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Lesbian Line Belfast

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Squilly Unit

26th November 2004

Single Equality Bill Team
OFMDFM
Room E3.18
Belfast
BT4 3BR

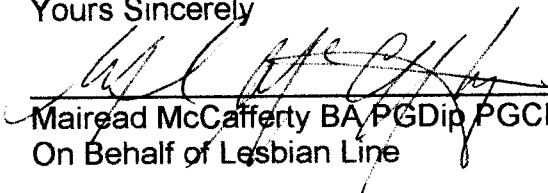
Dear Team

As one of the founding members of CoSO who have already submitted a response on behalf of all member Organisations, I am writing to inform you that Lesbian Line and the wider CaraFriend Organisation concur with and support that submission re' the Single Equality Bill.

As you know we submitted a response to the draft in 2001 and our stance has remained generally consistent since then. Rather than repeat the same information on to another form - particularly given we have been extremely busy lately with other areas of our work - we want you to list this as a response to the Bill Consultation process.

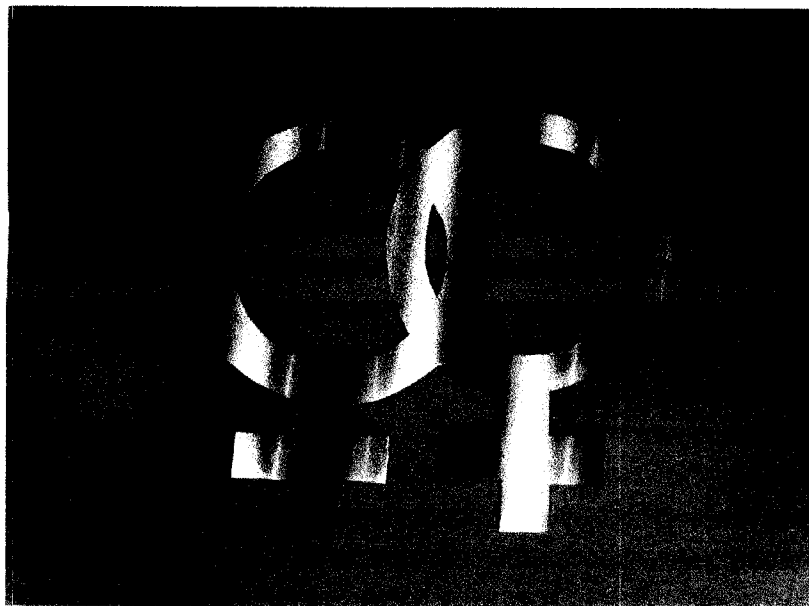
I am enclosing, for your information, a draft copy of the Lesbian Line section of our Organisation's Annual Report - CaraFriend is the umbrella organisation which incorporates Lesbian Line, Gay Helpline and GLYNI. F.Y.I. - Copies of our Annual Reports -over the past 30 years - are housed in the Linenhall Library (Politics Section, 3rd Floor). This may help in giving an idea of some of the issues facing our Community and indeed some of the work with which we have been involved this year. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely


