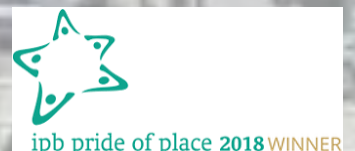
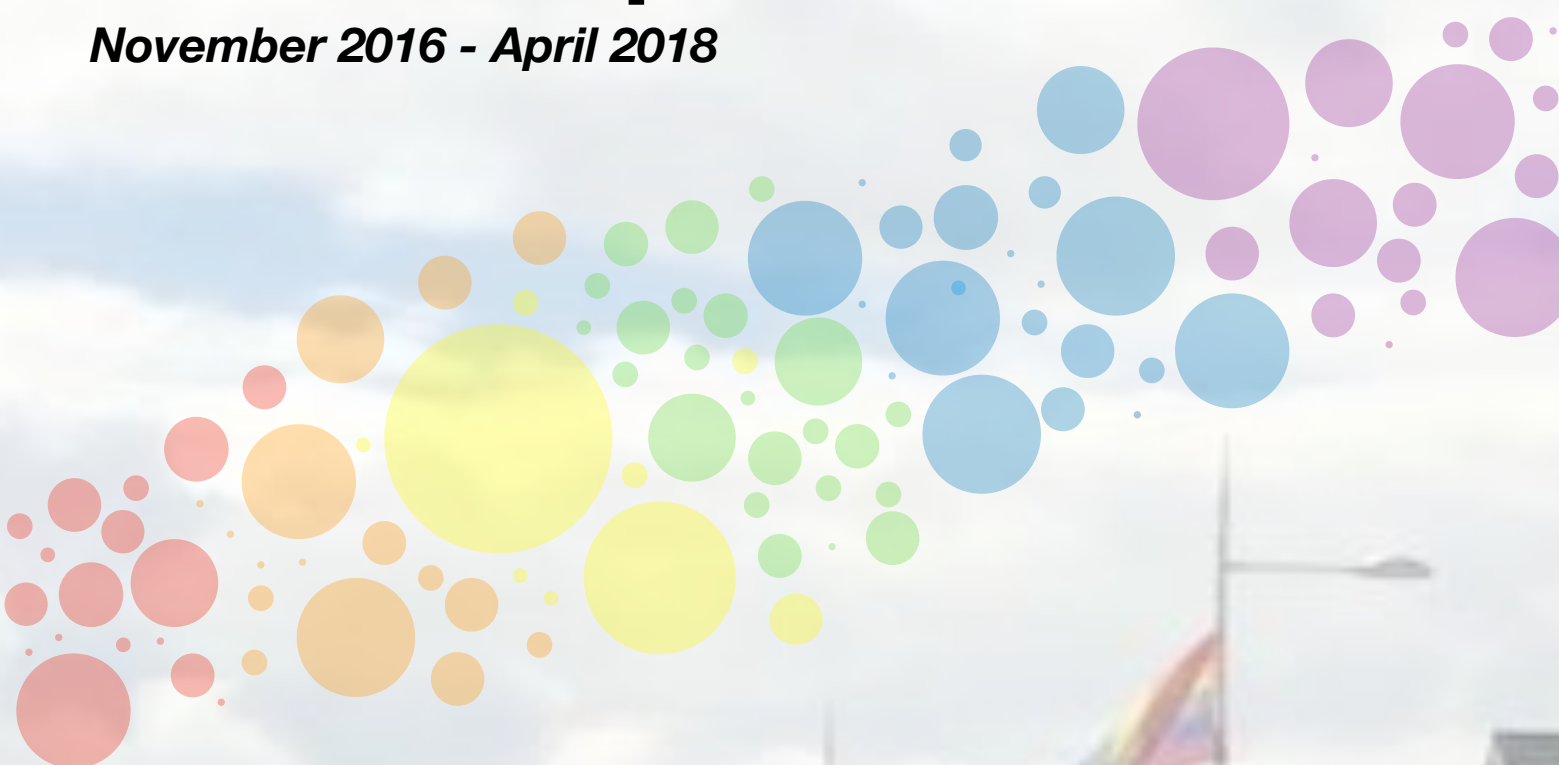




# Annual Report

November 2016 - April 2018



**Northern Ireland Charity Number:** NIC101084

**Northern Ireland Charity Commission Registration Date:** 27/11/2014

**History:** The Newry Rainbow Community was established in 2001 and constituted in 2005 as a social, befriending and informational organisation for the benefit of the LGBT community in Newry City and the surrounding counties of Armagh, Down and Louth.

