JOURNEY LGBT+ ASYLUM GROUP

LATEST NEWS

Happy 2025

(17th December 2025)

Our December meeting was a fun celebration with a Christmas-themed quiz, fiercely contested party games and a countdown to 'new year' and Auld Lang Syne. Jan and Lesley from the Pink Sou'Westers also joined us, bringing along donations of toiletries as a Christmas gift to our members. It was a joyful end to the year.

Members said:

"Today meeting was very nice and lovely."
"It was a very beautiful day and a wonderful meeting." "
"Today meeting was very good. Everyone enjoy a lot."
"Today's meeting was very fantastic specially the cake and umbrella game. I enjoyed a lot."
"It was a beautiful day and a wonderful meeting."
"Great day and nice meeting."
"Today's meeting was super fun! I really enjoyed it The year end-end activity was new for me and truly amazing. It was a great experience and i loved it."
"I really enjoy the meeting yesterday. There was a lot of fun. I like the way everybody was engaged."



Petition: scrap the 20 year wait

(17th December 2025)

A group of refugees and asylum seekers have started a petition to scrap the government's planned changes to migration rules that will force refugees to wait 20 years to settle in the UK, and restrict refugee family reunion.

They say:

"It's time to stop scapegoating refugees and other migrants, and start helping people rebuild their lives and reunite with their families."

SIGN THE PETITION



Weird science

(10th December 2025)

A big thank you to Birmingham Museums for making it possible for our members to explore Thinktank, Birmingham's museum of science and technology. The Community Welcome Pass Scheme is open to charities, CICs and community groups, giving free access to a number of Birmingham museums, so that people who might not otherwise visit get a chance to experience the great selection of fascinating collections.
At Thinktank, our members explored Birmingham's transport and manufacturing history, as well as space exploration and taking a look into the future of robotics and construction.

Our members said:

"The museum was so nice. The collections they have were amazing, starting from ancient technology to modern and even beyond, showing us glimpses of the future. The vintage cars and bicycles were cool."
"I had a great time at Thinktank! The exhibits were fun, interactive, and perfect for all ages. It’s a well-run, engaging museum that makes learning enjoyable."
"It was really good time on that event."





Keep on running

(9th December 2025)

One of our previous volunteers, Chlo, is running a half marathon with their dad in February 2026. We're very touched that they have decided to raise money for Journey through their Just Giving page.
As Chlo says: "Having volunteered with the organisation when I lived in Birmingham, I've seen first hand the difference the group makes to the lives of people."
Thank you to Chlo and their dad - and best of luck for the chilly winter training!

CLICK HERE TO DONATE



City of Sanctuary celebrations

(8th December 2025)

The Journey Group was invited to speak at Birmingham Council House at a celebration of 10 years of Birmingham being a City of Sanctuary.
It was a huge celebratory event with many different organisations and individuals sharing the welcome they had received as sanctuary seekers to Birmingham, alongside the amazing work going on within schools.
Two of our members, Virginia and Maurice, spoke from the stage about the importance of the Journey LGBT+ Asylum Group to their lives, being welcomed and feeling safe. They stressed that, if given the chance to settle, work or study, asylum seekers and other migrants will make a huge contribution to the city.

Virginia said:

"Sharing my experience was important to me. I wanted people to see the power of belonging. Our group is a family that offers compassion, care and acceptance, and we feel safe belonging to the group. My hope was the audience would take home the message no-one should ever have to feel alone."

Maurice said:

"It was an honour to be part of the 10th anniversary to celebrate Birmingham as a City of Sanctuary. There is a sense of pride speaking about what the Journey Group has done for us, and continues to do, because it has really given us that support when we needed it. I felt satisfied that I was able to

speak up for asylum seekers because, being an asylum seeker, I was able to share my lived experience which I believe is more powerful than having someone else speak up for us."

You can read more about the event in this article.





Finding family

(2nd December 2025)

The Journey Group was featured in edition #201 of 'Context', the magazine for family therapy and systemic practice in the UK.
Family therapist Sarah Favier worked with our members to explore how they experience the Journey Group as similar and different to a family. She wrote up their responses "to raise awareness within the systemic community of the extensive challenges and dangers faced by LGBTQ+ asylum seekers" and "to enable Journey voices to be heard speaking about constructions of 'family' which both invited stories of resilience and hope and touched on the realities of what people have fled to escape."
You can buy a digital copy of the magazine from the AFT website for £7, or email sarahlfavier@gmail.com for a free electronic copy of the Journey Group article.

Reflections from members quoted in the article include:

"In my very hard time when I was disowned by all I known from the start of life, the Journey Group accepted me and give me the support one need from a family."
"Family are the people who love me and support me at the time and accept me without judging me."
"When we came to this country we don't have no one, no father, no mother, no sister and no brother only Journey Group they want to help us, they open cuddle for our LGBT members and treat us like them kids, like parents, like friend."
"I don't like my family, my family try to kill me. Journey Group is my family now."





‘Journey group is my family now’

Sarah Favier

This article describes a brief project with the Journey LGBT+ asylum seekers group in Birmingham. The aim is to give information about the contexts this group inhabit and to share their voices.

Wider context

There is anti-LGBTQ legislation in 67 countries and an additional 9 countries criminalise forms of gender expression that target transgender people (Human Rights Watch, 2025). It is dangerous and difficult to be LGBTQ+ in many places in the world, even in places where same-sex acts are legal. Social stigmatisation of people perceived as non-heterosexual or non-cisgender remains high (ILGA, 2025; Amnesty International, 2025). Many of the laws prohibiting homosexuality are legacies from colonial rule.

Summary of Queer SEREDA report 2024

The Queer SEREDA (Sexual and gender-based violence against refugees) report (McKnight *et al.*, 2024) describes the dangerous challenges many LGBTQ asylum seekers face in their countries of origin, during flights and on arrival in the UK. People may flee their country of origin in response to cumulative homophobic or transphobic abuse in their families or communities, sometimes at the hands of the police. Alternatively, they may flee at crisis point when their sexuality is discovered by others, placing them in danger.

During transit people are vulnerable to exploitation and transactional sex for food or shelter. Sometimes asylum is claimed once people have reached the UK on student visas, which is a less dangerous route.

Once in the UK, asylum seekers are housed in Home Office accommodation, often budget hotels, with very little funds and are not allowed to work. LGBTQ people can be housed with, or required to share rooms with, co-ethnic community members who may be homophobic or transphobic. Reports published recently have highlighted how unsafe it is for LGBTQI+ asylum seekers to be placed in mainstream accommodation with non LGBTQI+ asylum seekers (Rainbow Migration, 2023).

There are significant negative experiences of the UK asylum system with dehumanisation and institutional heterosexism found in Home Office practices. People are subjected to intrusive questioning and have to ‘prove’ their sexuality. This can be a terrible dilemma when you have had to hide it most of your life and may still need to do so in order to be safe.

The SEREDA-report makes recommendations to create a system that is safe for queer asylum seekers, ranging from Home Office policy and practice, housing provision, access to employment and integration such as language classes from arrival, training around queer asylum seekers for staff in relevant agencies and increasing access to LGBTQI+ specialist services for survivors of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). It calls for queer people who have sought asylum to be involved in policy and practice development.

Journey Group

I met with the Journey LGBT+ Asylum Group. It has grown significantly since its birth in 2017 and there are now over 250 group members, with attendance at monthly meetings of up to 50 people.