Mairead McCafferty BA PGDip PGCE ADMP
On Behalf of Lesbian Line

Lesbian Line Belfast

**Annual Report
2003-2004**



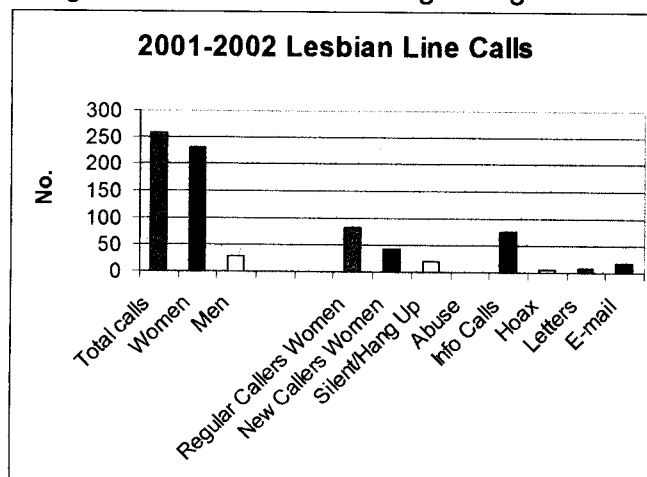
Introduction

Welcome to Lesbian Line's Annual Report 2003 - 2004. This year our Organisation - CaraFriend - celebrates its' 30th Anniversary. It is encouraging to note the advances which have been made - particularly those over the past few years which have moved us along the road to true equality in our Society including Promotion of Equality of Opportunity on the part of Public Authorities (S.75 NI Act '98), the passage of the Civil Partnerships Bill (Nov' '04), and EU Employment Regulations (Dec' '03) safeguarding us against discrimination in the workplace, proposed Single Equality Bill, Gender Equality Strategy (OFMDFM), the Hate Crime Bill etc. These advances have been gained by the work and commitment of all those who have gone before us and those currently still working in this area. Members of Lesbian Line have played no small part in these gains and indeed continue to do so - whether in participation in Consultations by public bodies / Govt Depts / political parties and community organisations, lobbying on behalf of our constituency and representing the issues in various fora etc.

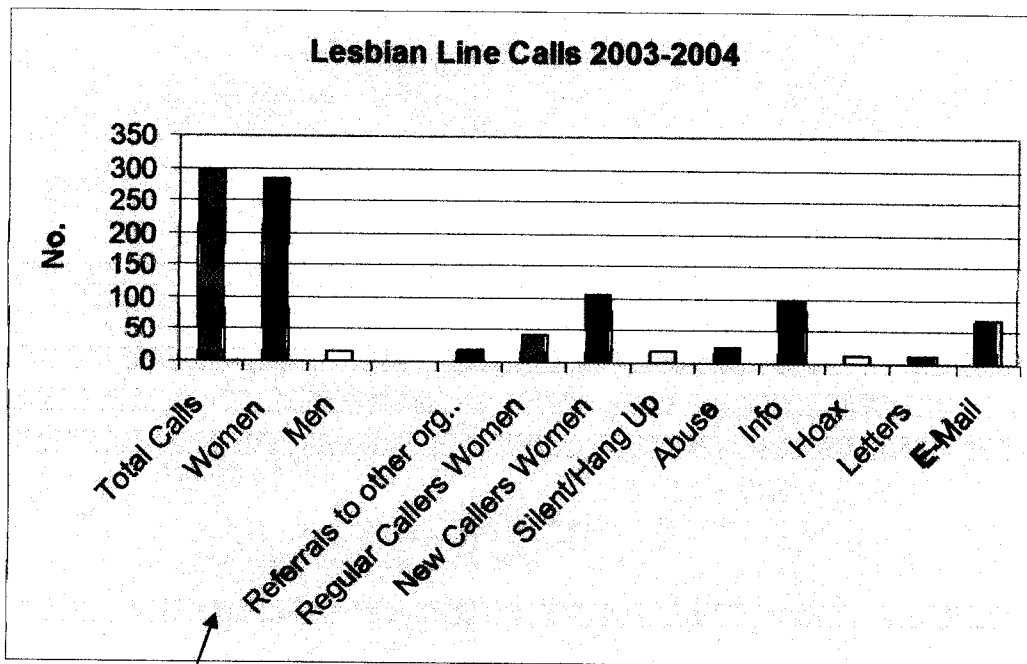
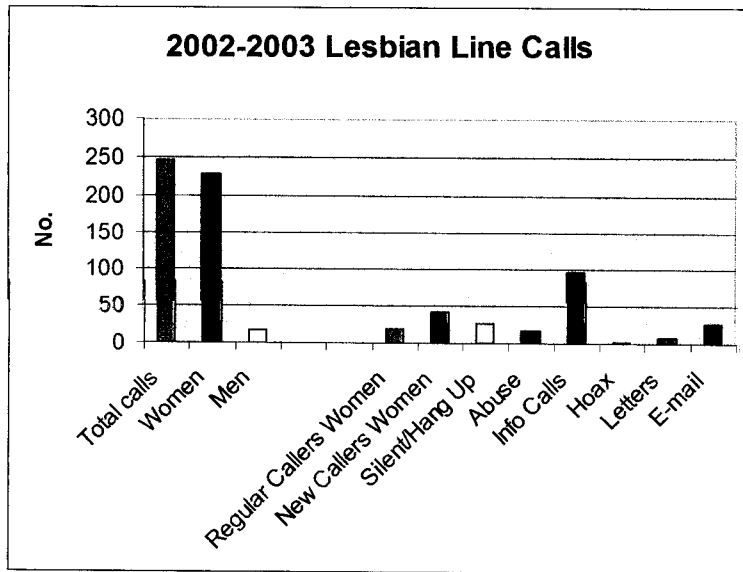
The Helplines continue to maintain vital service provision. These cover a wide range - from a listening ear, providing support and information, befriending, social support and events, awareness raising initiatives, collation of statistics, recruitment and training etc. That our service provision has been accessed by men and women from the LGBT Community over the past 30 years is testament not only to the demand for them but also due to the dedication and commitment of our Volunteers. The expansion of service provision has resulted from the demands placed upon the LGBT Community in recent years particularly those arising from legislative developments already mentioned. The following report outlines the work of Lesbian Line over the 2003 - '04 year.

