

Paul Martin

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[Silence]

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PARTICIPANT: My name's Paul Martin, I'm the chief executive of LGBT Foundation and the creator of this project, it was my clever idea to do this project, to record the stories of people who've been involved in promoting safer sex for gay and bisexual men in Greater Manchester for the last 30 years.

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INTERVIEWER 1: And as the creator of this project, why did you think it was more important to bring more awareness to it?

PARTICIPANT: I think it's really really important that the stories of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people are told and that they are recorded for posterity. I think it's really really important that people have the opportunity to talk about what it was like thirty years ago, it's a very very different place than it is now, many of the legal protections, the rights that we have, rightly so, were just a long long way away. The idea that we could communicate via email instantly immediately was a long long way away. I still remember getting in trouble from my commissioner for buying an Apple Macintosh computer in the mid-Nineties. We were one of the first organisations, as Healthy Gay Manchester, to actually have a website in the late-Nineties. So it was a very different place then, and I think it's really important for people to have the opportunity to tell their stories, and remind people, and record what it was like.

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INTERVIEWER 1: So you have a lot of experience working for and directing foundations and organisations. So where did you start off?

PARTICIPANT: Well I moved to Manchester in 1989 and I moved here for love, and I moved here because I had been unable to complete my degree because my father found out I was gay so therefore disowned me. So unable to finish the degree that I was doing I chose to come to Manchester, I went straight to what was then Manchester Gay Centre and started to volunteer. And very quickly realised that there was a massive gap in work not being undertaken aimed at gay and bisexual men around HIV prevention. And having come straight from university and having been the chair of my local Lesbian and Gay Society and having been involved in a Safer Sex week the year before I was quite shocked that there wasn't anything happening in Manchester. And so as a consequence I got together with some people, went and lobbied with Manchester City Council, and we started a small project called MACE, Manchester AIDS Care and Education. That lasted a couple of weeks, months at most, it was something that we thought was a good way of developing activities, but it didn't.

And so I got in contact with a guy called Ian Laing [?] [00:03:04] and Ian at that time was public education officer for men who have sex with men, and I also got in contact with Hugh Polehampton. Now unfortunately you can't interview Ian because Ian sadly died many years ago, but I do understand that you are speaking to Hugh, and it's really important that you find out from Hugh, because Hugh at the time was the Assistant Town Clerk, so the equivalent of a Deputy Chief Exec in the City Council today. And he was instrumental in getting money from the government to support HIV prevention work and AIDS support work, and so Hugh and I and Ian and a few other people got together and we created an organisation called MESMAC Manchester, Men Who Have Sex With Men Action in the Community. It was part of a much broader national programme of work aimed at men who have sex with men. I think it was the Health Education Authority as was. They funded projects in Liverpool... no, in Leeds, in Bristol, in London and somewhere else which escapes me. And they wouldn't invest in Manchester but they did allow us to be part of their network.

So we got a lot of free training, we got a lot of advice, we got a lot of support, and we developed a project called MESMAC Manchester. The City Council then decided to put some investment in the services and therefore they put out a recruitment exercise and I applied for the only job that I've ever applied for, which was a part-time development worker for MESMAC Manchester. And so there was also a part-time outreach worker and a part-time group worker. And we developed the organisation and then I met a guy called Gerard Gudgeon [?] [00:04:51] who I also know that you are interviewing, and Gerard and I created what became Healthy Gay Manchester.

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So we felt that MESMAC was not right for a number of different reasons, we felt that politically it wasn't gay-positive, it wasn't gay sex positive, and so we wanted to kind of create something that was much more relevant to gay and bisexual men's lives, something that was sexy, something that was upfront, something that was honest. And something that we felt was missing nationally. So we created Healthy Gay Manchester, it was very important to us to make sure that what we were doing was really optimistic, was really ambitious, and that I suppose spoke to men in a way that they weren't being communicated to prior to that. So all of Healthy Gay Manchester's resources, I know that Mike has been, you know, collecting lots of kind of examples of the work. But all of them were, you know, very explicit. We got in to lots and lots and lots of trouble because of the explicit nature of the work. But we felt very strongly that it was important that men talked about sex in order to keep alive, and so therefore we felt that we had a responsibility to communicate with men in the way men were communicating with each other.