The group’s mission is *“Empowering people who identify as LGBT+ through the asylum process and beyond”* and their vision is *“To create a safe space for LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees in the West Midlands, helping them find community, healing and support, throughout their asylum journey”.*

In 2024, members came from 22 different countries, with 46% from Pakistan, 13% from Cameroon, 6% from Iraq and Tanzania, and smaller numbers from other countries. 28% were aged 25 or under; 72% identified as gay men, 12% as bi-sexual, 9% as lesbian, 5% as trans, and 2% defined differently.

When this issue of *Context* for and about queer lives and families was agreed, we wanted to include a diversity of voices and experiences. I know one of the directors of the Journey Group and when discussing the meaning of family with her, she said their WhatsApp group is alive with ‘good morning fam’ messages every day. We started to think about how the group has become a family for people. When I attended the group’s AGM, members spoke with warmth of the group as their ‘family’.

As the Queer Sereda-report (McKnight *et al.*, 2024) says, the idea of finding people or ‘chosen family’ who have shared the experience of the asylum system as queer people is a key theme in what gives LGBTQI+ asylum seekers strength and resilience:

Specialist support services in safe places were described as a lifeline, addressing isolation, providing resources and reassurance, and giving queer people seeking asylum a space where they can safely start being their authentic selves.

I wrote formally to the Journey trustees and asked for their support to conduct this project. They responded positively and conversations continued throughout the 3-4 months of the project.

I am a bisexual cis woman living in a queer marriage. I am white and in addition to this privilege I have safe housing and a source of income. My family of origin and country of birth have largely accepted my queer relationship. In terms of other intersectionalities mentioned by the group I do not practise a religion although have done in the past. I introduced myself to the group as queer hoping this signalled I was a safe person to talk to at some level although clearly I do not share most of their experiences.

I constructed three questions with the director and translated them into the languages most spoken in the group: Urdu, Pashto, French (from Cameroon), Swahili, Arabic, Amharic and Farsi.

- اس ویک چیٹ ویک کے بارے میں اپ گروپ کا خیال کیا ہے؟
- ډیرې مهربانۍ وکړئ د هګنرغ ټیورک ډیفس د ډیرې ګروپ مب ویزوک ویې؟
- En quoi le groupe Journey est-il comme une famille ?
- Je, kikundi cha Safari ni kama familia?
- هل يمكنك إخبارنا لماذا تعتبر مجموعة الرحلة بمثابة عائلة بالنسبة لك؟
- ጉዞ በቡድን እንደ ቤተሰብ የሆነው እንዴት ነው?
- How is the Journey group like a family?

Also printed on paper and translated was a brief description about the

Recommendations

Ashley Gavin (2020-2025) *We’re Having Gay Sex.* Comedy podcast with humorous and profound conversations and stories of gender and sexuality. Available at: https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/were-having-gay-sex/id1505116116

British Film Institute (2025) BFI Flare. International Film Festival showcasing LGBTQIA+ films and filmmakers. Annually in approx. March, London. Details at: https://whatson.bfi.org.uk/flare

Grace Petrie (2018) *Queer as Folk.* Album of great tunes, recommend Black Tie in particular. Details at: https://gracepetrie.bandcamp.com/album/queer-as-folk

Richard Finn Gregory (2024) *The Radical.* Documentary about Muhsin Hendricks, the first openly gay Imam. Available at: https://www.amazon.co.uk/Radical-Richard-Finn-Gregory/dp/B0DJR14XLH

Zanele Muholi (various) Powerful artwork and photography by a Black South African Queer Non-Binary artist and activist. Look out for worldwide exhibitions and follow @muholizanele on Instagram.

Caster Semenya (2023) *The Race to Be Myself.* Semenya’s memoir of her personal and professional journey. London: Merky Books.

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Annette Strzedulla is a German and (since Brexit) British queer intersex systemic psychotherapist, supervisor and social worker. She works in independent practice, as a teacher and supervisor, volunteers with and for intersex people and can often be found singing at the Southbank.

Caitlin Molloy works as a CAMHS family therapist and is a queer (very new!) parent. Being a systemic psychotherapist stretches her mind and heart in beautiful ways. Her greatest joy is connecting with others through conversations that spark new learnings and ideas, particularly about social justice and what it means to show love to one another – Queer Connections has been fertile ground for this.

Dawn Thibert is a family therapist, social worker, systemic supervisor and doctoral candidate in systemic practice. She is a cis lesbian adoptive mother.

Ilaria Robin Calussi is a queer, neurodivergent, Italian-British integrative psychotherapist, systemic family psychotherapist, clinical supervisor, and lecturer specialised in neurodiversity, trauma, and couples.

Liz Kirkbride is a queer systemic psychotherapist.

Macushla Lovell-Meade is a queer/bisexual/pansexual trainee systemic and family psychotherapist in year 4 at IFT. She currently works as a clinical practitioner in children’s social care and is also a qualified social worker.

Nancy Brown is a bisexual, cis, white, American woman living in the UK for the last 18 years. She is practising as a systemic psychotherapist in NHS adult mental health services, specialising in complex emotional needs.

Sounds like community

(25th November 2025)

A big thank you to the B:Music Community Café and Celebrating Sanctuary for letting several Journey members join the café this month. There was lots of fun conversation, lovely hot drinks and a fun colouring session of warm autumnal colour-ins. This was followed by a wonderful concert by a Senegalese artist who played some incredible Kora music as part of the Celebrating Sanctuary Concert Series.

Our members said:

"I am thankful for the hospitality and really enjoyed myself."



Buddy training

(24th November 2025)

Buddies are Journey members, who play a key role in the Journey group, supporting new members to settle into the group, helping to organise and run our meetings, and representing the group with other organisations.
In mid November we organised a Buddy workshop - as a refresher session for existing Buddies and a training session for new Buddies. We now have even more Buddies to support the group. A huge thank you to every one of them - we couldn't do what we do without them.

Our Buddies said:

"I learnt about what it takes to be a Buddy from the older Buddies and the importance of having boundaries and how important it is to set the boundaries early. It has really boosted my confidence and I feel I'm ready for the role of being a Buddy."
"As a first-timer I've learnt how to deal with boundaries, safeguarding and how to help and support Buddy contacts."
"I learnt the importance of sharing openly and supporting one another during the Buddy workshop. It helped me understand how much strength we gain from community."
"I enjoyed seeing how eager the new Buddies were, they actively shared their ideas and appear

willing to get clarity, showing that they will indeed be a great support for the group."
"Being a Buddy gives me a deep sense of fulfilment. Sharing my time and experience brings greater joy than always being the one receiving support. It also boosts my confidence and self esteem."



Orchard care

(24th November 2025)

Journey members joined a 'helping hands' day at Calthorpe Interfaith Community Orchard, organised by Fruit and Nut Village. Everyone got stuck in with orchard care work, and then shared delicious food from SHOF Syrian Cuisine.

Our members said:

"I felt really happy. I really enjoyed meeting people and working together. I love gardening!"
"I feel more at home, less depressed. I like to help."
"The food was delicious, and I liked talking to other people."
"I enjoyed it a lot."



Movie time

(23rd November 2025)

A huge thank you to Birmingham Indian Film Festival for free tickets to 'Too Desi Too Queer', its annual screening of LGBT+ short films from South Asia. Hosted at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and programmed in association with Rainbow Noir Manchester, the evening showcased six powerful films spanning a range of LGBT+ stories and experiences. The screenings were followed by a panel discussion on the themes explored.

