

## BASEMENT HOME 1981-1988

Manchester Gay Alliance moved from the basement on Waterloo Place into a new basement at 61A Bloom Street.

The Centre thrived in their new basement home, despite numerous attempts to stop core funding by some members of the council.

## GAY CENTRE: END IN SIGHT?

In 1983, the Centre's core funding was under threat. It was only the lobbying by centre staff and volunteers which persuaded the council to reconsider and continue to support the centre. After this, the Gay Centre's liaison officer set up a Friends of the Gay Centre Group, asking people to donate £10 a year to support the centre, as well as a cafe, the proceeds of which also went straight back into the centre.

Services which were run from the centre between 1981-1988 included the Gay Switchboard, Lesbian Link, Friend, a Youth Club, Snax - a coffee bar, social events such as the Lambda Set, Magazine's Mancunian Gay - later Gay Life, as well as having a full-time liaison officer who was responsible for the admin of the groups and promoting events.



Peter Dungey outside the Bloom Street Gay Centre



## PIONEERING GAY RIGHTS

In March 1984 the Council did refund the centre, but cut the grant by 25%. Cllr Graham Stringer tabled a motion to award the centre the full grant, but was defeated 19 votes to 6.

Manchester City Council set up an equal opportunities committee, in August 1984. As part of this committee the council was the first in the country to appoint two paid gay mens officers and two paid lesbians officers. In 1986, despite opposition from Tory councillors, Manchester City Council agreed capital funding of £118,000 to build a new gay centre. When the original site fell through, it raised that amount to £169,060 to build the centre on a new proposed site: Sidney Street.

Manchester is a pioneering city for gay rights in the UK. The City Council played a key role supporting and granting capital funding to build the UK's first gay centre. Manchester Gay Alliance was set up in the 1970s, comprising several different voluntary groups. Located in a basement at Waterloo Place, they were in need of new premises and financial support, so in 1978 the group applied to the council for grant funding of £6200, 25% of which came from rates, 75% of which came from the Urban Fund.

This funding lasted for five years but in March 1983 it ran out and the social service committee refused to rescue it. It was the only voluntary project denied funds. Thankfully, following lobbying from the Gay Centre's staff and volunteers, the Council overturned that decision by 43 votes to 29 to provide a 100% grant of more than £10,000 until March 1984.

## NEVER GOING UNDERGROUND

Following disappointment when a site on Canal Street could not be obtained in 1987, a council owned site was selected on Sidney Street and plans were drawn up.

Throughout 1987 the centre held open meetings to discuss what would be in the new centre and how it would be organised. The brief given to the City Architect included counseling rooms, social space, meeting rooms and a kitchen for the cafe.

The planning application faced opposition from a neighbouring church, which organised an 147 signature petition and brought 20 members of the church to the planning committee meeting; the Gay Centre only had 2 representatives! Despite this opposition, the planning committee agreed with the recommendation to approve and planning permission for the centre was granted in August 1987. The same month the council also voted in favour of increasing the funds in order for the centre to be built.

## we were born in the 80s:

the history of the Joyce Layl and LGBT Centre, on Sidney Street.

a short zine describing the extraordnary story of how Manchester became the first city to create an entirely publicly-funded purpose-built Gay Centre in 1988

Construction work on the gay centre began in 1988. This coincided with the Local Government Act 1988 being debated in the House of Commons, which included the infamous Section 28, eventually being enacted and becoming law in May 1988. Huge protests happened across the country and in Manchester.

On Sunday 27th November 1988 the building was officially opened by Graham Stringer, leader of the Council and the Gay Centre Scene Party was held in celebration. The Stop British Section 28 tour reached its climax in Albert Sq. Manchester, the very next day, but it would be another 15 years before the law was repealed.

Over the years the centre has widened it's remit and now serves all members of the LGBT community with a focus on youth work. The building has been open for 27 years and the organisation is now looking to the future. Recent feasibility funding has allowed the centre to look at what services the community will need in the next 25 years...

This zine was produced for a walking tour describing the story of how Manchester became the first place in the UK; possibly Europe; and maybe even the world; to have an entirely publicly funded, purpose-built community centre for the gay community. This tour was first run as a fringe event of the LGBT History Festival in Manchester, 2015.



# Gay Centre time line



Equal Opportunities Officers SO1/2 £9,060-£10,539

3 Equal Opportunities Officers (Women)  
2 Equal Opportunities Officers (Lesbians)  
2 Equal Opportunities Officers (Gay Men)

**1984**  
Equal Opportunities Committee set up by Manchester City Council. Manchester becomes the first council with dedicated Lesbian and Gay mens sub-committees with paid officers.