And also we were part of the target audiences as well and we did a lot of work talking to guys from different subsections of the gay and bisexual men's communities, so leathermen, rubbermen, you know, guys in to the fetish scene, younger guys, older guys, bears. And we developed a whole range of information resources that were targeted and aimed at them using images that they kind of, you know, either agreed to participate in developing or that they approved and signed off. And in language that was relevant to them and the guys that they fancied.

So as I say we got in to lots of trouble being very sex-positive, being quite explicit, but we didn't do it for any other reason than we felt it was important to, you know, have a positive impact in reducing the incidence of HIV infection. And again I think that, it's really important to remember the context of the early and mid-Nineties, you know, there was a hysterical

campaign in the mainstream and right-wing press, similar to what it feels like at the moment aimed at trans communities. There was lots and lots of AIDS-phobia, there were lots and lots and lots of, you know, negative stories about... I mean we've seen it actually recently about a police force suggesting that you can transmit HIV through spitting and giving people spit-guards which is just ridiculous. But that was how it felt in the early- and mid-Nineties, and I think that it can be very difficult coming out for lots of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans people anyway, that was all have our scary stories that we carry around with us, that we all have quite negative experiences of how certain people react to us or how certain people kind of respond to us. So the fact that outside of our own lives and our own communities there was this huge horrendous hysterical negativity, that every day you would open the paper and it would be sort of like AIDS scares and negative stories, it just compounded, to have negative impact I think on many men's sort of like, you know, emotional and mental health.

So I think that we were a very lone and positive and clarion call from the darkness to say 'do you know what? It's really really okay to be okay. In actual fact, it's fabulous to be gay and that gay sex is just extraordinarily brilliant, and there's so many things that you can do.' The very very first resource that we produced was called 'Fucking Alternatives' and that's just because everybody was obsessed about, you know, fucking without condoms and lots of guys up until that point were saying 'well, condoms are for contraception, you know, one of the good things about being gay is that I would never have to sort of like bother with birth control again'. So like trying to introduce sort of like condom use and safer sex was really difficult. So actually what we kind of like focussed on as much as the core message of wear a condom was, there's so many other fabulous wonderful things that you can do apart from fucking, or alongside fucking. And so as a consequence, you know, producing that resource was quite exhilarating and quite positive for us involved in it because we were attracting lots and lots of volunteers as well, and so we were creating kind of almost a movement for change.

And I'm, you know, as part of that process, you know, we were lobbying decision-makers, we were lobbying politicians, we were lobbying kind of policy makers to make sure that their approaches and their investment was much more inclusive. But I'm sure I'll talk about that later.

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But the process of working with gay and bi men, gay and bi men coming together, often for the first time. I mean, sitting in a room without a beer in front of you talking about sex, having honest, open conversations with people that you wouldn't sort of like meet normally because you, they may be kind of guys who go to different bars or were part of different tribes, so actually it was a really kind of exhilarating process for guys just to come together and talking about things that mattered, and talked about things that actually would have a positive impact in keeping us alive. So it was a really brilliant time and a really positive time, and Gerard and I in particular wanted to find a way of expanding that work and developing that work and deepening that work and making sure that we didn't just think about gay and bi men as sexual beings, that actually we thought about their whole life, a holistic approach. So we were very keen to build on the safer sex work and actually do mental health work and drugs and alcohol work, and community safety work and a whole range of other things. So we were lobbying funders, we were lobbying commissioners, we were lobbying politicians. Some of them were very resistant. I remember in the mid-Nineties there was a very very clear message coming out of Labour head office around sort of like loony left-wing councils and sort of like 'gay sex on the rates' [?] [00:11:30] stories that would appear in the papers,

and so I know that Manchester City Council got very nervous about us with our 'Fucking Alternatives' and our gay sex positive band of brothers. And there was a bit of an arms-length relationship that we had with many of the decision-makers of the time.

