.**

The project made contact with trans people living in rural or isolated communities. These individuals often experience acute social isolation and lack of peer support and were forced to travel considerable distances to find safe, supportive spaces. Local community groups play a vital role in providing peer support.

**Trans community groups play a key role in supporting individuals.**

Trans community groups are able to provide a more informal source of peer support information, affirmation and validation. However these volunteer-run groups are precarious as they very often rely on the energy and commitment of just one or two individuals. More needs to be done to support the group leaders in providing this vital local support.

**Support of the trans community needs to include friends and family.**

Supportive relationships with partners, families and friends are very important for trans people. However, non-trans people often have difficulty accepting or coming to terms with the transition, or simply do not understand it. For this reason sources of support and information, such as community groups to help family members and partners, are very much needed.

LGBT Health and Wellbeing was set up in 2003 to promote the health, wellbeing and equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Scotland. It provides support, services and information to improve health and wellbeing, reduce social isolation and stimulate community development and volunteering.

The organisation's key objectives are to:

- provide a programme of activities which tackle the life circumstances that contribute to the ill-health of LGBT people
- reduce levels of isolation and social exclusion experienced by LGBT people
- strengthen the capacity of the LGBT community to promote the health of individuals
- support individuals to adopt and sustain healthy lifestyles
- ensure that LGBT people have equity of access to mainstream health services and information which are responsive to their needs.

Now in its eleventh year, the organisation has continued to consolidate, as well as deliver a number of new and groundbreaking initiatives, including the launch of our second national service, the LGBT Helpline Scotland.

### **LGBT Health and Wellbeing**

9 Howe Street  
Edinburgh, EH3 6TE  
T: 0131 523 1100  
E: [admin@lgbthealth.org.uk](mailto:admin@lgbthealth.org.uk)  
W: [www.lgbthealth.org.uk](http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk)

### **LGBT Helpline Scotland** (Tuesdays & Wednesdays 12-9pm)

T: 0300 123 2523

The Transition Support Service was delivered by Development Workers Rose Marshall (full-time) and Jules Stapleton Barnes (part-time).

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