The NRC has been proactive in identifying and addressing the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Newry and surrounding areas.

We have lobbied and advocated on behalf of LGBT people locally and regionally. From September 2010 the NRC has operated a dedicated support Centre, Rainbow House run entirely by Volunteers, in Newry City to provide drop-in, information and advice services to LGBT people and their families and friends. It is the only such Centre outside Belfast and Dublin on the East Coast of Ireland.

The NRC has worked to build relationships both within the LGBT community and between the LGBT community and wider society through lobbying, advocacy, awareness-raising activities and the development of social and networking opportunities for LGBT people which culminated in the first ever Pride In Newry festival and parade in September 2012 which witnessed very strong visible support and participation by the wider civic, political and community sectors of Newry and which developed a range of new volunteering opportunities.

This major festival enables the NRC to increase the visibility of the NRC as an organisation and to portray LGBT people in a positive way, breaking down barriers and stereotypes and promoting community cohesion and the integration and participation of LGBT people in all aspects of the wider community and civic life of Newry.

The fact that Newry City was seen as a tolerant, safe place where a Pride parade and festival could be hosted was a significant factor in the achievement of Purple Flag status for Newry City Centre.

**Governing Document:** Constitution.

**Aim:** To improve the life quality and confidence of LGBT people, their families and friends.

**Objectives:** The advancement of education, The advancement of health or the saving of lives, The advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity, The relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage.

**Core Remit:** Advice/advocacy/information, Community development, Counselling/support, Education/training, Human rights/equality, Volunteer development.

**Public Benefit:** The charity's beneficiaries are lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender people living in Newry City and the surrounding counties of Armagh, Down and Louth. The charity's beneficiaries also include family members and friends of lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender people living in Newry City and the surrounding counties of Armagh, Down and Louth. Indirect benefits include a reduction in the number of homophobic incidents, an increase in the confidence of LGBT people, an increase year-on-year in the number of people attending the Pride In Newry parade and festival.

**Out Going Management Committee:** At the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in November 2016 the following members were elected to serve on the committee of the Newry Rainbow Community in pursuance of the aims, objectives and remit of the organisation.

Rory Rafferty - Chairperson (Trustee)  
Damian Mckevitt - General Secretary (Trustee)  
Karen Rafferty - Treasurer  
Padraig Lynch - Member without portfolio. (Trustee)  
Padraig Mullally - Member without portfolio.  
Matthew Marshall - Member without portfolio.  
Cathal Lynch - Member without portfolio.  
Darren Campbell - Member without portfolio.

**Trustee Report:** Rainbow House, The Newry Rainbow Community and its subsidiaries have always faced many difficult challenges. The reporting 18 months focused on in this report have been no different. The NRC has continued to deliver services, developed new initiatives and projects, consolidated and built on the significant progress that had been achieved for the community in Newry and surrounding areas.

The NRC has realised considerable achievements and is highly regarded as an extremely credible and accountable organisation by the statutory and voluntary organisations in Newry.

This years annual report comes amidst a particularly difficult backdrop and time for the organisation with many new challenges on the immediate horizon.

Previous Annual Reports spoke of much positivity and delight at the incredible efforts of our Volunteers, the NRC had achieved its aim of consolidating and securing a dedicated LGBT drop-in Centre aptly named Rainbow House highlighting major achievements and initiatives undertaken by the NRC. Given the significant challenges and pressures that continue to face the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland this was and remains a major achievement.

Utilising the substantive space of Rainbow House has enabled the NRC to work strategically and in partnership with a range of organisations, the security it has provided in terms of an operational base has been instrumental to the success of the many groups that operate from the premises.