But slowly but surely we won the argument slowly but surely, you know, we played an incredibly important part regionally around re-gaying AIDS. So what many people had forgotten was that AIDS in the early days was seen very much as gay disease, and then for lots of different reasons it became de-gayed and so just 'men who have sex with men' was deemed to be a politically acceptable term. And so in the mid-Nineties there was very much a movement to re-gay AIDS, in Manchester there was Healthy Gay Manchester, I've already talked about the sex-positive approach. In London we saw Gay Men Fighting AIDS and in other parts of the country we saw other sex-positive approaches. And so we were playing our own really important part in terms of, I suppose, paving the way for future LGBT equality and liberation, because it was really important for us to be seen in the whole context of our lives.

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[Break]

[Interviewers discuss squeaking chair.]

[00:13:41]

INTERVIEWER 1: So as you were just saying that you wanted to get gay men recognised more for their lifestyle and their actual whole being as a person, how did you go about getting them recognised?

PARTICIPANT: Well, in the late-Nineties, we made approaches to what was Lesbian and Gay Switchboard. And we were exploring with them how we might be able to collaborate with each other and work in partnership a bit more. And at that time they were chaired by an amazing woman called Jackie Cross, so she was the chair of Switchboard and she really wanted to modernise Lesbian and Gay Switchboard and make it much more of... Lesbian and Gay Switchboard was founded in 1975 and it was a completely volunteer-run organisation, so they had a part-time administrator and several hundred volunteers. They ran a helpline, I think at that point it wasn't, it might have been seven days in a week in the evenings, but they also had a couple of support groups and they had a counselling service. But Jackie wanted to modernise Switchboard and make it... broaden its range of services. So I met with her and we just kind of hit it off straight away. In actual fact for many years we were probably best friends. And we, I remember a very drunken night in my kitchen where we decided to found a lesbian and gay organisation for Manchester. We felt that lesbian and bisexual women needed the same kind of services that gay and bisexual men were receiving through Healthy Gay Manchester, I was really keen around the helpline, the counselling services and the groups that Switchboard were running. She was very keen on sort of like the staff, the funding, the office and the infrastructure that Healthy Gay Manchester kind of brought to the table. So we hit on this idea of doing an LGB organisation. And we were very open about being trans-inclusive at that point as well, although I might talk a little bit later on about how that didn't quite work out as we anticipated.

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But we had this idea to create this organisation which eventually did become Lesbian and Gay Foundation, and that was created and came in to being on the 1st of April in 2000. But we had quite an up-hill battle to sort of like persuade the hearts and minds of some of our own supporters, some of our own volunteers, some of our own staff, and indeed some of our funders. Lots of people were quite opposed to the idea and it took quite a lot of work to kind of like bring people on-side. And that carried on even once we'd founded, there were very different cultures and we very sadly lost quite a few people along the way because people couldn't reconcile themselves to the changes that were taking place. But that was often what happens. Some gay men didn't want to work with lesbians, some lesbians didn't want to work with gay men, some people didn't want to work with paid workers and all sorts of reasons that people were very comfortable and happy about how things were.

But again it's important to kind of remember the Lesbian and Gay Foundation being created in 2000. Well in 1997/1998 I tried to make Healthy Gay Manchester a charity and the Charity Commission turned us down at that point because they didn't believe that sexual orientation was a charitable matter. And so we had to fight the Charity Commission, so much of my career has been focussed around challenging people's either prejudices or their objections, and often my career has been focussed on turning 'no's in to 'yes's, and so it's been quite an uphill struggle a lot of the time when you're not only wanting to kind of do what you know is right, but actually also having to change the sort of views and opinions of people along the way, and also attend to a much broader hearts-and-minds. You know, I often get accused of selling out these days, you know. I've turned from an activist to a strategist, I wear a suit to work because, you know, I need to blend in with decision-makers and policy-makers. But, you know, it's all done for a purpose, it's all done to, you know, eradicate homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. It's all about, you know, working on LGBT inequalities and improving access for LGBT people, particularly around public services.