Our members said:

"I enjoyed every one of the films. It's really educational."
"It was a lovely evening and a wonderful time."
"The scenes were memories of the past, of how I lived under violence, pain, and injustice. Every scene has a meaning. I cried because I remembered so many things, but now I think about how I lived and how those memories have become painful recollections of the past. It was a series of scenes, but each scene has a meaning that will never be forgotten. I am very happy with my life now. The films were wonderful, and the memories are unforgettable."





Community award

(10th November 2025)

The Journey Group is really pleased to have been awarded £3,247.50 from the Birmingham Pride Community Foundation. The funding was announced at a celebration event on 7th November at the Village Inn, in the heart of Birmingham's Gay Village.

Along with other LGBT+ community groups, we benefited from ticket sales and donations at Birmingham Pride 2025. This award will enable us to continue supporting LGBT+ asylum seekers, through group activities, one-to-one support and advocacy work. Journey Buddies and volunteers were invited to the stage to receive this award.

Our members said:

"Thanks everyone for a wonderful evening."
"It was so nice. Thanks for everything."



Serving fabulous

(20th October 2025)

Journey members shared in the raucous fun of this year's Catwalk Extravaganza, part of Shout Festival. The fierce event, hosted by celeb Rikki Beadle-Blair, showcased a dazzling array of look queens, dancers and showgirls, working the catwalk in glitter, leather and feathers serving a sizzling dose of queer joy.

Our members said:

"The dance style, host, and overall atmosphere were all fantastic. I had a really great time."
"The show was absolutely amazing - full of energy and joy!"
"I enjoyed a lot. It was a fantastic show."



End for-profit asylum hotels

(10th October 2025)

In August 2025 the Journey Group was one of 60+ signatories to a joint statement: "The government must end the for-profit asylum accommodation system. While people seeking asylum are housed in miserable conditions and wider communities are deprived of much needed investment in social housing, millions in public money that could be designated for the purpose of providing accommodation for all is simply taken in profit by a handful of private companies."
This statement was cited this week, in an article from the BBC exposing the problems of the for-profit asylum hotel system.

Asylum hotel provider makes £180m profit despite claims of inedible food and rationed loo paper



Tarah Welsh, **Tara Mewawalla** and **Tom Beal**

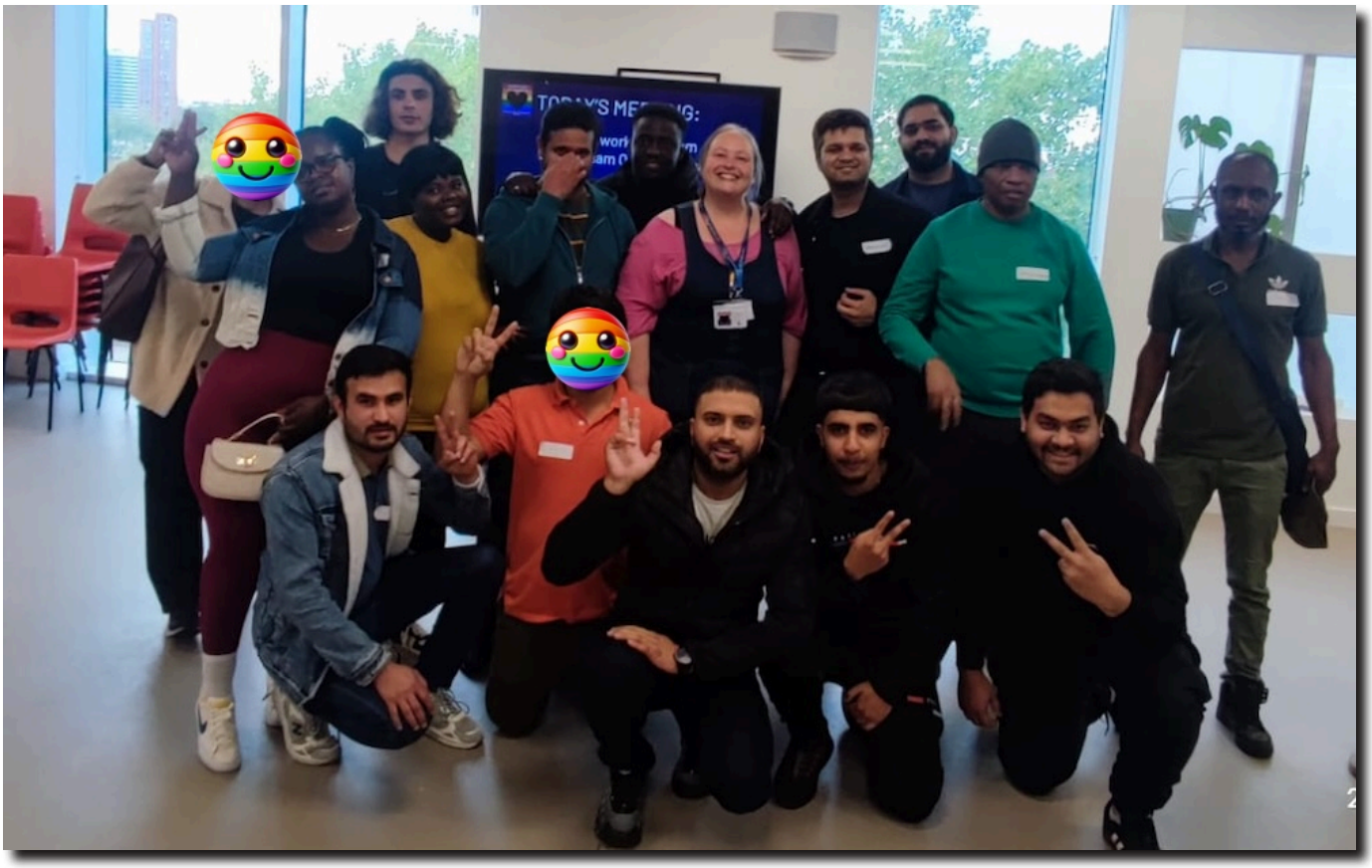
Making music

(2nd October 2025)

A huge thank you to Birmingham Opera Company for putting our members through their singing, moving and acting paces in September's monthly meeting. The lively workshop, led by BOC's Nyasha and Diandra, involved a lot of laughter, and some members got to share their own devised performance, accompanied by beautiful singing and piano playing from BOC's Mairi and Sara.

Members said:

"It was a great meeting. I enjoyed it a lot."
"Nice meeting and good experience."
"It was a pleasure meeting all members new and old. I enjoyed the chair game opera songs as well."
"We did enjoy it very much. Thank you for always finding something to remind us that we are loved and cared for."



Standing up to racism

(1st October 2025)

Alongside many other organisations, the Journey Group has signed a statement of solidarity against racism, initiated by Consortium, a charity that supports not-for-profit LGBT+ organisations and

groups.
The statement is as follows:

We are proud to represent charities, community groups and social enterprises supporting LGBTQ+ people across the UK and around the world.
Amid rising far-right protests and racism, we want to say clearly that we stand shoulder to shoulder with everyone in our diverse LGBTQ+ communities, particularly people of colour, Muslims, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum.

You are seen, you are valued, and you are not alone.
We, like most people in our society, are anxious about the rising division, hostility, and hate that we are seeing on our streets and in the news.

We remain firmly committed to equality, human rights and the rule of law. Our support will never waver. Together, we're working towards a future where everyone can live freely, safely, and with dignity—side by side, without fear or prejudice.

To see the full list of signatories, or to add your organisation to the list, visit the Consortium website.



