



Mermaids

My JOURNAL

EMBRACE

Our children, young people
and families shouldn't feel alone

EMPOWER

Our children, young people & families
should have the confidence to get the right help.

EDUCATE

We're here for families and professionals
who are trying to understand.

Hello.

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about Mermaids and the work we do to support our children, young people & families. My own first contact with Mermaids came some twenty years ago as the mother of a transgender daughter so I know firsthand how vitally important our team is to the wellbeing of our families.

I am so proud of our team of staff and volunteers and my hope is that we can continue to grow as a charity, whilst holding on to the core values of support, kindness and understanding which have made us the charity we are today.

Mermaids CEO
Susie Green

Introduction.

Hello & welcome to the Mermaids journal. At Mermaids' we want to create a world where all children and young people can thrive and be themselves.

We want to help relieve the mental and emotional stress of gender-diverse children and young people aged 20 and under, as well as promote education and awareness. We do everything we can to help support families through difficult times. Ultimately, we'll know we've done our job when we're no longer needed but it can seem like a long journey to get there.

We need a major step change in society, which is why Mermaids promotes education and awareness and works with other organisations and professional bodies towards meaningful change. Since 1995, we have helped countless children and young people find their own true selves in a safe and supportive environment and we are proud to have many of them as inspiring volunteers, mentors and staff today.



What we do is:

EMBRACE

Our children, young people
and families shouldn't feel alone.

Help & Support Services

In addition to five full-time helpline staff, we have recruited and trained an additional 20 volunteers in the last 24 months, bringing our helpline volunteering team to 31. Managed by our Helpline Manager, these volunteers are often the first point of contact for a young person or family member in crisis. In some cases, the volunteers may be the first person a transgender child or teenager has ever confided in.

In 2013/14 we received a little under 500 contacts from people needing help and advice. In 2019/20, that figure had grown to more than 11,000, up 2,000 on the previous 12 months. Our trained support staff and volunteers provide information and reassurance. They also signpost young people and families to further support when necessary. If appropriate, they might also be directed to our online support forums. Our support is also used by professionals requesting support for young people undergoing medical and/or social transition and their families.

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Having someone on the end of the phone who understands is incredible & something I don't have anywhere else in my life.

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★ **Doesn't
judge
Me**

Online Forums

The parents' and teens' forums provide peer support, reducing isolation and loneliness, as well as access to others who are in a similar position.

This service is managed by the Helpline Manager and staffed by the helpline team and volunteers to run the necessary security checks and monitor online activity, including worrying content around self-harm and suicide. They are on hand to deal with disruptive or negative language, but also respond if individual help is required in specific circumstances such as name changes, pronoun changes, difficulties with school or other services.

Local Support Groups

We have established local support groups in 10 locations nationwide. We want to expand our local groups to cover more of the country and have secured a National Community Lottery Fund to deliver an additional 45 groups nationwide over the course of the next 4 years.

The local groups are managed by our Training & Local Groups Manager, working with staff members to deliver this project.

Training

Mermaids delivers training into schools, the NHS, and other organisations such as fostering agencies and public bodies. We have also assisted schools supporting a transitioning student.

Our Training and Local Groups Manager is responsible for our training department. Mermaids provides effective and CPD-accredited training into many organisations, the income generated by these activities supplements training to support transgender young people when little or no budget is available, as is often the case in many schools. The Covid-19 crisis led us to set up online training courses, which have proven popular and will likely continue post-lockdown.

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Mermaids' support has been invaluable when nobody else is there.

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Residential Weekends

We run residential weekends across the UK. Families and teens over 16 attend, and they must be members of Mermaids, having undergone checks. One of our main aims for the weekends is to educate both young people and their families, so they can deal with all manner of difficulties that arise from their gender. We have found that professionals from all areas are often ill-informed as to the rights of trans children and young people, and prejudice is a considerable issue. Our speakers are not only there to show that being trans is something to be celebrated, but also to empower and enable families and young people to access the best care possible.

Each residential weekend caters to a maximum of 100 people and are a loved and oversubscribed part of our service delivery. Our Events Manager delivers the residential weekends, in conjunction with the support of other staff members and a team of volunteers.