So it's been a bit of a struggle in terms of kind of like persuading everybody and keeping everybody together and keeping everybody on-side and keeping everybody, you know, in the ballpark. But Jackie and I and other people on our board really wanted to see a very different approach to LGBT people's healthcare and community involvement, so the LGF founded in 2000 was something that again was quite, you know, unique in the country. Even now we don't have as many LGBT organisations that give equal weight to all parts of the community, and LGBT Foundation today, we're trying to reach out to as many excluded groups as we possibly can, make ourselves as relevant as we possibly can to the diversest [sic] range of people, and there's always kind of like, you know, new challenges on the horizon.

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INTERVIEWER 1: So... do you have a question?

INTERVIEWER 2: Yeah, I do. Paul, you mentioned that, when you were developing your outreach work with Healthy Gay Manchester that the organisation got in to a bit of trouble, as you put it, and I remember you talking a little bit at the consultation event about that. And I was wondering if you could say a bit more about that, if you're comfortable doing that.

PARTICIPANT: I am, just remind me what I said at the consultation event.

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INTERVIEWER 2: It was about trying, the council having, finally coming on-board that AIDS was a problem and inviting groups to the Town Hall, but they exclude you and then...

PARTICIPANT: Yeah yeah yeah.

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INTERVIEWER 2: Is that okay?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, of course it is. So, I think that... [Break] do you want me to look at you, or do you want me to look at Alex?

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INTERVIEWER 2: Erm... maybe if it doesn't feel too weird keep looking at Alex.

PARTICIPANT: I'll pretend you've asked me that question.

So we didn't intend to shock or outrage public decency, but many many many times we inadvertently did. And I can remember that every single Pride event that we participated in the parade we would have to have special dispensation from the Pride organisers beforehand, before they would allow our float to go in to the parade, because again we saw that as a really really unique opportunity to communicate to lots and lots of gay and bi men. So we, using that very sex-positive approach, you know, we, some of the themes of our floats over the years was 'Masters of Safer Sex and Slaves to Pleasure', so we had loads of kind of like guys in a whole range of different outfits that were having lots of fun all over the lorry with each other. We had 'Famous Erections Around the World', covered in condoms. So we had the Leaning Tower of Pisa, you know, Eiffel Tower, Statue of Liberty, et cetera. All of them were kind of like clothed in sort of like condoms. We had the most amazing sort of huge great eight foot, nine foot cocks, that we had produced for us. I wanted to have them sort of leek shooting out sort of foam and sort of lie bubbles and stuff but I was told that was going far too far, so I wasn't allowed to do that.

But we always had to have our floats signed off beforehand because people were worried that we would offend the viewing public. I also remember a time in the early-Nineties, I think I mentioned earlier on about producing a resource called 'Fucking Alternatives'. And much of our promotion work was again equally as explicitly. Primarily because it was aimed at gay and bi men and it was meant to be distributed in pubs and clubs and spaces that gay and bi men went to, and so therefore wasn't meant for the general public. But a stall displaying our wares, if people wanted us to bring our work with them, they used to have to put over-18s near us or put us in tucked away positions.

And I remember one very prominent time where we were given a stall at Manchester Town Hall in the Sculpture Hall, and we were kind of like put around the corner but people were so worried that we would offend the public that they put these big black plastic screens around us and plastered 'over-18s only' on the outside. Well of course what that meant was we got the most viewings of anybody because there was massive great queues, because if you're sort of like told that this is kind of parental advisory, something that you shouldn't look at, well of course you want to look at it, don't you?

So again, you know sort of like being sometimes treated differently actually could work to our advantage. And I suppose what we did try to do is we tried to be very very very pragmatic and optimistic and tried to not become personally offended when people sort of like tried to exclude us. We tried to turn it to our advantage, we tried to always remember that we were here to make a difference and have an impact on gay and bi men's lives, it wasn't for our own egos or our own purposes. I can't pretend that we didn't sometimes, you know, get personally offended and sort of act up because of course we did. But we tried wherever we possibly could to make it work for us and make it work for our cause.