Community Cafe

(19th September 2025)

This Thursday morning several members of the Journey group got together to attend the B:Music Community Café at the Birmingham Symphony Hall. This café gave our members a wonderful opportunity to enjoy some hot drinks, have some lovely conversations with each other and listen to an incredible performance of Tibetan music.
This performance was particularly well received by members of the Journey Group, with multiple members highlighting the music and performance had a calming and beautiful quality.

Thank you so much to the Birmingham Symphony Hall, the B:Music Café and Celebrating Sanctuary for hosting the café and musical performance, which allowed for such a wonderful cultural exchange and community event!

Our members said:

"It was fun with friends. We listened to Chinese music and got rid of anxiety and tension."



Temporary pause

(12th September 2025)

The Journey Group is currently closed to new members while we recruit a new Members Coordinator.
We will not take any more members until at least December 2025.
If you are an LGBT+ asylum seeker or refugee, we recommend you look at our 'Useful Information' page, and read the Right to Remain toolkit.



Coming together

(11th September 2025)

Our steering group felt very swanky this week, thanks to IT company CGI. The international business supports our work by offering free meeting space in its city centre offices. This was our first time getting together in the swish new building, where the complimentary biscuits and hot drinks definitely helped us steer the Journey Group in the right direction. Many thanks to CGI, and especially to Gareth, Journey volunteer and CGI employee, for making it all happen.



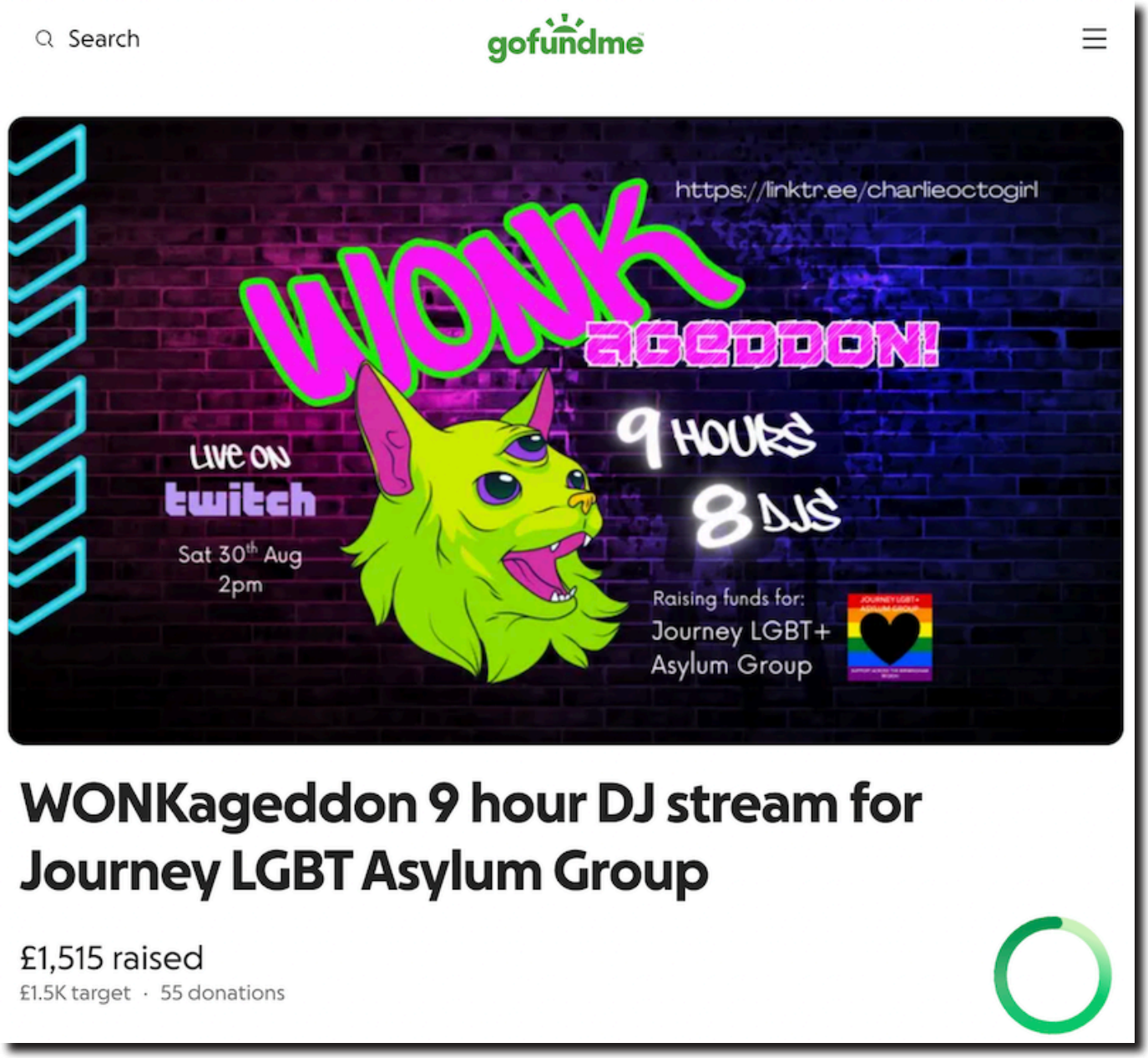
Music to our ears

(9th September 2025)

A huge thank you to Charlie Octo Girl for organising WONKageddon - a livestream event on Twitch, which brought together eight DJs to drop beats for nine hours, in order to raise money for the Journey Group. It raised over £1500, all of which will go directly towards supporting LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees in the West Midlands. The fundraising page is still open, so it's not too late to donate!

Charlie said:

"With everything as it is, with the rise in hate, anger and misinformation around, I'm very conscious of the toll this will be having on you all. This weekend, love and joy won out. People in our community are angry and sad and raging about what is happening at the moment, and those feelings really motivated them to get involved with the fundraiser. They shared it, they shouted about it and they joined us online for a very joyous day, reclaiming some wonder in these difficult times. I hope that this goes some way to be some comfort and practical support to keep doing what you do."



Anyone for tennis?

(30th August 2025)

Journey members got to experience a brand new show this weekend. 'Fairlight' is an electropop musical that takes place on a tennis court, and reimagines the origin story of lawn tennis as a queer love story.

Our members said:

"It was a fascinating experience. I cried a bit watching them separated in the start."
"It was very nice show."
"It was a great and fantastic show. I really enjoyed it."



Festival fun

(23rd August 2025)

A huge thank you to Birmingham Hippodrome for showing our members a good time at the Birmingham Weekender festival. Not only did we get a guided tour to some amazing performances, but we also had the opportunity to make glitzy crowns and wrist bands, to enjoy some delicious samosas, and even to get a trim from barber Tilly.

Our members said:

"The best things were the soca music and the haircut."
"I really enjoyed it, food and everything."
"Today’s the best day. I enjoy a lot."




WELCOME
TILLY
THA
BARBER
WAHL
TILLY
THE
BARBER


BIRMINGHAM
WEEKENDER
#BIRMINGHAMWEEKENDER
STAFF



Park life

(17th August 2025)

Our summer picnic saw nearly 40 Journey members enjoying the sunshine in Cannon Hill Park for an afternoon of food, music, games and chat.
We also took the opportunity to say thank you and goodbye to volunteer Phil, who is stepping down after nine years. Phil helped establish the group, and was a director for many years, steering the organisation alongside giving one-to-one support to dozens of members. Heartfelt thank you, Phil - we wouldn't be here without you.