Policy & Advocacy

Mermaids works to address misconceptions and advocates for the benefit of trans young people and their families. We attend as many policy-making meetings as possible and engage with key national stakeholders to help affect positive change. Mermaids also attends events across the country to raise awareness, including supporter events in addition to speaking at conferences, working closely with the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Department of Education and Government Equalities Office, and has links to other charities working to support transgender children and young people.

Many difficulties often faced by our service users are of a legal nature; our service users are still too often the victims of prejudice, discrimination and misconduct. Mermaids has this year established an in-house legal support service.

Demand for the service has increased by 187% in its first year from 47 enquiries to 135. The nature of enquiries were as follows: Education 43%; Family 11%; Healthcare 16%; Housing 2%; ID 9%; Public law (excluding healthcare & education) 7%; Immigration 2%; Employment 3%; Hate Crime 2%; Data Protection 2%; Legal Gender Recognition 2% and Media 1%.



Creating ways to: **EMPOWER**

Our children, young people & families should have the confidence to get the right help.

Future Plans

As a general principle we will continue to focus on services, maintaining and improving them, including necessary growth to deal with demand. We are also looking at the impact of COVID-19 on services and moving towards virtual delivery of many of our traditionally face-to-face services. Our work on our core service delivery will continue, however we are committed to engaging more widely in changing the public perception of transgender youth and effecting change through our communications, legal work, research, and education.

We believe that transgender rights are the human rights issue of our time. Mermaids, and other organisations that support transgender people, are facing a backlash against the rights of this vulnerable minority. This will not discourage us from continuing to represent children, young people, and their families. Whilst one of our aims is for Mermaids not to be needed in the future, this goal feels further away than in recent memory.

Events

This year we decided to focus on prioritising quality and safety of engagement at events, rather than attending as many as possible. Nonetheless, in 2019/20 Mermaids facilitated and/or attended 181 events nationwide, a significant increase from the 131 we attended in 2018/19. These ranged from small local Pride events, to events at Microsoft aimed at developing young people's access to technology and skills, to the biggest Pride in the UK, Pride in London. As well as staff participation, we actively encourage our service users and volunteers to take part, with specific events aimed at engaging vulnerable young people and giving them self-confidence and an opportunity to learn new skills. The number of young people that we have supported at events has increased to 192 in 2019.

From mid March 2020, COVID-19 interrupted our face to face events including residential weekends and Pride attendance, and we are looking at ways to deliver virtual events moving forward until we can deliver our face to face offerings.

New Recruits

Research Lead

As part of our work, we have employed a researcher to develop projects to collect data on a number of different topics, all of which will add to the information that we have on key areas of transgender people's lives and the struggles they face.

Legal Caseworker

Mermaids has employed a legal caseworker to support the Legal & Policy team as the charity engages in increasing policy, advocacy and legal work.

Sports Inclusion Officer

We are delighted to have created a new position for a staff member who will work full-time to advocate for trans children and young people in sport.

IT & Systems Manager

Mermaids has created a role for a new staff member who will take responsibility for the charity's data handling.

Trans Person of Colour Youth Engagement Officer

Mermaids has recognised its responsibility to help address racial inequalities and the particular issues faced by TPOC. To this end, we have created a post for a full-time staff member who will work to engage with new voices.

Campaigns Officer

Mermaids has a proud campaigning history, but the charity has never had a full-time staff member taking responsibility for its campaigns. In an increasingly fast-paced and digital world, we recognised the need to improve our ability to reach new supporters and finesse our messaging. The campaigns officer will work within the new Communications and Fundraising Department to help design a full calendar of events for the charity, working with key supporters and corporate partners.



My Lifeline

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Mermaids were a lifeline to me when I didn't know who I could turn to.

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“

Finding Mermaids at a time when I was completely lost felt like being thrown a lifeline.

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New Structure

Corporate partners

Corporate partners are important for the financial and practical support they offer Mermaids. Corporate involvement also helps endorse Mermaids as an established charity. We are currently working with several corporate partners, including Lloyds, Barclays, NBC, and others, and are looking to extend this work in the future.