Having dedicated premises in a central prominent location in Newry has dramatically increased the visibility of the NRC as an organisation and of LGBT people generally helping to create a more vibrant, confident and focused community locally.

2018 sees Northern Ireland and Rainbow House in a period of flux i.e: without a rights-based society or a government to implement legislation that is available in the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. We live in one of the most homophobic places in Europe and have a disproportionately high LGBT suicide rate, where LGBT people, their families and their relationships are not recognised via equal marriage. We are also lacking a sexual orientation or gender identity strategy resulting in funding for vital services being at an all time low.

The sustainability of Rainbow House is now in jeopardy and requires immediate action. As Rainbow House will close in April 2018, we want to ensure essential services are

available to those vulnerable members of society who require them on a local level. It is equally vital that organisations exist to campaign for the rights of LGBT people and families to continue the strides that have already been made into the future.

The continued provision of a dedicated Centre for LGBT people is of paramount importance and will deliver long term outcomes and benefits that will make a lasting impact on their lives and their life opportunities.

**Services, projects and programmes delivered:** Rainbow House has continued to deliver a comprehensive range of information, support and services to LGBT people, and their families and friends, through, for example, personal development courses; advocacy and referrals; signposting; befriending service; professional counselling; rapid HIV testing; sexual health advice; health & wellbeing Yoga classes; movie nights; social events; organised mystery tour; a dedicated NRC women's group, NRC youth group, trans, non-binary, questioning and intersex group GenderJam, families of transgender and gender variant group, SAIL and a family support group, NRC The Outlaws.

Rainbow House is also a base for the delivery of support through the Same-sex Family initiative being rolled out by The Rainbow Project and HereNI. As well as host to other groups including Women's Aid, Newry 2020, Iúr Cinn Fleadh, Newry DEA, Newry Camera Club etc...

In another sign of progress the NRC was asked, as an integral element of a Personal Development Programme, to develop and deliver Sexuality and Gender Identity awareness workshops to YEAR 12 pupils in St. Josephs Secondary School in Newry City. This was an extremely important and successful engagement with both pupils and staff in one of Newry's biggest schools. The inter-active sessions over three days were designed to help pupils to positively engage, in a safe and confidential environment, with sensitive issues around sexuality, gender and emotional wellbeing.

**Yoga/Zumba/Walking Group and Circuit Training:** As part of the ongoing effort to promote the physical health well-being of members and service users, a number of 6 week Yoga and Zumba classes continue to be held and well attended in Rainbow House. In addition, Circuit training and walking group sessions and meet ups continue to prove a popular resource.

**Counselling/Suicide Prevention/Befriending:** As part of the ongoing effort to promote the mental health and well-being of members and service users, confidential counselling, crisis meetings, suicide prevention, assist and befriending services continue to be held in Rainbow House. The last 18 months have seen a sharp increase in the number of individuals seeking these services.

**Sexual Health Services/Rapid HIV Testing:** As part of the ongoing effort to promote the sexual health and well-being of members and service users, confidential sexual health and Rapid HIV testing services continue to be held in Rainbow House. The last 18 months have seen a sharp increase in the number of individuals seeking these services.

**NRC The Outlaws:** The outlaws continue to meet and provide services to friends, family and allies of the LGBT community. With over 140 members, They have grown considerably over the past 18 months and have become an extremely active group within Rainbow House hosting many seasonal family events throughout the year including Christmas jumper nights, Santa Sunday's, Easter bonnet nights, Easter egg hunts, halloween parties, cocktail nights, wine and cheese evenings, gay aunts/uncles day, dress like a rainbow and pride events. They have held over 20 events, social outings and welcome meets for new members. The group recently secured a dedicated support telephone number which was launched at another of their own events at Rainbow House. They can be contacted via their new number : 077 451 43 733



**NRC Youth Group:** The NRC youth group continue to meet and provide social opportunities for LGBT young people in Newry, Mourne, Down and surrounding areas in a fun and safe place to come and hang out. Run by the youth, for the youth. Age group: 16 - 21.