Our members said:

"I enjoyed a lot everything was nice. The game was very funny and interesting."
"I really enjoyed the games."
"We really really enjoyed the yesterday’s picnic though we were late but still we felt the joy and warmth of our people.
They were beautiful moments we just spent!"
"I really enjoyed the food and the games and it was very interesting."

"Really friendly people, didn't feel like that I am meeting everyone for the first time. Though games and food were fab too."





WONKageddon!

(28th July 2025)

Brace for WONKageddon! A 9-hour music spectacular with eight DJs, live on Twitch from a professional DJ studio in the heart of Birmingham. The entire line up is generously gifting their time and talent to help raise funds for the Journey Group.
Several of our members have made video callouts saying why the Journey Group is important to them, and these will be played during the event to help persuade the audience to donate. See what they had to say, here.
Follow organiser charlie_octo_girl on Instagram for updates.



Making music

(24th July 2025)

A big thank you to Ashlee and AJ from Birmingham Hippodrome, who brought the beats to our July meeting. AJ worked with our members to create our very own Journey hip hop track, helping them

select the sounds and rhythms, and even drop their own lyrics. AJ is going to a bit of mixing magic, then share the finished track. We can't wait to hear it!

Our members said:

"I really enjoyed today meeting and DJ too. Thanks for a lovely day."
"It was a great time. I enjoy a lot really."



Journey member Kwaku Appiah dropping some bars

Home is where we belong

(23rd July 2025)

Members of the Journey group enjoyed a trip to Birmingham Rep to see a performance of 'Home is Where We Belong', created by Stories of Hope and Home - a group of people with lived experience seeking safety in the UK. Some of our group members were also part of the performance.

Our members said:

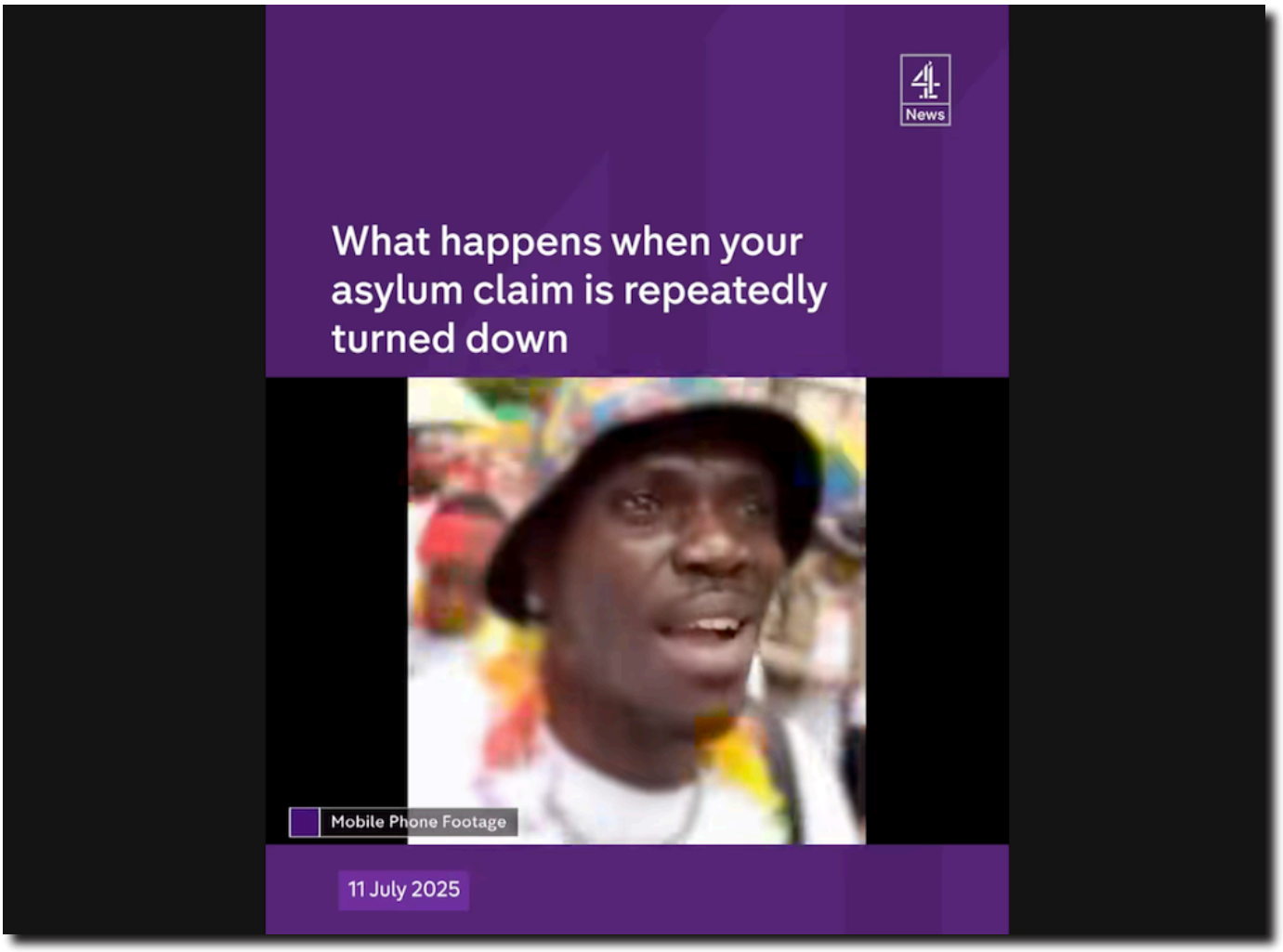
"What I like most is how they define home, they all talked about what home is like back in their country of birth. I can relate to why they no longer felt like home in their country of birth and how they can now call the UK home and even trying to make the UK home comes with different challenges but as diverse group of people we all can make each other feel more at home."
"I really enjoyed every step."
"What felt so true for me was the Home Office making you wait for so long, which can make you feel the UK is not safe or home to me."



Right to appeal

(12th July 2025)

One of our members, Kwaku Appiah, is featured in a report by Channel 4 News about the rise in appeals against asylum decisions.
Watch the report here.



Finding Pride

(6th July 2025)

This weekend saw the launch of the 'Finding Pride' exhibition, the culmination of a series of creative workshops with Journey members, organised by Kings Heath Action for Refugees (KHAR). The exhibition was open all weekend at the Nook gallery in Kings Heath, timed to coincide with the local Pride event, when Kings Heath becomes 'Queens Heath' for a day.
Journey members and volunteers braved torrential rain to walk in the parade, visit the 'Finding Pride' exhibition, and enjoy the markets and stage performances.
A big thank you to KHAR for continuing to support the Journey Group and its members.

Our members said:

"Thank you to the members of the group to make this day memorable."
"Thank you everyone for your support and love for this Pride. I really appreciate."
"Everything was fantastic, specially people."
"Stage performance and having fun. Love that."


TRAINING



Theatre trip

(25th June 2025)

Members of the Journey Group enjoyed a fantastic evening together at Birmingham Rep, where they attended a performance of Marriage Material. The outing was more than just a night at the theatre - it was a chance to connect, reflect, and share in the joy of storytelling as a community.

The play, rooted in family life and cultural identity, sparked plenty of conversation among the group, and resonated with our members' experiences of coming to the UK.

Our members said:

"An amazing show. Everything was really well done, and I enjoyed it. Great job."
"We enjoyed ourselves thank you very much."
"We really had a great time."



