



‘Creative Solidarity: Shaping Older LGBTQ+ Support in Arts & Wellbeing Services’ Forum summary

Quick recap

This toolkit outlines the key insights and learnings from the Forum Discussion held on 22nd October 2026. Hosted by **Flourishing Lives** in partnership with **LGBT Consortium’s** London Engagement Officer, **Ray Carter**, the session explored how arts, culture, and wellbeing organisations can actively include, support, and stand in ‘creative solidarity’ with older LGBTQ+ adults.

1. The Catalyst & Context: Systemic Gaps & Historical Legacy

The forum grew out of the work of the **Older LGBTQ+ Londoners’ Roundtable**, an infrastructure coalition convened by LGBT Consortium following the sudden closure of **Opening Doors** (London’s primary charity supporting LGBTQ+ people over 50). The session focused on moving beyond basic safety or avoiding abuse toward enabling older LGBTQ+ adults to live rich, self-determined lives through creative campaigning and structural advocacy.

The session outlined five critical systemic barriers facing older LGBTQ+ communities:

- **Historical Discrimination & Cumulative Trauma:** Decades of legal persecution, social stigma, Section 28, criminalisation, and institutional mistreatment directly impact present health, self-esteem, and willingness to access care.
- **Unsafe Social Care Settings:** Older adults face widespread homophobia, transphobia, and a lack of cultural competency within formal social care systems, often forcing elders back into the closet.
- **Acute Loneliness & Breakdown of Kinship:** Older LGBTQ+ adults are significantly less likely to have children or biological family support networks, leading to profound isolation when queer community spaces close.
- **Housing Precarity & Financial Strain:** High living costs in urban areas disproportionately affect older LGBTQ+ renters, particularly trans elders, LGBTQ+ People of Colour (QTIPOC), and low-income individuals.
- **Digital Exclusion & Loss of Non-Online Spaces:** The shift to digital-only information creates major barriers for older adults seeking queer community, reinforcing physical and social isolation.

Core Roundtable Demands: Investment in "by-and-for" peer-led groups over 50, inclusion of LGBTQ+ elders in local government strategy and health policy, cross-sector collaboration between arts and health providers, and pathways to safe, affirmative housing.

2. Theoretical & Conceptual Frameworks ("Creative Solidarity")

To frame the discussion, the forum explored the concept of "**Creative Solidarity**" across four main theoretical dimensions:

1. Solidarity as Active Political Action ("Showing Up"):

- Solidarity is a political commitment defined by actively "**showing up**" with your feet, votes, and actions for struggles beyond your immediate demographic.
- Citing historical precedents like the Gay Liberation Front supporting the Asian female workers during the 1970s Grunwick strike, delegates noted that solidarity means showing up for others rather than treating allyship as a passive feeling.

2. "Running the Same Risks" — Augusto Boal & Che Guevara:

- Citing theatre practitioner Augusto Boal and Che Guevara, delegates highlighted that solidarity is defined as "running the same risks".
- In creative health, this means recognising shared systemic vulnerabilities—such as climate precarity, late-capitalist economic squeezes, and funding erosion—to build genuine commonality between organisations and communities.

3. Disarmament & Deconstructing Hierarchies of Oppression:

- The group discussed the concept of "**disarmament**"—the process where funded arts institutions and grassroots groups lay down defensive postures by acknowledging power differentials, relative resources, and institutional privileges.
- Referencing Zadie Smith's essay collection *Intimations*, the forum reflected on the dangers of creating rigid "**hierarchies of suffering**" that cause minoritised groups to compete against one another rather than unite.

4. Creativity as Political Expression & Heritage:

- Delegates rejected passive "arts-and-crafts" activities for older adults. Creativity should function as a tool for self-advocacy, honouring queer

political history, celebrating chosen families, and actively challenging commercial ageist and heteronormative tropes.

