



### **Civic Pride Singers**

Throughout 2021/22, Barnsley Civic recruited a number of focus groups, the first of which was an LGBTQIA+ focus group for people aged 18+. The group's age range was 21 – 65 and included people from all walks of life and professions. The group supported the development of our marketing, programming, development of safe spaces and fed into organisational training – LGBTQIA+ Awareness was made available to all staff, including front-of-house and at board level. The group also took part in artistic opportunities, supporting the development of new work created by national LGBTQIA+ artists at the Civic and generally became community advocates for Barnsley Civic.

When looking at ways to develop the group and Barnsley Civic's LGBTQ representation, they requested two things. The first was to site the 2022 Barnsley Pride festival in the Civic's Mandela Gardens, in recognition of the work we're doing for Barnsley's LGBTQ community and culture. This happened in July 2022 and was incredibly successful. The second thing was to develop some kind peer support or social group that takes part in visual or performing arts activities.

Civic Pride Singers was the new singing and social group for Barnsley residents identifying as LGBTQIA+. This project was a natural progression from what was our LGBTQIA+ focus group for people aged 18+ in 2021/22 and our partnership with Barnsley Pride festival.

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Led by Barnsley Civic and a lead musician, the group have held a session every two weeks since October 2023 and sessions have been comprised of singing uplifting songs of pride and celebration. We currently have around 40 regular members and around 15 turn up to any one session. The group is based at Barnsley Civic's theatre.

The session offers a safe space for people to meet other members of the LGBTQIA+ community and for some people it became their first safe public space to be their genuine selves. We ensure that attendees can be sign-posted to appropriate support services if they need them, and that literature and resources are available in sessions. We invite community leaders from local LGBTQIA+ support group, who are now also regulars. The group is disability and neurodivergent friendly, and recognise the common intersection of trans and non-binary people with those that are neurodivergent.

The group offers a safe space for those transitioning to become comfortable with their voices, in a non-critical place, while their bodies change. The group as also offered fun educational opportunities, where younger members will learn about queer pop icons of the 60s – 90s, and older members learn about queer pop icons of the present scene.

While the group's primary aim is to support the positive mental health and wellbeing of local LGBTQIA+ residents, the group's long-term artistic aim is to become a recognised local vocal group that can perform at local events, such as Barnsley Pride. The group is currently supported through Better Barnsley Bond.

<https://barnsleycivic.co.uk/get-involved/projects/>