

The Story of Pride Games

Almost ten years ago, a group of enthusiastic individuals (including me) inadvertently became involved in an NHS project seeking to tackle the number one killer in Great Manchester, Heart Disease, with a focus on the LGBT community. Its legacy was a handful of new voluntary community sports and leisure groups. Then, during 2000, we got a second big boost, from the Home Office this time and via Northern Wave Swimming Club, with a funded full time post to increase community volunteering in LGBT sports and leisure. This led to the birth of Pride Games and a collective legacy for all to see as we have now grown to over 30 groups! Seven of these groups started using Pride Games as a catalyst to capacity build, providing new healthier non scene alternatives for the LGBT community and friends, stimulating 'community' cohesion. The best part is, we've only just begun!

Our international multi-sport event was at EuroPride 2003, it was so successful it inspired us to have another go two years later in 2005 and we decided to brand this and future events 'Pride Games' and to increase the sports programme and broaden its appeal. 2005 was a very special event and the largest LGBT multi-sports tournament held in the North of England and probably the UK. Over 200 volunteers helped deliver this PG2005 and it attracted people from 18 countries, 10 people came out as gay for the first time and 1 moved to Manchester from Paris!

Now, let's take a step back for a minute, during the lead up to EuroPride 2003, Team Manchester sports groups, led by Northern Wave Swimming Club, played a key role in helping secure the bid to host EuroPride in our City by fulfilling the required community participation element with plans for our first international sports tournament and organising a very large and highly visible show of unity at that year's annual VBA Dinner. This began something of a trend with the VBA Dinner becoming a valued part of the social calendar. During preparations for the 2005 VBA Dinner, interest was very poor, this is when it became a community led event and was re-branded Pride Games Dinner as a community celebration and launch event for Pride Games. To facilitate this transition we formed a new voluntary community and business organisation called 'Serendipity'. We did this with our friends and supporters at Taurus Bar and it has gone on to assist a growing range of community events and activities and has a large membership.

Back to Pride Games! Originally there were no plans for a 2006 Pride Games as 2006 included two world events in the same period as Pride Games was planned. However, we had generated so much interest in 2005 that we decided we should do something and one of our volunteers suggested the Pride Games Lite concept, a simple UK focused version of Pride Games that would keep the flame burning and boost LGBT sports and leisure locally. This became a week long programme of events and tasters aimed at encouraging pride participation and personal best. Amazingly it was prepared before most key organisers left for The World Outgames in Montreal and was set in motion in the 48 hours before it was to begin! (with jet lag!). With only minor glitches it was a hugely successful event, generating another surge in participation locally and several new sports groups in the process!

Okay, so here we are today, we have two Pride Games completed 3 Pride Games Dinners and our most ambitious Pride Games for 2007 deep in planning and boasting new sports, increased visibility, more inclusive programme, more partners on board and at the requests of sponsors and partners, a new social enterprise to run it from called 'Pride Sports'. There is more than 25 years of combined grass roots community sports experience behind Pride Sports and it is actively rooted right here in Greater Manchester and is designed to support the interests of Team Manchester sports groups.

Wider community involvement in Pride Games activities and direction will be enabled through association, membership and participation in 'Team Manchester', a voluntary association of LGBT sports and leisure groups. Breadth of membership continues to enable support and expansion for the all important cultural aspects of Pride Games events. Pride Games participation is open to all gay friendly people and organisations.

Team Manchester sports and activity groups are at the very heart of our annual Pride Games and the fabulous Pride Games Dinner, which will feature an exciting new programme of quality entertainment including some home-grown talent surprises for 2007, a community market showcase and a central theme to celebrate our sports groups fantastic successes at the 1st World Outgames www.montreal2006.org followed by a thrust into the future with Copenhagen 2009 and the second World OutGames www.copenhagen2009.org

Pride Games 2007

Venues

Venues will include; Sport City, Manchester Aquatics Centre, Sports Development (Trinity), Miles Platting Pools, Salford Quays Water Sports Centre, Salford Sports Village, Salford University, Trafford Water Sports Centre. Others venues are being sought for Ballroom Dancing and Choral event(s).

Objectives

- Deliver the best quality event we can achieve within our partners
- Encourage Healthy gay lifestyles through sports and leisure
- Encouraging heterosexual participation to help us challenge homophobia in sport
- Raise the profile of lgbt sports, it's remarkable growth and its economic potential
- Attract sponsorship for the year round support of Team Manchester activities
- Increase community cohesion and active citizenship through common interest
- Establish Pride Games as an annual event with 'City' support
- Build a coalition of partners to help deliver future events

Delivery

Context – the Pride Sports / Pride Games team are mostly skilled experienced volunteers.

For successful delivery Pride Sports plans and co-ordinates the overall action plan and participating organisations take responsibility for delivery of an event or role that is in line with their specialism, area of work or business interest.

Partners

Building partnerships with a broad range of organisations is crucial for the delivery of Pride Games and we are keen to further expand our support networks. Our work is focused on what is often referred to as a 'Hard to Reach' group and as such can help organisations connect through participation in support and delivery of Pride Games. We are especially keen to develop closer relationships with local authorities, leisure trusts, national sports bodies, voluntary community organisations, volunteering organisations and businesses.

Our delivery partners for 2007 include; Pride Sports, Team Manchester Sports and leisure groups, Proud City – an Active Citizenship social enterprise, Ghap (Gay Healthy Alliance Project), Real Manchester, Taurus, Salford City Council, George House Trust, Hollywood Studio & Lounge, Vanilla, LGYM (Lesbian & Gay Youth Manchester, Out North West / LGF (Lesbian & Gay Foundation) and we are having promising conversations with other complimentary organisations.

Volunteering

We are working to develop a rich pool of experienced regular volunteers by arranging volunteer development, accreditation and support through our partnerships. We will link with the Commonwealth Games volunteer organisation, University of Salford - Volunteer England, Sports Volunteers North West and for accreditation Pride Sports has become an associate Centre of Proud City, enabling us to offer the unique City & Guilds qualification called "An Individual Profile in Active Citizenship" or iPAC for short. This is especially relevant as both unit and full accreditations are available and, most importantly, it is all about the individuals' journey and personal achievement. We aim to increase our volunteer opportunities year on year in association with our specialist partners to enable wider access and benefit and to value them with an internationally recognised certificate.

The Pride Games Legacy

- We are building the 'Team' into Team Manchester
- Increasing LGBT volunteering and active citizenship
- Supporting the start up of new sports and leisure groups
- Developing new groups to be self sustaining and independent
- Providing many varied healthy alternatives to the 'Scene'
- Breaking down social barriers and stimulating community cohesion
- Providing rehabilitation opportunities as recommended by health professionals
- Generating new volunteering opportunities
- Building new partnerships between business, communities and local authorities
- Providing positive role models for young people
- Attracting international expertise, support and cash to Manchester
- We are helping put Manchester on the international map through sports

During Pride Games 2005, Salford City Council supported the making of a Pride Games video to capture the spirit, the feeling, the breadth of participation and the success of our voluntary community action in progress. We introduced 3 totally new successful sports groups, engaged over 200 volunteers, attracted people from 18 countries around the world, enjoyed the support of 36 local organisations, direct advisory support and cash from our partners at Montreal 2006 (1st World Outgames team). All this helped us deliver the largest LGBT multi-sports event ever held in the UK. This fantastic video can be viewed via the 'news' section at www.pridegames.org

If you would like to share in our success and make a difference, please contact Trevor Burchick or Lou Englefield to arrange a meeting, a presentation. Thank you for your time.

Trevor Burchick MBE 2007