Batting above average

(25th June 2025)

Journey members enjoyed a fun and relaxed evening of cricket training, thanks to Warwickshire Cricket Foundation. The taster event was held in the training centre at Edgbaston Stadium, and was open to everyone, no matter their level of experience.

Our members said:

"I had my first cricket practice in the UK, and it was an amazing experience. A special thanks to our coaches, who were incredibly kind and supportive."



Informing research

(18th June 2025)

One of our Journey trustees, Alex, took part in a research workshop at Birmingham City University. The focus of the day was on academic research with marginalised communities, exploring issues of access, ethics and power relations, as well as sharing best practice. There were many valuable insights raised and discussed, and the organisers hope to take findings from the day to put together a 'best practice guide' for researchers looking to work with community groups.



Championing volunteering

(13th June 2025)

One of our dedicated volunteers, Gareth, has been featured on his company's website, talking about his work with the Journey Group.

Gareth says:

"It’s not just about giving back; it's about standing up, speaking out and helping to create spaces where everyone feels seen, heard and valued. Every moment spent volunteering feels like a step toward a more just and vibrant future."

It's great to see CGI championing Gareth's community work in this way.
CGI also supports the Journey Group with meeting rooms for our steering group meetings.

You can read the article here.



Rainbow laces

(6th June 2025)

A big thank you to Warwickshire Cricket Foundation for providing Journey members with free tickets to see two matches at Edgbaston Stadium. Bears players wore rainbow laces and the stadium was bedecked in rainbow flags for the special fixture, part of Edgbaston's Pride month celebrations. It was a good day for both the men's and women's teams, who both won their matches.



THANK YOU

(4th June 2025)

This week is Volunteers' Week, so we're taking the opportunity to say a huge THANK YOU to all our fabulous Journey volunteers. This includes our amazing Buddies - longstanding members who also volunteer their time to help organise activities, give one-to-one support and raise awareness of the challenges faced by LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees in the UK.

A big round of applause for Alex, Ameer, Andy, Aziz, Bet, Chlo, Elena, Faith, Gareth, Helen, Imogen, Irene, Izzy, Jay, Mandy, Marina, Mihran, Naz, Pankti, Phil, Sammy, Seid, Sheila, Shukri, Simon, Umar, Virginia and Zizi. You all ROCK!

Our members said:

"Thanks to all our amazing volunteers for their good works they are doing for Us. God bless you all and healthy life."
"At first I felt worried and insecure but through the smile of the team and welcoming smile you all have made all of us feel home and happy. I wish I can pay you and thank you or reward each but i want to say a big Thanks."

"God bless you guys for your support and time. Thank you all."
"Thank you guys for your great work. We are grateful."
"Thank you guys for your support and effort that u put in in that journey."
"Huge thanks to our awesome volunteers! You're more than just volunteers - you're family. We appreciate you more than words can say."
"Grateful for our volunteers, your time and support truly matter."
God richly bless you all for your support and dedication to the members of the group. We appreciate you all for the hard working efforts you put into this group as volunteers."
"I just want to say a heartfelt thank you to all our incredible volunteers, your dedication, compassion, and the time and energy you give without expecting anything in return truly mean so much. As one of the members of this group, I deeply appreciate everything you do to support us and create a welcoming space. Your efforts are seen, felt and valued more than words can express. Thank you!"
"Thank you so much guys for your support and love you guys show to us through the journey."
"Thank you all volunteer and buddy for your great work and effort."
"To all our incredible volunteers, thank you from the depths of my heart. Thanks to you, Journey is a place of hope, family, and healing. You give so much of yourselves, and it means the world. May all the love and care you share come back to you in ways you can't even imagine."
"Heartfelt thanks to all of you. Not only did you step up as volunteers to help us, but with your constant care and support, you made this journey truly memorable. May Allah bless you with success and happiness at every step."



Hip hop hooray!

(2nd June 2025)

Journey members had an unforgettable day at the grand finals of B:Side, Birmingham's hip hop festival. From explosive breakdancing battles to jaw-dropping whacking performances, our members cheered on every flip, spin and beat drop. But it wasn't just the dance floor that delivered - Birmingham Hippodrome also served up a delicious lunch, giving us a warm welcome and making our members feel like VIPs. A huge thank you to Ashlee and the team for continuing to champion creativity and community in Birmingham.

Our members said:

"The tight competition between the teams made everything way more exciting, and just being with everyone else in the group was one of the best parts of the day."
"Wonderful day."
"Much appreciated for an awesome day."
"Thank you so much for such a wonderful outing. It was a wonderful day!!!"





Birmingham Pride 2025

(26th May 2025)

For many of our members, Birmingham Pride is a deeply significant event. After fleeing from a life lived in secrecy and fear, marching proudly and openly under a rainbow banner past supportive crowds and friendly police officers can be a profound and liberating experience.
This year our joyful Journey posse included beautiful headdresses made in our 'Finding Pride' creative sessions, rainbow bracelets made in our May meeting, and our two youngest members, aged just 3 months and 8 months.

Our members said:

"Today was great and I really had fun with everyone."
"It's very important because it proves that each person's sexual sovereignty belongs to the individual, not the state."
"In my country, Pride events are barely recognised or understood by most people. Last year was the first time I attended one, and this year again, I found myself surrounded by a community full of love and support. It made me feel safe, seen, and accepted. The most powerful part is realising how much it means to be embraced for who we are - especially in a place where awareness is still growing."
"It was special day for us."
"This was most beautiful experience for us and we show to the world that we belong to same family and there is no difference if you belong to any part."

"I didn't know it was my right because of my background. Now l can confidently pronounce my preference because of my big LGBTQ family."
"It reminded me how special it is to be yourself and feel accepted. Pride is about love, support, and standing together. I'm happy to be part of a community that celebrates everyone for who they are. Happy Pride!."
"It was one of my best experiences for the first time attending Pride with Journey LGBT Asylum Group. I'm so happy to be part of this family."
"That was my first LGBT Pride and this gives me confidence and happiness."
"Love and peace for everyone."
"Happiest day."