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INTERVIEWER 1: So while you were saying how it was a lot more explicit and a lot more out-there as part of, was it Healthy Gay Manchester, wasn't it? Before at MESMAC you were saying that it wasn't as easy to do that and you wouldn't do it as... the way that you wanted to do it was more censored. Why do you think they were like that?

PARTICIPANT: Well I think partly there was reasons of law. So if you look at LGBT history there were claims and approaches, obscenity cases. The most famous one was Mary Whitehouse and Gay News, taking Gay News to court and prosecuting Gay News for producing what was deemed to be blasphemous and explicit material. So we used to have to pass our information resources past... you know, we had to submit them to lawyers and get a legal view and opinion on whether or not they would breach the Obscene Publications Act. Because during our time that has been amended and changed, so during my professional career those laws have been updated, they have been improved, they have changed. But back in the late... well probably the early-Nineties they were quite rigid, you know, you couldn't show an erection. In actual fact you were discouraged from showing a man's penis. And it's quite hard to communicate to guys about sex and how to have sex safely without sort of like showing genitalia and including genitalia. Long, complicated... you try describing how you put a condom on a cock without having pictures. It's very very difficult, it's a bit like trying to explain how to tie a shoelace, it's complicated if you don't know what you're talking about.

Plus the fact that not every guy can read, not every guy has got English as a first language. Lots and lots of reasons why photographs showing how to put a condom on were quite important. And we didn't want to do what everybody else was doing, which was kind of like doing caricature cartoons, you know we wanted to show a hard cock with a condom on it. Preferably being put on by his lover, because that's what happened in men's bedrooms, that's what happened in alleyways, that's what was happening in backrooms. You know, we wanted to encourage more of condoms being put on cocks. So it was also not always responded positively by gay and bi men, so for all of the prejudices that are out there in the general population, don't for a second think that we don't have those prejudices ourselves as an LGBT communities. So we had as many complaints from guys saying 'oh this is far too explicit, this is far too shocking, this is far too blasphemous, this is not something that you should be doing'. And it was something that again we felt very strongly about, we felt that we had a responsibility to kind of you know educate... we were very earnest as well, we were kind of there to save the world, I'm sure we were completely as annoying as hell, in terms of just how righteous we felt and how we were on a mission from the gay Gods to change the world or at least our part of it. So I'm sure, I know, we were unbearable for many people.

But you know, that's what you kind of do when you are moved to create a movement for change. It was much more than just a safer sex campaign, it was much more than just a project to promote condom use, it was much more than a safer sex series of activities. This was about encouraging gay and bi men to not only survive but also to thrive, to look after themselves, to look after each other, to really make a difference to not just their life but the lives of guys. So as a consequence it wasn't just about the safer sex materials and the condom scheme, there were lots of other things that emerged. We had men's groups, we had men's support activities. That's why we were very interested in merging with Switchboard, because we felt that we wanted to do a helpline, we wanted to do a counselling service, and my view was, why should we set these things up when we could use what already was in existence? And I'm a great one for make-do-and-mend, I'm not one for sort of setting things up unnecessarily.

So we wanted to make sure that guys were actively involved in their own lives, that guys were actively involved in telling these stories. Which is why this project is really important, to reach out to guys to make sure that their recollections get recorded for the future.

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INTERVIEWER 1: Do you have a question?

INTERVIEWER 2: So you talked earlier about that, Healthy Gay Manchester and how it was quite an exhilarating time for you personally. I was just wondering if you could describe some of the atmosphere that you felt with, working with other gay and bi men around producing these kinds of materials. Like, where did you do it? How did you organise it? You know, and if you could also a bit about the condom and lube distribution scheme because I know that has been quite a trailblazer in that sense.

