

Swindon and Wiltshire Pride Festival 2019 - June 2021



Organisation name: Swindon and Wiltshire Pride Committee

Project name: Swindon Pride 2019

Location: Swindon, South West England

Grant amount: £10,000

Award date and duration: January 2019, 1 year

Project context: The Swindon and Wiltshire Pride Committee organise a yearly pride celebration in Swindon. The £10,000 grant was used to organise the 2019 event, which took place on the 10th August 2019.

Project aims: The project aims to bring people together and promote diversity and equality. The committee hoped the event would help encourage more positive perceptions of the LGBTQ+ community, and increase the LGBTQ+ communities visibility in the local area.

Project aims

The aim of the Pride event was to bring local people together (from both within and outside of the LGBTQ+ community) to promote, raise the profile of and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community.

About the grant

The Swindon and Wiltshire Pride committee organise a yearly pride celebration in Swindon's Town Gardens. The £10,000 grant from The National Lottery Community Fund was used to help organise the 2019 event, which took place on Saturday 10th August 2019. Funding was received from three other sources (including Thames Water and Nationwide). Overall, the grant from The Fund made up two-thirds of the event's funding which came from grant income (the grant from the Fund covered around one-quarter of the overall costs of the event).

The grant from The Fund was used for the **upfront costs** needed early in January 2019 to hire the core services required to put on the event. This included the cost of **hiring a first aid / medical services provider, security, and Liability Insurance**. The grant from The Fund guaranteed the event could take place, as in previous years without similar levels of grant funding, the event was not able to go ahead.

Project set up and delivery

The 2019 Pride celebration included a **parade** through Swindon, and a **festival site with stages and stalls**, organised into 'zones'. The activities available for people to visit included a DJ zone, a shopping zone, a community zone, a public sector zone, a family zone, and an arts zone. There was a newly added craft zone for 2019 too, which included 20 local craft stalls. There were two stages hosting acts throughout the day, including N-Trance, an electronic music duo, and La Voix, a popular drag queen, alongside multiple other music and dance performances.

The **general public were invited**, with a focus on the LGBTQ+ community around Swindon and the wider county of Wiltshire. The event was free to attend. No Added Sugar, an arts organisation in Wiltshire, partnered with the Pride committee to go into local schools to encourage children and their families to come along to the event, without mentioning Pride or the purpose of Pride. They also used social media, local newspapers and banners in the local area to promote the event.

The volunteers from the committee, as well as from the Thames Water and Nationwide funders, hosted stands on the day. Volunteers from Out of the Can, a

“All the committee I've spoken with for different things are always really accommodating, informative ... good working relationship ... hope it continues” **Chris, volunteer**

local youth club for LGBTQ+ young people, also provided volunteers, and they assisted with the No Added Sugar arts activities on the day.

One of the volunteers, Chris, who worked for one of the partners who co-funded the event and who volunteered on the day, was very impressed with how the committee organised the event.

Project impact

Key highlights

Numbers supported

- The 2019 Pride committee who organised the 2019 pride event was made up of 16 members.
- They were supported by volunteers from partner organisation such as Thames Water and Nationwide.
- The day attracted around 10,000 visitors.

Key impacts

- Increased visibility for the local LGBTQ+ community
- People had more social contact
- Improved mental wellbeing

Website

<https://www.swindonwiltshirepride.co.uk/>

Increased visibility for the LGBTQ+ community in the local community

All those interviewed as part of the case study were pleased with how the event went. A key aim was for the day was to **bring people together and promote diversity and equality**, and multiple volunteers pointed out how successful the day was in terms of the diversity of the attendees. It was their largest attendance to date, with around 10,000 attendees.

“Standing in the middle on the day and looking at people coming along...the selection of people there was just incredible” **Jo, Chairperson of Swindon and Wiltshire Pride**

They made the event free to attend, to ensure it was as inclusive as possible. The outreach work carried out by the Out of The Can team was successful, and they attracted a lot of young people, including many who had never been to a pride event before. Tracey, from No Added Sugar, an arts organisation who attended the event, noted there were more transgender people attending compared to previous years, and also noticeably more Muslim people.

Thames Water, another supporter of the event, also offered volunteers to the Pride Day. The event has **strengthened the relationship between the Swindon and Wiltshire Pride committee and local businesses**, and Thames Water invited them to the Swindon Inclusivity and Diversity Employer Group. The Pride committee has attended this group since and presented an overview of their activities. The Thames Water volunteers hope to help again in future years, and feel their involvement in Pride has helped strengthen their internal employee LGBTQ+ group.

People had more social contact

Due to a lack of LGBTQ+ venues in the local area, the Pride event was an occasion for local LGBTQ+ people to **see old friends and to reconnect** in a safe environment. Tracy felt that Pride, by giving people the chance to see and speak to others in the LGBTQ+ community, could help young people who may be afraid to speak openly about their sexuality.

“There is a lack of support services and organisations for local LGBTQ+ people in Swindon and Wiltshire, so having a Pride event is so important because of that ”
Jo, Chairperson of Swindon and Wiltshire Pride

The Out of the Can youth group have had an **increase in interest in their LGBTQ+ youth group** after Pride as a result of the engagement they had with young people at the event. Jane, from Out of the Can, highlighted this as an example of how the Pride event shows local people the support that is available. After Pride, Jo found an increase in people interested in joining the Pride committee.

Improved mental wellbeing

One of the main zones at the pride event was a community zone, which included stalls from mental health charities. The event therefore gave people who attended the chance to get advice. One of the volunteers interviewed felt that helping with the event improved her mental health and felt in a more positive space to look for a job as a result of volunteering. They met some new friends and drag queens at the Pride event whilst volunteering and have kept in touch throughout the pandemic.

“Everybody is in a good mood and the LGBTQ+ young people are elated to be there ” **Tracy, volunteer**

Overall reflections

The 2019 Swindon and Wiltshire Pride festival was a successful event: the committee and volunteers reported attendees clearly enjoying themselves and felt positive about the variety of local people at the event, supporting the LGBTQ+ community. The aim was to create a fun, exciting day which would lead to greater enthusiasm and support for the community. An indicator of this happening is the year-on-year increases in the attendance at the event, and an increase in local young people enquiring about the Out of The Can Youth Club.

The grant was used specifically to secure the initial infrastructure needed to get the event off the ground, and to pay for the essential services needed to run the event such as security. Without the Fund, who were one of the largest financial contributors to the event, the event would have not been able to go ahead at the same scale (the event did not go ahead in 2018 due to this). Once the grant was secured, this acted as a 'buffer' which meant the team were able to go ahead and look for other funding sources to pay for the rest of the event, without the pressure and uncertainty of whether they would be able to run the event.

In the future, the committee hope for even more local LGBTQ+ people to attend Pride. Jo felt many of the local LGBTQ+ community can still be nervous to attend public events, but hoped the continued success of Pride will give people confidence to attend this and other events in the future. For 2021, the Committee are going to be introducing a family circus zone as part of their continual push to make the event appealing to a wide audience.

About the case study

As part of this case study, IFF Research spoke to Jo (the chairperson of the Swindon and Wiltshire Pride Committee), Chris*, a volunteer from Thames Water, Jane*, a volunteer from Out of the Can, Tracy* and Mike* from No Added Sugar and Sally*, a volunteer.

*Names have been changed.