**1986**  
December. Manchester City Council votes in favour of granting the Gay Centre £118,000 to build a new centre at a site on Canal Street. This site falls through.

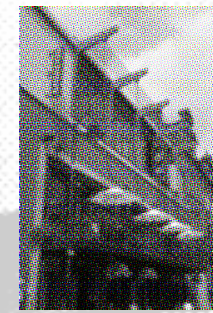
Manchester  
**£118,000**

Manchester Gay Centre has been awarded a grant of £118,000 by Manchester City Council to build new premises in the City Centre. The award, agreed by the meeting of the Council on Wednesday 17 December, makes the Centre only the second gay project in the country to be given a grant of over £100,000.

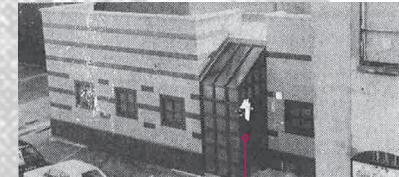
The application for the capital was made some three months ago and was approved by the City's Gay Men's Sub-committee, Equal Opportunities Committee and the Finance Sub-committee. The request surfaced from the bureaucratic red-tape intact, however, and is destined to make



Peter Dungey outside the Bloom Street Gay Centre



**1991**  
Manto bar opens on original site selected for the centre. It is the first bar on Canal Street with a glazed facade and is regarded as the catalyst for the bustling gay scene on Canal Street.



**2015**  
LGBT Youth North West is awarded feasibility funding to look at taking on a long term lease & making improvements to the existing building.

**1970s**  
Several gay rights groups form the Manchester Gay Alliance and are given a basement space by the Student's Union at Waterloo Place.

**1983**  
August. The Gay Centre opens a new drop in coffee bar on Saturdays nights. This is primarily to raise funds. Manchester City Council do, after several attacks, continue to fund the services at the centre.

**1981**  
Manchester Gay Alliance move into 61A Bloom Street, another basement location.

**1982**  
The Gay centre's basement home has a facelift. Mancunian Gay reported that it created a "cheerful, jazzy atmosphere!"



MANCHESTER GAY CENTRE

**1984**  
Manchester City Council continues to fund the centre, but cuts the budget by 25%.

**1987**  
Gay Centre holds regular meetings from May- Sept to discuss the new Gay Centre.

**1987**  
October. Manchester City Council votes in favour of increasing the capital grant to in order to £169,060 to build the centre on the new site on Sidney Street.

**1978**  
Gay Centre volunteers successfully apply for £5000 Urban aid grant. Manchester City Council also grant an additional £1600.

**friend**  
A Counselling and Befriending Organisation for Homosexuals  
**236 6283**

**MANCHESTER GAY CENTRE INVITES YOU**

TO OUR REGULAR OPEN MEETINGS ON THE NEW GAY CENTRE

Next one - SUNDAY 9th AUGUST, 7pm AT 61A BLOOM ST, MANCHESTER 1  
Ring 061 228 3554 (office hours) for more details. Access is via a steep flight of steps so is poor. Help will be available.

BISEXUAL GROUPS  
COFFEE BAR  
FACE TO FACE COUNSELLING  
LAMBDA SET  
CHRISTIAN GROUP

GAY YOUTHLINE  
YOUTH GROUP  
ICEBREAKERS GROUP  
SPEAK OUT

**061 236 5986, 4-10pm daily**

**LOST MONEY ON THE STOCKMARKET??**

**SHARES IN MANCHESTER GAY CENTRE COST NOTHING**

Yes, in the next few weeks we're GIVING AWAY shares in the Gay Centre. Unlike stockmarket shares you can't make money on them. And each person can only hold one. But they do give you the right to a say in how the Centre is run. And you can help elect a completely new Management Committee at our first General Meeting on 10th January, 1988. Or stand for election to the Committee yourself.

Membership is open to anyone who supports the aims of the Centre and wants to take an active interest in it.

If you would like an application form, or just want to know more, ring us on 061 228 3554 (office hours) or write to us.

Manchester Gay Centre Ltd, 61a Bloom Street, Manchester 1. (Registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1965-1975 No. 25648R)

**1988**  
The new Gay Centre is constructed. In August the roof goes on.



**1988**  
On 27th November 1988 the Gay Centre is officially opened by Graham Stringer, leader of the Council. A Gay Centre Scene Party is held in celebration. The day after a huge anti-Section 28 tour ends in Manchester in Albert Square.

**1988**  
The Local Government Bill 1988, which contains Section 28, is enacted on 24th May.

**1987**  
December. Gay Centre gives away shares in the centre, to allow the community to have a say in the services the new centre will be run.

**2003**  
The Local Government Act 1988 is repealed as part of the Local Government Act 2003 on 18th November 2003.