Before the parade



On the parade



After the parade

Pride preparations

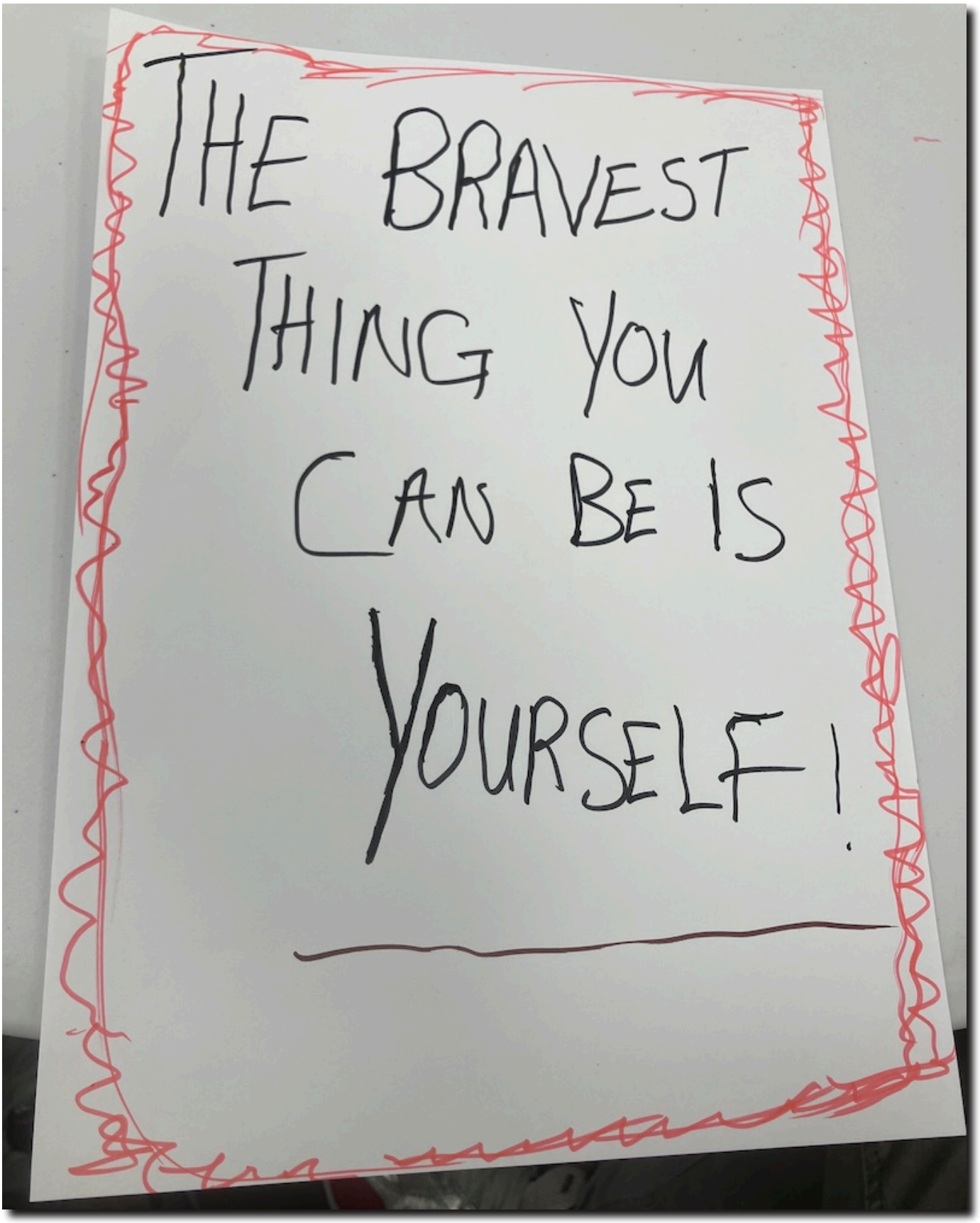
(20th May 2025)

This month's in-person meeting was all about Pride, in anticipation of Birmingham Pride this coming weekend. Members discussed why Pride events are important, and shared wellbeing and safety tips for the parade on Saturday. We also made rainbow bracelets to wear, and posters to carry.

Our members said:

"It was so nice and and we all enjoyed it so much."
"Today meeting was very great."
"Today meeting was very great & I enjoyed."


HARROGATE SPRING WATER



Lift the ban report

(20th May 2025)

The Lift the Ban coalition has published a report urging the government to allow asylum seekers to work. The coalition is made up of over 300 non-profit organisations, think tanks, businesses, trade unions and faith groups. Several Journey members are also actively involved.
Under the current UK law, people claiming asylum are not allowed to work while their claim is being considered. After 12 months, the Home Office may grant permission to work, but only in specific jobs, outlined on the Shortage Occupation List. For many asylum seekers, this means that their living costs are being paid for by the government, while their professional skills and experience is going to waste.
The campaign is calling on the UK government to give people seeking asylum and their adult dependants the right to work in any field, and after they have waited six months for a decision on their initial asylum claim. This would enable them to contribute to the UK economy and have a better quality of life while they await the outcome of their claim.
You can read the full report here.



A breath of fresh air

(6th May 2025)

On Saturday, a group of twenty Journey members and volunteers took to the Lickey Hills to search for bluebells, and enjoy being out of the city and in the fresh air. For some members, it was their first trip to the UK countryside. Everyone talked and laughed, shared a picnic lunch and learned the names of the different fruits they were eating in all their different languages. The word for chocolate seems to be more or less the same in many languages!

Our members said:

"I really enjoyed the nature and fresh air. and I liked the blue flowers, their fragrance was really nice."
"The walk was very nice though a bit windy.."
"Everything was good - more close to nature."
"We had a beautiful day."



Down to earth

(28th April 2025)

We were lucky to be invited again to the New Art Gallery Walsall for a tour of its current exhibitions. On this trip, Journey members were given a guided tour of the gallery, led by Trixie Suen (the gallery's community coordinator). This included the Garman Ryan collection and the gallery's current exhibitions, 'Earthbound' and 'The Joy Project'.
After the guided tour, we had an artist workshop inspired by the 'Earthbound' exhibition. Members got to use clay and plaster to create pieces inspired by the collection.


The New
Art Gallery
Walsall
Admission



Communities not camps

(22nd April 2025)

Asylum camps like Wethersfield are dangerous, traumatising and cruel. Every day they stay open is another day of suffering, at huge cost to the taxpayer.

The Journey Group signed this letter to remind Home Secretary Yvette Cooper MP that people deserve to live in communities, not camps.



Powerful performance

(21st April 2025)

Thanks to Birmingham Rep, members of the Journey group were able to see the recent production of 'A Thousand Splendid Suns', adapted from the book by Afghan-American author Khaled Hosseini. It was a difficult watch for some of our members who said the violence depicted was similar to what they had experienced in their home countries.

One member said:

"Thanks to the Rep for giving us the tickets. It was a fully fledged show full of truth."



Community chat

(18th April 2025)

A massive thank you to the Birmingham Symphony Hall and the B:Music Community Café, who host a monthly café for multiple community groups across Birmingham, allowing for a wonderful community get-together.
One of our members, who went along to the Community Café this month enjoyed the opportunity to chat, have coffee and food, and listen to lovely live music - even having a nice moment to take a photo with and chat to the performers afterwards.

Our member said:

"It was very good. I was very happy to be there."



Building Buddies

(16th April 2025)

The Journey Buddies are an essential part of the Journey group, providing peer-to-peer support to new group members, helping organise meetings and activities, and being ambassadors for the group.
At a training session on Saturday, current Buddies shared their knowledge and experience in this role, and helped welcome six new Buddies to the team.

Our new Buddies said:

"It was an amazing day. It gave me more confidence and also a sense of responsibility. The meeting taught me how to hold the responsibility that I'm given."
"Thanks for such inspiring training. I learnt so much and look forward to putting it into practise with new Journey members."



Finding Pride

(14th April 2025)

A huge thank you to Kings Heath Action for Refugees for working with Journey members on the Finding Pride project.
KHAR have organised a series of six workshops for LGBT+ asylum seekers to work with artists in three different mediums: printmaking, photography, and textiles.

The first session was an introduction to the artists and the different mediums. It was a great opportunity for our members to try new artistic styles and get a feel for the new mediums.
For the upcoming sessions, our members will focus on one specific medium and work towards creating a final piece to be displayed at an exhibition in Queen's Heath in July.

Our members said:

"I really enjoyed yesterday's event. I had a lot of fun and at the end I played a professional photographer. I filmed with the camera. It was very good, I really liked it."
"It was great to hang out. My favourite activity was the stamping."
"It was amazing and engaging as well.
I enjoyed the activities and my most favourite one was fabric printing and decoration stuff which I

made little birds. Thank you so much for giving us opportunities to explore ourselves."
"I really appreciated it. It was magnificent."





Lift the Ban

(3rd April 2025)

Journey members were amongst the 'Lift the Ban' campaigners who took to the streets in Coventry last weekend.