3. Models of Practice & Case Studies

Case Study 1: Brixton Umbrella Circle (Intersectionality & Peer Support)

- **Context:** A community network bringing together older LGBTQ+ people in Lambeth across diverse social classes, ethnicities, faiths, and gender identities.
- **Solidarity Mechanism:** Using the shared baseline of surviving homophobia and transphobia as a unifying bridge to build solidarity across differing backgrounds.

Case Study 2: Sustainable Communities & LGBT Switchboard BOLD Services (Brain Health & Dignity)

- **Context:** Abu (Sustainable Communities) leads work for LGBTQ+ individuals over 40 living with dementia or memory loss; Helen (Charles, ex-LGBT Switchboard Brighton) established the *Memoir* project.
- **De-Stigmatising Memory Loss:** Transitioning away from medicalised labels toward "brain health," Helen created creative origami and venue-based group journeys across an age span of 50 to 100, proving that trust-building requires slow, gradual pacing.
- **Preserving Queer Identity:** Ensuring dementia does not consume the participant's identity, preserving dignity and self-expression.

Case Study 3: East London LGBT Seniors & Bijou Stories (Functional Intergenerational Collaboration)

- **Context:** Bill (East London LGBT Seniors) noted his group's experience where visiting passive commercial spaces (like old gay pubs) resulted in younger queers turning their backs on elders.
- **Functional Creative Working:** True intergenerational solidarity flourishes when younger and older LGBTQ+ adults collaborate on **functional creative tasks**—such as co-producing theatre, pantomimes, historical archives, or zines.
- **Bijou Stories & Avant-Gardening:** Led by Paul, collecting performance art, oral histories, and community stories to inform intergenerational arts projects.

Case Study 4: NHS Southwark & Progress Health & Wellbeing (QTIPOC Public Health Advocacy)

- **Context:** Facilitated by Andreas Intziegiannis in partnership with public health.

- **Creative Healthcare Access:** Using theatre and performance to gather the collective voices of older Queer, Trans, and Intersex People of Colour (QTIPOC) to challenge healthcare access barriers and inform local government strategy.

4. Key Learnings & Facilitation Nuances

- **Navigating Evolving Language:** Intergenerational work requires bridging vocabulary divides between generations (e.g. differing perceptions of the words "*gay*" vs "*queer*", or evolving gender terminology where younger queers use terms taken for granted while older adults may feel offended by terms used as insults during their youth).
- **Patience over Urgency in Trust-Building:** Due to past trauma and institutional mistreatment, older LGBTQ+ adults often hold deep mistrust toward formal services. Facilitators must avoid transactional deadlines, offering slow, consistent, and patient engagement.
- **Cross-Sector Partnerships for Continuity:** Freelance artists and small organisations frequently face short-term funding cycles that risk abandoning groups after trust is built. Sustainable practice demands cross-sector partnership working (e.g., arts organisations partnering with housing providers like Tonic Housing or health bodies) to maintain continuity.
- **Grassroots Volunteer Models & Economic Solidarity:** Volunteer-led initiatives (such as Rainbow Communities' befriending model) demonstrate how younger workers in commercial sectors can offer practical time and solidarity to older adults. Larger funded institutions must share resources without imposing gatekeeping.

5. Core Principles for Arts & Wellbeing Providers

- **Dismantle Condescending Paradigms:** Treat older LGBTQ+ adults as experts and custodians of rich cultural, political, and artistic history—never as passive recipients of simplified activities.
- **Build Functional Intergenerational Bridges:** Focus intergenerational encounters around shared artistic making (e.g. theatre, zines, archives) rather than unstructured socialising, allowing mutual learning and allyship to flow both ways.
- **Maintain Intersectional & Contextual Vigilance:** Acknowledge how ageism intersects with misogyny, transphobia, racism, and class precarity (e.g. gendered marketing tropes and heteronormative assumptions in commercial media).

- **Embed Disarmament in Institutional Partnerships:** Funded arts organisations must acknowledge their privilege and resource advantages, negotiating equitable terms that support grassroots queer groups.
- **Align Creative Wellbeing with Rights Advocacy:** Connect creative health interventions directly to advocacy around housing security, social care reform, and health equity.