Other Notable Corporate Activities: Hunter Boot Pride campaign, Microsoft Pride and Trans In The City fundraiser for Trans Day Of Remembrance.

Starbucks & Channel 4 Partnership: Most of the corporate fundraising's resource was committed towards a TV and digital advertising campaign partnership with Starbucks for their winning entry to the 2019 Channel 4 Diversity and Inclusion Award. The advertising campaign, #WhatsYourName, ran during February and March. The partnership also included support from Mermaids with casting, staff training and the development of inclusive gender identity and expression policies for Starbucks staff. Funds were raised for Mermaids via the sale of a special edition mermaid tail cookie with 50p of each sale being donated.

GIRES, Gendered Intelligence, Trans Equality Legal Initiative, Stonewall, All About Trans, Transmedia Watch, LGBT Consortium:

We are working with these groups to collaborate on issues affecting transgender people in society, to pull together a post/role to act as liaison between all the separate organisations and facilitate data and knowledge sharing. This is a new initiative, the LGBT Consortium will manage, with an initial pilot of 3 months to give enough basis for a funding bid to provide a part time post. The issues with so many organisations involved are equality of information and sharing, therefore transparency is needed. This will be reviewed every 6 months.

Goldsmiths and Nottingham Universities: Mermaids is working with universities to identify potential areas for research to help develop supporting evidence. A pilot has identified a number of different areas to pursue but is reliant upon securing funding to be able to take forward.





Helping to:

Educate

We're here for families and professionals who are trying to understand.

Research

Mermaids has employed a full-time researcher to help us gather new information & context around trans experiences.

Parental Support: This research aims to investigate the variables which act as predictors of parental support in response to a child's disclosure of a trans identity. The research will commence with a cross-sectional survey, before progressing into a longitudinal study, which we intend to conduct over several years. We are working with researchers from the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University.

GP Support: This research aims to investigate the experiences of trans children, young people and their families when visiting GPs for support with gender identity. This is a large-scale cross-sectional survey supported using focus groups. We are partnering with De Montfort University for this work.

Working collaboratively with other researchers/organisations: We are working collaboratively with several researchers on various research projects. The research projects which we endeavour to support are selected on the basis that they address the issues most important and relevant to our service users, whilst also being constructed in a manner that allows for significant impact.

Some of the academic institutions with which we are working closely are Goldsmiths, Bristol, Southampton, Sussex, and Nottingham Universities. We are also working closely with several similar charities, predominantly in our work with the Trans Learning Partnership (TLP), with whom we have recently applied for research funding.

“

Mermaids help me to deal with my emotions better when people are being trans-phobic

”

★
Helps
Me

Communications

It has been a significant year for Mermaids, with a full rebrand coupled with the launch of a new website, streamlining the user experience for those seeking support and information. Charity messaging has also shifted, with a greater focus on positive, empowering campaigns on social platforms, resulting in a significant increase in engagement. Our Twitter following has tripled, our Facebook likes have doubled and our new focus on Instagram content has seen our audience quadruple in only six months.

The growth in our social media audience has led to an increase of 80% in web traffic.

In February 2020, Mermaids appeared on national television and across the UK in Starbucks coffee outlets, bringing millions of people to the Mermaids brand and helping us to position ourselves fully as the UK's foremost charity speaking for young transgender and gender-diverse lives.

In early 2020, the world was hit by the COVID-19 outbreak, arriving in the UK in January 2020, although at that point, the impact was unknown. When the pandemic led to cancellation of face-to-face services we responded by increasing our online streaming events, and growing the communications and campaigns team to meet demand.

Mermaids will always speak unflinchingly on behalf of our services users, while helping them to amplify their own voices...

Fundraising

The new website has allowed for significant improvements in the donation page and fundraising support functions. We have also implemented a new CRM to help us manage donations in a more dynamic way. Our Fundraising Manager has worked diligently with our supporters and fundraisers, to demonstrate our heartfelt gratitude for their efforts and passion for the work that Mermaids does.

In 2019 we hired a Corporate Fundraising Manager to work with corporates and other partners.

The fundraising team work closely together to ensure the best journey for all our supporters. We have also launched a regular newsletter to keep our friends up to date.