The Helpline

Below are graphs charting the types of calls and trends over the past 3 years to Lesbian Line. The general trends appear to be continuing with the number of new callers increasing and contacts via e-mail growing.



Working for and on behalf of Lesbians and Bisexual Women

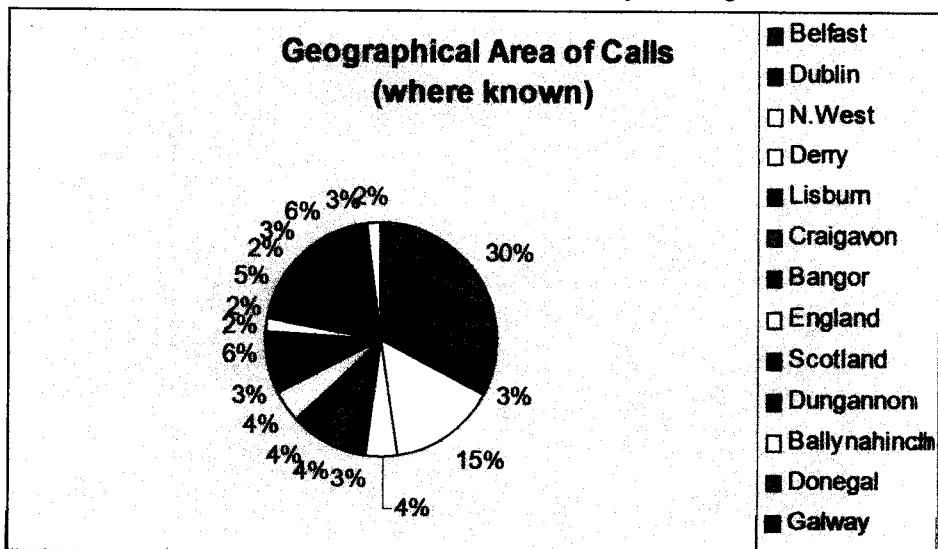


Referrals to other organisations include GLYNI, Samaritans etc.