6. Recommended Resources, Links & Contacts from Saved Chat

Reports, Studies & Strategic Frameworks

- **Precarious Lives Report (Tonic Housing & Opening Doors):** Research on financial precarity and housing strain for older LGBTQ+ adults.
 - *Link:* <https://www.tonichousing.org.uk/precariouslives>
- **State of Ageing Spotlight on LGBTQ+ Ageing (Centre for Ageing Better):** Statistical overview of health and social care disparities.
 - *Link:* <https://ageing-better.org.uk/resources/state-of-ageing-LGBTQ-spotlight>
- **Ageing on Our Own Terms (The Furzedown Project):** Guidance on supporting community groups and funding needs for older adults.
 - *Link:* https://www.furzedownproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Ageing_on_our_own_terms-Booklet.pdf
- **LEAP Study (University of Kent):** Researching LGBTQ+ inclusive home care provision for people over 60.
 - *Link:* [LEAP Study Information](#)
- **Being Ready Survey Report (Hospice UK & GIRES):** Trans-inclusive end-of-life and palliative care resources.
 - *Link:* <https://www.gires.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Being-Ready-Survey-Report-20250918.pdf>
- **Using creative methodology to explore LGBTQ+ love and relationship experiences across the lifespan: Developing inclusive and healthy spaces through positive intergenerational exchange.**
 - *Link:* <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2667321524000726?via%3Dihub>
- **Context for 'Justice for LGBTQ+ Londoners':**

- *Link:*
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1c4rIEF67UNELUuzCHEkHa88QRfn_bVPc/edit
- **LGBT Consortium Briefing Document May 2026:**
 - *Link:*
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Vb2N8B0ETZ2x4knw7rJw3laDG_J8InljTPPVoykYLq8/edit?tab=t.0
- **LGBTQ+ History & Intergenerational Practice:** Flourishing Lives resource hub on intergenerational balance.
 - *Link:* [Flourishing Lives Resource Hub](#)

Projects & Practitioner Organisations

- **LGBT Consortium:** Infrastructure charity supporting UK LGBT+ groups. Website: consortium.lgbt
- **Brixton Umbrella Circle:** Local peer-led network for older LGBTQ+ people in Lambeth. <https://www.consortium.lgbt/member-directory/brixton-umbrella-circle/>
- **Bijou Stories & Avant-Gardening:** Queer storytelling and community performance art. Website: <https://www.avantgardening.org/news/1068/bijou-stories>
- **Queer Diary:** Intergenerational coming-of-age memory sharing and zine workshops. Website: queerdiary.org.uk
- **London LGBTQ+ Community Centre:** Holistic community space in London. <https://londonlgbtqcentre.org/>
- **Tonic Housing:** Community-led LGBTQ+ affirmative retirement housing. <https://www.tonichousing.org.uk/>
- **Progress Health & Wellbeing:** Inclusive surgeries and healthcare access advocacy. <https://www.progresshw.com/>

Network Contacts Shared in Session Chat

- **Andreas Intziegiannis (Progress Health & Public Health Southwark):**
andreas@progresshw.com / andreas.intziegiannis@nhs.net
- **Paul (Bijou Stories / Avant-Gardening):** stories@avantgardening.info
- **Paul (Rainbow Communities):** paul@rainbowcommunities.org.uk
- **Jesualdo Lopes (London LGBTQ+ Community Centre):**
jesualdo@londonlgbtqcentre.org

- **Clare (Brixton Umbrella Circle):** brixtonumbrellacircle@gmail.com / clare.brixton@gmail.com
- **Tim Birkbeck (The Diversity Trust):** tim.birkbeck@diversitytrust.org.uk
- **Beth (Queer Diary):** hello@queerdiary.org.uk
- **Iain Cloke (Age UK Rotherham):** iain.cloke@ageukrotherham.org
- **Francesca (London Bisexual Games):** Londonbisexualgames@gmail.com
- **Thierry Alexandre (Axis Mundi Project):** jesuisart@gmail.com