

# Communities and Covid

Stories of people, support and mobilisation across NI communities

Social Change Initiative (SCI), the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI), and the St. Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT) are working together to offer peacebuilding and social justice programmes that help support "positive peacebuilding" within and across communities.

The "Communities and COVID-19" story telling project sets out to capture the stories of the ways in which groups being supported by SCI, CFNI and SSGT responded to the new realities and impact of COVID-19 over the last 5 months.





# TransgenderNI

**“The reality is lockdown and coronavirus exacerbated the issues that already existed.”**

Transgender NI is dedicated to improving the lives of trans people across Northern Ireland, “focusing on legal reform, strategic policy, community resources and creating lasting change”.

Director Alexa Moore said the closure of its Belfast office and community space presented challenges during lockdown but the group was able to reach new people by moving services online.

“We had to close the office and the community space and were unable to run any in-person meet ups so we moved everything online.”

“It was important, particularly so at the start of lockdown, to have somewhere for people to be themselves.”

“The reality is lockdown and coronavirus exacerbated the issues that already existed.”

“Loneliness, isolation, incidences of domestic violence and abuse within homes did come up throughout lockdown.”

“The mental side of things was impacted.”

“Trans healthcare services have almost completely collapsed at this point over the last two and a half years.”

“Again this is not because of Covid but it has been exacerbated it.”

Online drop ins and community space, video game evenings set up “by a stroke of luck” before Covid became an issue, ran throughout lockdown.

Providing an online space that is moderated, safe and accessible was vital, Alexa explained.

“This provided a lot of help over a hard time for many folks,” she said.

“We reached people we didn’t reach before by doing things online, reaching people into rural communities and trans people who live outside Belfast.”

“We will be taking this forward after lockdown.”

While challenging in so many ways, Transgender NI director Alexa Moore believes that benefits of supporting and connecting with trans people online can be blended into their future approach:

“Providing an online space that is moderated, safe and accessible was vital”, Alexa explained. “This provided a lot of help over a hard time for many folks. We reached new people in rural communities and trans people living outside Belfast. We will be taking this forward after lockdown.”