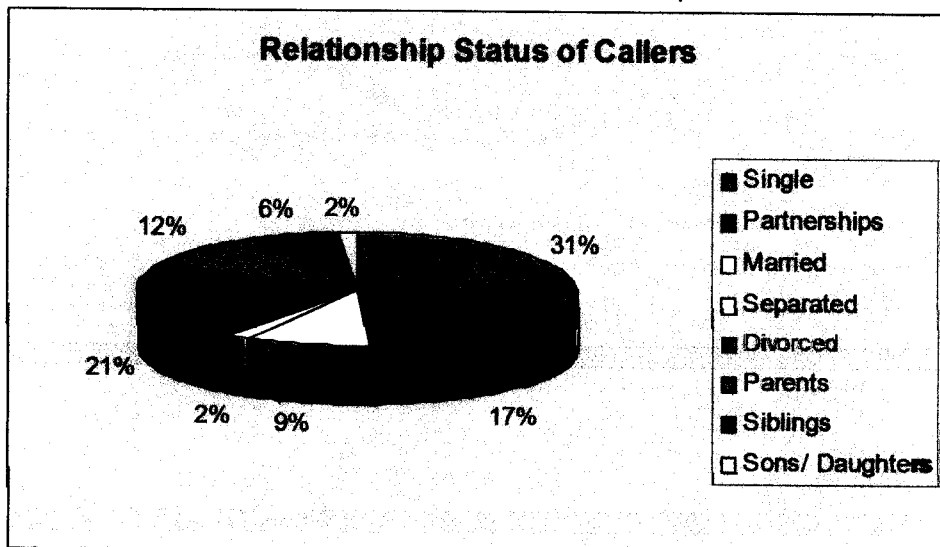
Geographical regions of callers.

The majority of calls came from the greater Belfast area though it is interesting to note that a growing number of calls came from the N.West which could be the result of the Foyle Friend organisation in Derry having closed down.



Relationship Status of Callers

The relationship status of callers is shown below. We have a growing number of calls from parents, siblings and children of LGBT parents.



Working for and on behalf of Lesbians and Bisexual Women

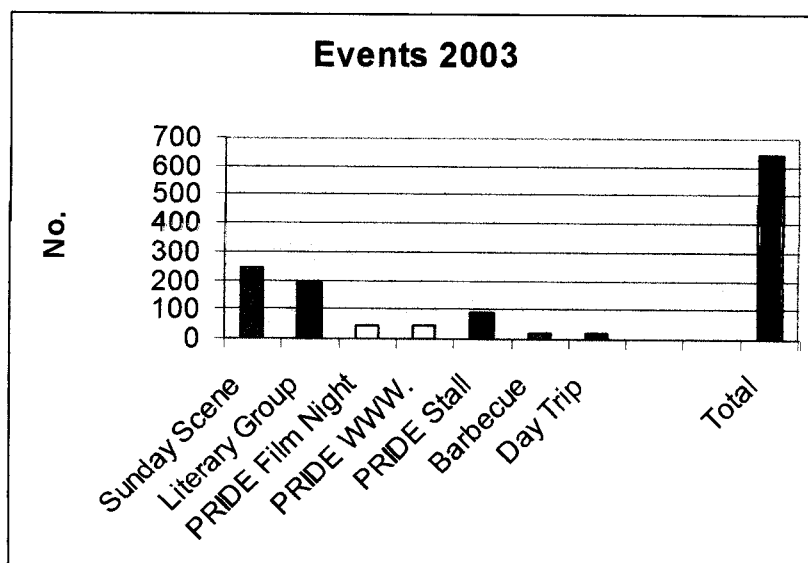
Fundraising

Fundraising at organised events, during PRIDE 2004 etc, has continued throughout the year, as necessary, to maintain service provision and enable our work in all the other areas outlined in this Report (see *Tables, Charts later*). It is hoped that a comprehensive funding strategy for the overall organisation be drawn up and implemented in the near future.

Improving the Status of Lesbians and Bisexual Women

Members of Lesbian Line have consistently worked to improve the status within Society of Lesbians and Bisexual women. This year we have achieved this through involvement in Consultations (see addendum) with Public Bodies, Political Parties, Belfast City Council, Gender Equality Unit of OFMDFM, Health Trusts etc. We also made representations and submissions to the NI Affairs Committee (June '04 and Nov' '04) re' their Hate Crime Consultation process. This work is ongoing with e.g. the introduction of '3rd Party Reporting' i.e. where victims of hate crime or homophobic incidents can report - anonymously, if wished, to enable compilation of more accurate statistics by PSNI, and therefore a truer reflection of these within our Society.