Campaign leader and Journey member Virginia said:

"Lift the Ban campaign wants the government to allow asylum seekers to work while they wait for a decision their asylum claim. This will restore human dignity, give a sense of purpose, promote self sufficiency and enable people seeking safety to contribute to the economy."


WE ARE READY TO WORK
#LIFTTHEBAN
WE HAVE SKILLS TO SHARE
LIFT THE BAN
LET US SUPPORT OUR-SELVES
WORK BAN = WASTED POTENTIAL
Sainsbury's

Dragons

(27th March 2025)

A big thank you to Birmingham Hippodrome for inviting Journey members to a community meet-up, followed by free tickets to spectacular Korean dance show 'Dragons'. It was a great opportunity to get to know the Hippodrome's Learning and Participation team, as well as other community groups, and enjoy some delicious food!

Our members said:

"Thank you very much for this beautiful evening, a very nice moment that I spent this evening."
"Wow I really like creativity. Very nice show."





Speaking to power

(21sr March 2025)

Representatives from organisations that support migrants were invited to meet with Ayoub Khan MP, an independent MP for Birmingham Perry Barr. Representatives from Journey, Asylum Matters, Restore, Hope Projects, St Chad's Sanctuary and the Birch Network, plus people with lived experience of the asylum system, spoke with Mr Khan to raise awareness of the challenges faced by asylum seekers in Birmingham and the West Midlands. We hope that he will use his voice to speak up for those seeking safety in the UK.



Breaking fast

(12th March 2025)

Many Journey members, both Muslim and non-Muslim, gathered together to celebrate Iftar this week.
Iftar is the breaking of the daily fast during the Holy Month of Ramadan. The event was organised by Imaan, the UK's leading LGBTQ+ Muslim charity, and hosted by Carrs Lane Church Centre.
Many members of the community joined together to enjoy delicious food and connect with each other.
Huge thanks to Mohammad from Imaan, and our Journey volunteers - Sammy, Mandy, Pankti and Marina - for making sure everyone had a great time.

Our members said:

"It was a lovely event. The food was so delicious too, and the company. It felt like family vibes, just how we gathered to break our fast in our home countries."
"Thanks for everyone contributed toward this event. It was so much fun!"
"Thanks to Imaan, for making this community gathering successful. It was nice to meet a lot of friends, and the food was so delicious."
"Thank you for delicious food next to the family."
"It was nice food and very welcoming. I really enjoyed it there."
"Massive respect and thanks to everyone who arranged this nice iftar."



Chop chop!

(12th March 2025)

Last weekend, Journey member Mahdi put his skills to good use, giving free haircuts at an LGBT craft fayre in the gay village.
Mahdi set up his salon station in the Fox, where the bar manager was very impressed with how clean he kept the space.

Mahdi said that he had the idea thinking it would be a good opportunity for members of the Journey group to come along to enjoy the event, and get their hair cut at the same time.
He said: “Actually, I was just enjoying the day.”

A big thank you to Bryony from Rainbow Connections for making it happen.



Monthly meeting

(27th February 2025)

45 members attended our February meeting, where they tested their knowledge in an LGBT History Month quiz, and shared wellbeing tips. Sarah Favier also returned, to share her magazine article about queer families, prior to publication.

Journey members said:

"Today was fun and thank you for your love and support like always."
"Today I have spent a wonderful moment in my UK life. All members are very friendly. I'm very happy about this meeting."
"Today was really nice, I enjoyed the meeting. Everyone was very welcoming and friendly."
"Today was a really nice meeting and i really enjoyed the meeting, thank you everyone."
"It was really an amazing day. I really enjoyed the love and support that was given."
"Today's meeting was the most interesting part of my day and it made my day so much more enjoyable ."

"What a lovely day."
"The best day of my life."



Media coverage

(3rd February 2025)

Member Virginia is featured in a Metro article, which includes distressing details of her experiences and situation, as well as a quote from the Journey Group.

Read the article here.



Home Office 'refuses to believe Kenyan asylum seeker is a lesbian'

ORIGINAL
Josh Milton
Published January 31, 2025 1:09pm **Updated** January 31, 2025 4:45pm

Comments

Making connections

(2nd February 2025)

A big thank you to Rainbow Connections for going out of their way to welcome Journey members to their monthly social. Organiser Bryony got in touch, then came to one of our Journey meetings to talk to members and encourage them to try it out. Journey is covering members' travel costs.
To find out more about Rainbow Connections, visit the website.

Journey members said:

"It was lovely."
"Very friendly people."



Light up!

(30th January 2025)

At the end of 2024, several of our members were involved with Light Up Fest, an initiative by Autin Dance Theatre to involve the community in making paper lanterns. It culminated in a procession through Cannon Hill Park, and this video of the event features many Journey Group members.

Watch it on YouTube here.



Family

(27th January 2025)

Sarah Favier, a family therapist and queer woman, visited our January meeting. Sarah is writing an article for a family therapy magazine and was interested in how the group referred to Journey as 'family'. She asked our members about how they experience the Journey group as similar and different to a family, and whether there are any messages they would like to share with mental health professionals.

Sarah said:

"I am very grateful to the group and leaders for their contributions and will be back to check in about what gets published."



Visibility and intimacy

(24th January 2025)

Thank you to Fabric for free tickets to 'Plue', a dance performance by Eli Lewis and Joe Garbett. Their "hypnotic duet" is an exploration of "the gap between how queer people feel and how they're seen".

Journey members said:

"What truly stood out was the connection between the dancers and their ability to express emotions so vividly through their movements."
"It's was wow. Thanks for the opportunity. Actually it made me feel more relaxed mentally."



Annual report published

(20th January 2025)

The Journey Group's annual report for 2024 is now available to download from the website. It summarises our activities for the year, with lots of photos and quotes from members. It also includes well-deserved thank yous to our Buddies, volunteers and supporters, and sets out our priorities for 2025.
Read it here.

Journey LGBT+ Asylum Group



Annual Report 2024

Celebrating another successful year.

Lights, camera, action!

(15th January 2025)

Several Journey members took part in the first session of 'Creative Futures', a series of film making workshops for men, run by Birmingham Rep Theatre. From January, participants will work together to produce a short film, and then the films will be shown to festival audiences in July. Throughout the process they will learn film making skills, such as camera, lighting, directing, acting and editing.

Journey members said:

"I had a great time and learned new things like acting, filming equipment and its prices, and how to make a movie."
"It was an amazing session. I hope we can do something great."
"It was very productive session. I took part in one example exercise and I think I will learn a lot there."
"It was amazing and I learned some acting and how to make films. I really enjoyed this workshop."



Bah humbug!

(5th January 2025)

Our first activity of 2025 was a trip to Birmingham Rep Theatre to see their lavish production of 'A Christmas Carol'. Four intrepid members braved the snow outside to enjoy the spooky, funny and joyful show.
A big thank you to the Rep for the tickets, and for its continuing support of the Journey Group.

Journey members said:

"The show was great, sad at first, but when the old man changed his mind, the show became amazing. This teaches us to be open-minded, which is the right thing to do. I enjoyed it very much."
"Today's experience was very very good. I did enjoy it very much."
"I enjoyed every minute of the show. The wonderful display and sound effects were amazing, the actors nailed it."
"It was an amazing day. Thank you to everyone.".



[News from 2024]

The Journey LGBT+ Asylum Group is a registered CIO (charitable incorporated organisation), number 1212001. It is organised entirely by volunteers.



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