**NRC Women's Group:** The NRC Women's group continue to meet and provide social opportunities for lesbian, bisexual and trans women in Newry, Mourne, Down and surrounding areas.

**SAIL:** We have continued to work closely with the SAIL organisation (Support, Acceptance, Information and Learning) a voluntary support group for family, friends, carers and individuals living with gender issues allowing the two organisations to work much more effectively in partnership on a broad range of issues including opportunities for joint lobbying and advocacy.

**GenderJam:** We have continued to work closely with GenderJam, providing them with a venue to host their bi monthly social meet ups for trans, non binary and intersex young people. This safe space for trans youth is vital for Newry, and our two organisations have worked closely together on a broad range of other issues including opportunities for joint lobbying and advocacy.



**Pride In Newry Awards:** In February 2017, the First Ever Pride in Newry Awards (Celebrating five years of Pride In Newry) took place. This sold out prestigious event included a Red Carpet, Official Photographer, Champagne Drinks Reception, 3 Course Meal, Just Adam Band along with DJ and Compere Lady Portia Di Monte. The event had over 500 attendees including 60 nominees in 12 categories voted for by the public. The Pride in Newry Awards recognised and celebrated the positive impact of five years of the Pride In Newry Festival & Parade, 2012 – 2016. The outstanding contributions of individuals, groups and organisations that have made a difference to the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people over the prior five years showcasing the great work, and

people, that have over this time greatly increased the visibility, raised awareness and helped to portray LGBT people in a positive way, breaking down barriers, challenging stereotypes and at the same time promoting a City & District that truly recognises and values diversity.

**St Patricks Day Parade:** In march 2017, as part of the ongoing effort to promote the positive visibility of the organisation and LGBT people generally, The NRC took part in the 2017 St Patricks Day Celebrations with a float in the parade.

**Marriage Equality Campaign - Mock Wedding at Parliament Building's:** In May 2017 members of the NRC, Neal Rush and his partner Mark McLoughlin took to the steps of Parliament Buildings and staged a mock wedding to campaign for marriage equality in the North Of Ireland attracting significant media interest and support. There have been five votes in the Assembly calling for the introduction of marriage equality here. On the most recent vote, the marriage equality side won a majority for the first time, however, the DUP lodged a petition of concern to veto the majority vote of the Assembly and block the introduction of marriage equality. We remain the only place anywhere on these islands where Marriage Equality has not yet been legislated for (Marriage Equality has already been introduced in England, Scotland, Wales and the republic of Ireland).



**Marriage Equality Campaign - Love on the street:** In June 2017 members of the NRC took part in the "Love Equality" "Love on the street" campaign leaflet drop in Newry to raise awareness of the Marriage Equality campaign across the north. Love Equality is a campaign led by a consortium of organisations who are campaigning for the introduction of legislation in the Northern Ireland Assembly for equal civil marriage for same sex couples. The organisations involved in the Love Equality campaign have each been involved in the campaign for equal civil marriage for years. From 2012 – 2015 these organisations were involved in a range of campaigns including supporting four equal marriage motions which were brought before the Northern Ireland Assembly, and actively lobbying our local politicians.



**Marriage Equality Rally:** In July 2017 members of the NRC attended and spoke at the Marriage Equality Rally held in Belfast. Dermot Rafferty from NRC The outlaws was a keynote speaker at the event addressing the 25,000 strong crowd coining a new catch phrase (What's the Problem? There is NO PROBLEM!)



**Belfast/Dublin Pride Festivals** In July and August 2017, as part of the ongoing effort to promote the positive visibility of the organisation, to promote Pride in Newry and to continue to raise awareness of the Marriage Equality campaign still ongoing in the North, the NRC took part in both festival's parades with a marriage equality themed float.

**Pride in Newry:** September 2017 saw the 7th Annual Pride In Newry Event which was the largest to date and remains a major annual undertaking and is now a landmark event in the life of Newry City. Pride in Newry has created a broad platform to showcase the diversity of communities and cultures in Newry City.