In spite of the COVID-19 crisis and increasing hostility online and in the media, we have seen a healthy year-on-year increase in funds raised.

Service Beneficiaries

Parents of transgender/gender questioning children/teens:

Mermaids supports parents of transgender/gender-diverse young children up to the age of 19 (inclusive). Parents/carers of gender diverse/transgender children often feel isolated and ill equipped to help their children. Information is sparse and often incorrect or biased. Media representation of transgender children and young people is often prejudiced and ill informed, and support is minimal. Through raised visibility of the charity, parents can find information and support when needed, as well as providing access to peer support through online groups, meetings, and residential weekends.

Transgender/gender-questioning young people:

As with parents, Mermaids also supports gender questioning and transgender young people. Although the internet is a huge source of information, much of it is incorrect or biased. Young people may not have family support and are an incredibly vulnerable minority. Our helpline/email/chat service and online peer support groups are a lifeline for young people feeling isolated and lost.

Professionals supporting transgender/gender questioning

young people: Mermaids currently offers information and support directly through the helpline/email/chat service, alongside materials on the website for professionals who work supporting young people. We also deliver trans-inclusive diversity training to schools, youth groups, medical professionals, and other organisations. Adding services and extending our training capacity is a key part of the business plan to enable us to expand the number of professionals committed to supporting transgender children and young people appropriately.

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Mermaids' support has been invaluable when nobody else is there.

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Our Performance

Our focus is on embracing, supporting, empowering, welcoming, encouraging, celebrating, equipping and enabling gender diverse young people and their families and involving them in a community.

480 Participants

Reduction of Isolation + Loneliness



● Experienced a significant difference
● Begun to experience a difference

483 Participants

Increased Confidence + Ability to Cope



● Not experienced any difference
● Have experienced a significant difference

483 Participants

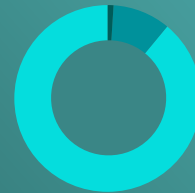
Reduction of Distress



● * Have begun to experience a difference
● * Have not experienced any difference

485 Participants

Experience with Mermaids overall?



● Positive ● Neutral ● Negative

* Answer on behalf of child or young person

Helpline/Email & Chat Service 2013-20

This provides a summary of the increase in demand over the last 6 years, and the contacts made for each category. The increase from last year is 37%.

| Year | Calls | Emails | Chats | Totals |
|---------|-------|--------|-------|---------------|
| 2014/15 | 563 | 772 | - | 1,335 |
| 2015/16 | 1,134 | 1,800 | - | 2,934 |
| 2016/17 | 1,709 | 2,227 | - | 3,936 |
| 2017/18 | 2,162 | 2,818 | 208 | 5,188 |
| 2018/19 | 3,497 | 5,566 | 639 | 9,702 |
| 2019/20 | 3,305 | 6,813 | 1,607 | 11,725 |

Income 2019/20



● 42% Donations
● 27% Legacies
● 22% Grants
● 4% Training
● 5% Other

As a growing charity, we are looking to build on a positive year engaging with new commercial partners. We are also diversifying our training to online, allowing for greater efficiency.

We are seeking to increase funding from payroll giving, increase fundraising activity through campaigns, events and fundraising opportunities plus an expanded merchandise offering.

My Values



Integrity. We will act with compassion, empathy and transparency, having our service users' and colleagues' best interest at the heart of every decision.



Don't Assume. We will not make assumptions about anyone's identity. Nor shall we assume how 'open' someone is about their identity. This is essential to ensure respect and trust.



Listen. We take time to clearly understand our service users' needs, values and cultures to ensure the best possible support is provided to everyone.



Freedom to be. We will create an environment that allows every person to be who they are without risk or fear of harassment, prejudice and/or discrimination. We will celebrate diversity and always provide a safe space for individuals to be their authentic selves, without judgment, whatever their age.



Focus. We will have our charitable objectives at the heart of every decision we make: building a better future for trans & gender-diverse young people and their families.



Champion. We will campaign, but only positively championing, not denigrating or attacking people or organisations. Our aim in campaigning is to illuminate.

Contact



Help Line: 0808 801 0400 | email: info@mermaidsuk.org.uk

Website: Mermaidsuk.org.uk #MermaidsGender