Events



There has been a dramatic increase in the activity of Lesbian Line in 2003/4. During the year we organised a variety of events ranging from the social through to the developmental with contributions to the equality and human rights debate and policy design.

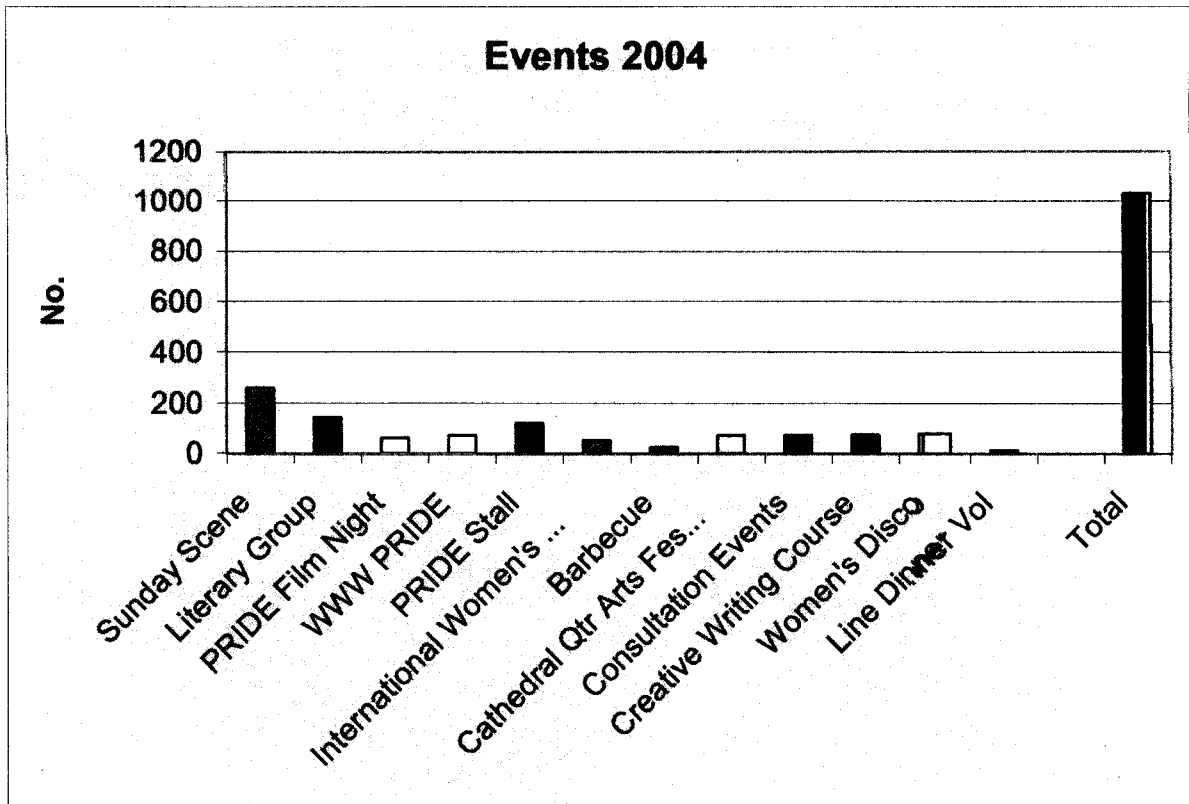
Our quarterly 'WWW.Come – Wine, Women and Words' event provides an entertaining context to showcase Lesbian performance talents in poetry, prose and song.

*Celebrating 30 years of Service Provision for members of the LGBT Community
Lesbian Line is a Volunteer Led Community Based Organisation*



Working for and on behalf of Lesbians and Bisexual Women

Over 1000 women participated in Line organised events in 2004!