The week-long Pride festival, sees a wide range of activities take place across the city but the undoubted highlight of the week is the Pride Parade through Newry City Centre and the Party in the Park concert at McClelland Park. Featuring floats, music, Samba Band and walkabout circus performers, the parade brings a carnival of colour and sparkle to the streets of Newry.

The Pride In Newry festival is a successful major public event that attracts thousands of people into Newry City

centre to participate in and view the parade, concert and outdoor entertainment, providing significant economic benefit to local businesses and is now an important major annual event in the tourism package of Newry Mourne and Down District.

The Pride in Newry Festival is exactly what it says – pride in our City. It's about celebrating the people, places and progress of Newry City as it moves forward with confidence and truly valuing the diversity of all its people and communities. Newry has changed so much, particularly in the past ten years, and our City is so much more diverse now than ever and we are very proud of the contribution the NRC and our LGBT community has made to that change.



**Remembering Trailblazers:** As part of The Pride In Newry festival in 2017 the Newry Rainbow Community remembered, paid tribute to and celebrated the life of one of Newry's LGBT Icons, the inspirational Gerald Magee. Speakers at the event drew particular attention to Gerald's bravery and his contribution to the remarkable journey the LGBT community has made in Newry. We were honoured to be able to do this in the presence of Gerald's sister Úna Cregan, and other family members.

**PSNI LGBT Recruitment Evening's:** In November 2017 The PSNI held a series of recruitment information evening's geared towards LGBTI+ people in Rainbow House, Newry. At these events, participants where able to find out more information on the recruitment process and hear about the experiences of serving LGBTI+ Police officers in the Police Service. A panel of serving officers and PSNI Human resources staff where on hand to answer questions relating to the recruitment process and about the exciting career possibilities in the Police Service.

### **IPB Pride Of Place Award.**

In December 2017, members of Newry Rainbow Community along with Newry, Mourne and Down Council, Deputy Chairperson, Councillor William Clarke and Good Relations Officer, Kerry Morrow took the trip to Letterkenny for the IPB Pride of Place Awards. The awards acknowledge the achievements and the invaluable work undertaken by volunteers and those involved in local community development. The NRC took the runner up award in Category six in the Cities Competition, which is for Social Inclusion and Equality Initiatives.



### **Valentines Call For Marriage Equality**

To coincide with valentines day, On Feb 14th 2018, representatives from the NRC met with Love Equality and all political parties with the exception of the DUP to add our voice to the growing demand for marriage equality here. A majority of MLA's are in favour, Over 70% of the general public are in favour yet a party with the word 'democratic' in their title continue to block change and ignore the will of the public...

### **Reparative therapy Protest.**

In March 2018 The Newry Rainbow Community and the LGBT+ community held a peaceful demonstration outside a church in Ballynahinch where a religious cult was screening the film 'Voices of the Silenced' after Queens University sensibly refused to screen it. The film, it's contents and the practice of "gay cure/therapy" has been widely discredited globally by the medical profession. We in the NRC wholly condemn any attempt to promote or include the globally discredited 'gay conversion therapy' as a viable, safe or possible option. We must protect our young and vulnerable people from these dangerous people, their practices and their rhetoric! It was gratifying to know that Northern Ireland's leading seat of learning and enlightenment demonstrated its support for respect, equality, diversity and inclusion. The demonstration was supported by over 100 people who came out to show solidarity and support of the LGBT+ community, which was in stark contrast to the handful within the church. It was gratifying to be able to once again have an opportunity to highlight to the public the practiced intolerance shown toward the LGBT+ community by those who claim to be Christians. The most important message we have for those in our community who are LGBTQ is that being LGBT in entirely natural, is not

deviant nor sinful. If anyone requires advice or support there are many organisations across Northern Ireland including ourselves in Rainbow House in Newry.

**REGISTER OF MEMBERSHIP 2018 / 2019:** The register of membership of the NRC for the coming 2018 / 2019 accounting period opened on the 1st and closed on the 31st March 2018.

