

## Liberate Annual Report for 2015

### Our Mission

Our mission is to include, inform and support the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) communities across the Bailiwick of Guernsey. Our underlying tenets are:-

- Include
- Reform
- Inform
- Support

An integral part of Liberate's mission is to ensure that all Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) people feel included in our Island community, and that they have a 'place'.

At Liberate we believe that one day we will all be treated equally under the law, no matter what our gender, race, religious belief, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

We provide support to those with questions about their sexuality and any aspect of LGBTQ life, the families and friends of the LGBTQ community, and to all who feel they need it for any reason.

### The Liberate Committee

Liberate is an inclusive Group, which welcomes people irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity, religious belief, race, or disability. We are a local charity and were founded on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2014 in Guernsey. We later assisted in the establishment of a separate branch in Jersey.

Liberate is made up of a virtual rainbow of people from every different gender and sexual identity you could possibly think of. By having such a diverse crowd involved we can operate on many different levels as we all bring something different to the group.

Martin Gavet was Chair of the committee from its inception in 2014 until he stepped down towards the end of 2015. The Chair is now Pippa McCathie. Vice Chair is Ellie Jones.

Since Liberate's establishment a vast amount of work has been completed using the voluntary efforts of a large number of people. As a result, the money passing through our bank account has not reflected the value already added to the Bailiwick's LGBTQ community, and efforts have been focused on results rather than fundraising to pay for them.

## Goals and objectives for 2015

- to question social attitudes and behaviours which discriminate against LGBTQ people, and offer advice and help in tackling homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, etc.
- to campaign to reform laws and policies to ensure that LGBTQ people could enjoy the same freedom to marry as everyone else in the Channel Islands.
- to challenge politicians on a wide range of current discriminatory laws and policies, to ensure that LGBTQ people will, one day, be treated equally.
- to promote Liberate as a group that will provide support and help to people that struggle to come to terms with their sexuality or gender identity, or have problems surrounding their family, friends, peers or colleagues' reaction to it.
- to support the families and friends of those who 'come out' as lesbian, gay, transgender, etc, and assist in their understanding and acceptance of their family member's sexuality/gender.

## Highlights in 2015

- the States of Guernsey agreed to introduce same sex marriage in December 2015
- the States of Guernsey agreed, in December 2015, to update the Income Tax Law so that LGBTQ people are no longer treated differently.
- a number of LGBTQ people were helped by our confidential support service.

## Details of activities and impact

### Include

In September 2015, the very first Channel Islands Pride event took place in Jersey. Plans are under way for a Pride event in Guernsey in 2016. Channel Islands Pride will become an annual event where Guernsey and Jersey take turns in hosting it every other year. We hope to make this the first, true pan-island event in the Channel Islands, and we hope this tradition will continue for generations to come.

Also in September, Liberate, in conjunction with Guernsey MIND, produced a short film about the labels people give themselves. This film was shown in October as part of the 'Breaking the Barriers' conference, hosted by Guernsey MIND during Mental Health Week.

In October 2015 we introduced a section of our website specifically dedicated to Trans people, as this is still an area where people tend to feel more isolated.

## Reform

There are many benefits to an inclusive society. Laws which tackle discrimination send out a clear signal that discrimination is not acceptable. It protects those who are otherwise vulnerable, as it makes them feel valued and that they make a contribution to the fabric of our society. Furthermore, it promotes their mental and physical wellbeing.

Statistically, LGBTQ people are at twice the risk of self-harm, substance misuse, depression, anxiety or suicidal feelings. This can be due to discrimination, rejection and/or isolation within their immediate circle of family and friends, bullying or harassment at school or in the workplace, rejection by faith communities, etc. By adopting such laws and policies, which challenge discrimination, a society helps to reduce that risk. Until LGBTQ people receive those same rights and freedoms, they will remain second class citizens.

In June, the Union Civile consultation was launched in Guernsey. Liberate produced a very successful social media campaign encouraging everyone in Guernsey to have their say – as a result the States of Guernsey had the highest engagement with a consultation from the public ever, with over 80% wanting reform in favour of same sex couple. This came after discussions with Guernsey's Chief Minister, Jonathan Le Tocq, on the subject of same sex marriage, civil partnerships and the various options available in Guernsey. It was decided that the Policy Council would launch a public consultation process. Public opinion clearly favoured introducing full equal marriage over Union Civile or any other sort of civil partnership. Also in June, Guernsey States agreed to proposals from the Policy Council on allowing same sex couples to adopt.

We watched as the States of Jersey passed a law protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination in June, and in September, they agreed to introduce same sex marriage, with the law to be drafted by 2017.

In December 2015, the States of Guernsey debated the introduction of Same Sex Marriage. Again Liberate very successfully campaigned via local and social media channels in the run up to the vote - this was mainly in reaction to an anti same sex marriage group which arrived on the island in the run up to the vote. The result was 37 votes to 7 in favour of its introduction.

Also in the same States session, it was agreed to address discrimination against LGBTQ people within the current Income Tax Law.

## Inform

We have our very own advice columnist on the “#AskBrad” page on our website. This was launched in March 2015.

# LIBERATE



In May 2015, Prospect, the union for professionals, featured an article on Liberate and the work we are doing.

In October 2015, Liberate was on the final shortlist of three of the Guernsey Community Foundation for Charity of the Year at its annual Community Awards.

## Support

Sad though it may be, because of some people's attitude to, and lack of knowledge about, the LGBTQ community, those with questions about their sexuality and those who still haven't shared their orientation with their parents, family and friends, often need the support of someone who has been there. We at Liberate have worked to provide this support in 2015, both privately and publicly, to all who felt they needed it.

We want to create a place of openness and honesty where anyone from the LGBTQ or the wider community, can ask about LGBTQ issues. People can ask us anything and we'll try to answer as honestly as possible. We hope it will help break down some barriers, dispel some myths and help as many people as possible. We are there to listen and offer help. If counselling or professional help is needed, we can help put people in touch with the relevant services/organisations.

Aaron, Gemma, Martin & Pippa are our Support Volunteers and have helped several people during 2015.

There are email addresses for Liberate in both Guernsey and Jersey that people can use to contact us. There is also an "Ask Liberate" page on our website ([www.liberate.gg](http://www.liberate.gg)) where people can contact us in confidence.

Our website also contains links to national organisations which can help and support LGBTQ people.