Networking & Capacity Building

Lesbian Line consistently maintains membership of those organisations which work to increase capacity within the LGBT Community i.e. CoSO, and BORG. 2 of our members are now on the Management Committee of CoSO which is now seeking to employ workers to develop and carry forward the very real advances made to date. We also work very closely with other LGBT Organisations to build links and strengthen our collective voice in wider mainstream Society. We have recently begun initiatives with Community Dialogue through Queer Space and CoSO which will hopefully help us identify the issues facing the LGBT Community in the future with a view to develop strategies on how to address these effectively.

We have been approached by organisations like the PSNI, Parents' Advice Centre for information, cards etc. with a view to working more closely together in the future. We recognise the importance of networking and prioritising working relationships with those Community, Voluntary and Statutory Organisations which can help us in our overall aims and objectives.

Working for and on behalf of Lesbians and Bisexual Women

Recruitment & Training of Volunteers continues on an ongoing basis to develop and help facilitate the growing demand on us to achieve effectiveness in all areas of our work. We are currently training another 6 women with a view to joining the Line.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while it is apparent that it has been a very busy year, it has also been a very productive one which has seen the culmination and fruition of much hard work and dedication. It is vital that our work continues to develop and respond to the needs of Lesbians and Bisexual Women as they are identified and that we work with other groups and organisations to address these.

Lesbian Line is committed, like many within our Community, towards the true acceptance of diversity and equality for all our citizens regardless of difference.

Report compiled by Mairéad McCafferty and Theresa Cullen



Consultations where members represented Lesbian Line /

CaraFriend

Fair Employment
Pathways to change
Partnership Bill
Section 75
Sexual Orientation Strategy
Hate Crime
Belfast City Council - Community Dev't Dept
Health Strategy
Gender Equality Strategy OFMDFM

Media

PRIDE Events write up in GCN
Women's News
WIG Women's Information Group News Sheet
Radio Ulster 25th October / Martina Purdy Interview – Hate Crime
witness NI Affairs Committee
Publicity brochures and promotional materials - dissemination of.

WWW.Come - 'Wine, Women & Words' - Quarterly Event

WWW December 2003 Christmas event
WWW 8th March CAF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
WWW Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival
WWW Aug - Clanmil PRIDE 2004

Membership of Organisations

CoSO
CoSO Management Committee
Queerspace
BORC Management Committee
CaraFriend Management Committee
PSNI Liaison Group
GLOSS



Lesbian Line Belfast

Hate Crime

From the 28th September 2004, the NI Hate Crime Legislation now protects Lesbian and Gay people from homophobic attack. Homophobic attacks go largely unreported for various reasons. Attacks can be verbal, psychological or physical. If you have experienced hate crime there are different ways you can report it i.e. directly to PSNI or indirectly through a third party such as Lesbian Line where you can ring the Line on Thursdays 7.30 – 10.00pm and report the incident in confidence and anonymously. Lesbian Line would then forward this information to the PSNI so that the crime becomes part of the overall statistics and can reflect better the level of homophobic attacks in NI. This will ensure that the issues are addressed more effectively in the future.

NI Affairs Committee Panel Meeting

The N. I. Affairs Committee conducted a meeting on Hate Crime in June '04 which representatives of Lesbian Line and other LGBT Groups attended. The Committee subsequently held a follow up meeting on 25th October. Lesbian Line had been invited to attend as part of a panel.

It is vital that we continue to obtain as much information as possible concerning the realities of hate crime suffered by Lesbians and Bisexual women here. If you feel this is important too please forward details on the enclosed form to Lesbian Line

Tel: 028 90 238 668 Thursdays 7.30 – 10.00pm
e-mail admin@lesbianlinebelfast.org.uk
64 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2GT



Working for and on behalf of Lesbians and Bisexual Women

Lesbian Line Belfast

HATE CRIME / HOMOPHOBIC INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Name: _____ (optional)

Address: _____ (optional)

Date of Incident: _____

Date of Reporting: _____

Where did it occur? _____

Details of What happened ?

Witnesses: Yes / No Details _____

This will be passed on to PSNI - Do you want your report to be anonymous ?
- Do you wish to be kept informed of the outcome ?

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