The NRC and Rainbow house is a major undertaking for the entirely voluntary, dedicated team involved and throws up many challenges, not the least of them being resources...



Over the last number of years, we have been trying to grow our membership to include allies, supporters and associate groups as well as those who use NRC services throughout the year.

This year the NRC has seen a huge 520% increase in membership applications representing a considerable growth of parties interested in the survival and continued success of the organisation.



**2018x100 Campaign:** We want to build our own bespoke premises which will secure our survival and growth. We appreciate that this is a large undertaking on our own but with the help of others, the enormity of this task can be tackled.

We are contacting 2,018 sponsors to ask for a £100 donation each to help us continue to make a positive and meaningful difference to our community and the wider community in Newry, Mourne and Down. Our aim is to raise **£201,800.00**.

All donors will be listed on our website, social media, and "The Rainbow House 2018x100 campaign plaque" that will form a permanent part of the new Rainbow House premises

**Working towards continued progress:** The NRC continues its efforts to build relationships both within the LGBT community and between the LGBT community and wider society through increased visibility, lobbying, advocacy, awareness-raising activities and the development of social and networking opportunities for all. The Pride In Newry festival and parade bears witness to the increasing visibility and confidence of LGBT people and to the increasing awareness and support that they have within the wider civic, political and community sectors of Newry.

The NRC will continue at every opportunity to publicly raise awareness of LGBT issues and to portray LGBT people in a positive way, breaking down barriers and stereotypes and promoting the integration and participation of LGBT people in all aspects of the wider community and civic life of Newry Mourne and Down District.

We believe that things have changed for the better in the lives of the local LGBT community in Newry compared to even just a few years ago. When people who went away from Newry, because it wasn't a comfortable place to be for them, tell you that it has changed so much for the better and that it's in no small way due to the efforts of the Newry Rainbow Community maybe it is time to sit and reflect on how far we have come in a few

short years. While the NRC certainly couldn't claim all the credit for this in a society that is changing as a whole, we think that what the NRC has been doing over the past number of years is actually now making a real difference to people's lives on the ground, in our local communities.

Regrettably, due to many factors including funding and resources being at an all time low, Rainbow House, at 28a Monaghan Street - which has been established for over 3 years is set close at the end of April 2018.

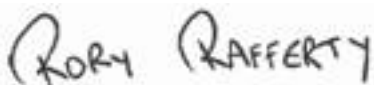
We are appealing to anyone who can offer help and assistance in the fight to save and maintain this vital service. It has taken many years, and much painstaking work to grow the organisation to what it is today.

Recent developments have been a massive setback and the closure of Rainbow House will mark a huge loss to the wider community. Rainbow House provides services to the LGBT community including drop-in, counselling, family support, personal development, sexual health and rapid HIV testing, sexuality/gender identity workshops, GenderJam, Same Sex Family projects, youth groups, women's groups and film clubs and also host to a number of local and regional organisations allowing them to operate and work from our premises. These organisations include Women's Aid, The Suicide Prevention/Assist Service, Newry DEA meetings, Iúr Cinn Fleadh, Newry Camera Club, Irish Language Classes etc.

We seek frank and open discussions with NMDDC and others to explore short and long-term solutions for Rainbow House including securing the long term aim of a permanent premises where the organisation can continue to flourish without fear of eviction.

It is of imperative importance that Rainbow House has a long-term and secure base, with visible frontage. A new Rainbow House, owned by and for the community.

On behalf of the organisation, we would like to thank everyone for attending this meeting and their support thus far. We would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate the help and support still required. The people of Newry, Mourne & Down are well-known for coming together to help one another in times of need. This is one of those times. We sincerely plea to the people to once again come together to help keep Rainbow House in the heart of your community.



RORY RAFFERTY

Chairperson.

Newry Rainbow Community  
Pride In Newry  
Rainbow House

[www.gaynewry.com](http://www.gaynewry.com)

[www.prideinnewry.com](http://www.prideinnewry.com)

[www.rainbowhousenewry.com](http://www.rainbowhousenewry.com)