PARTICIPANT: I don't think there was anything like this happening anywhere else in the country, not quite like we did it in Manchester. The conditions were really ripe. When I moved to Manchester in 1989 there had been the year before the country's largest civil rights march around LGBT equality, the anti-Section 28 March in 1988. There had been a group of people that had been lobbying the council and had succeeded in securing some investment to build the Gay Centre. There had been funding from Manchester City Council for a number of years for the Gay Helpline. And so the conditions were absolutely right for the creation of new approaches, new activities, new opportunities for LGBT people. So I think for many of us it felt like we were pushing against an open door. I was recently talking to somebody that talked about many people's view of the Eighties is a problematic one. So economically this country wasn't doing great, politically this country was sort in a state of change and a state of flux, and so for many people the Eighties and early-Nineties was deemed to be sort of like a difficult and dark time for this country, whereas actually for people like me, coming to Manchester, moving to Manchester because it was the best gay scene in the country, because it had, you know, the best gay bars, the best gay clubs, the sexiest men, was absolutely brilliant. And the fact that in the early-Nineties the music scene in Manchester really really took off, that it was a brilliant time, it was a fantastic time, the city was just absolutely buzzing.

So the fact that a bunch of gay men decided to take on the powers that be and start to articulate a new approach for our own lives was just absolutely the right thing to be happening, and you know I can't ever remember a time when we doubted ourselves, I can't ever remember a time when we kind of questioned ourselves. And so we as a group of gay

men, I mean I'm the last man standing really, you know, in terms of I'm still actively involved and still working, but there was lots of other guys who were involved along the way and not a few women either as well, and not just lesbian women. But there were lots of us that sort of like came together and created this new movement, and it is the start of the modern LGBT rights movement today, clearly, and that's not just this city, there are other cities around the country where people can trace back their community empowerment, their community mobilisation, to this time.

I think the shock of people that, you know, were our age or younger dying of a disease that was transmitted sexually, so at the very moment of expressing all the excitement, love, affection, and brilliantness about being gay, was actually that moment where it could be, you know, you might be putting yourself at most risk, at maximum danger. That created problems in and of itself. So you know there was a real need for us to really be positive about what it was like being gay. The early-Seventies there was a great, you know, 'sing if you're glad to be gay' kind of movement and there was real positivity that was emerging. And then, you know, in the Eighties, early-Eighties, sort of like suddenly this really like scary thing that was coming over from America and was killing people really quickly just took hold, so those real feelings of negativity, those real feelings of fear and as I said, fuelled by hysteria in the mainstream press, made it feel very unsafe to be a gay man at that particular point.

I once did a paper called 'Cock Crazy or Scared Stiff', and my whole premise was on the basis that at that point you came out one of two ways. You either came out 'cock crazy', you didn't give a thought to what was going on, you just pretended it wasn't happening and you just went out and had as much sex as you possibly could. Or someone like me came out 'scared stiff', you were frightened, you were terrified, you would wrap yourself in plastic before you would even as much as touch another guy. You didn't know at that point what would transmit the infection, and so trying to countenance that, trying to be really positive, trying to be much more realistic, trying to encourage guys that it was okay to have sex, to be intimate with guys, there was certain rules that you needed to follow, there were certain precautions that you needed to take, but beyond that it was brilliant and fantastic.

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It's a little bit like, you know, a lot of the coming out activities that you see now in terms of 'it gets better', that was very much the sort of like, our thinking at that time. Sex is good, sex is not bad, gay sex is fab. You just need to think about this, this and this, and then you can have a great time. So in terms of creating activities, I mean the condom and lube distribution scheme was one of the first in the country, initially they were 'party bags'. I had this idea that, when you were kids you would kind of like go to a party. So we used to have these great safer sex parties in bars, and I just felt that you needed to give somebody a goodie bag when you left. And that's how the condom and lube distribution scheme started. We couldn't afford to fund the goodie bags indefinitely because, you know, you get the Chinese or Indian take out, sort of like those brown kind of like bags and stuff. That's what they were. And they were filled with lots and lots of goodies that we got from Clone Zone, that we got from Durex, that we got from the London Rubber Company, anybody else that we could think of. And we just stuffed them, filled full of lots of lots of goodies. And at the centre of them was of course a tube of KY and a packet of condoms. And that was what we wanted to encourage people to do, wear condoms when they fucked. But they were just too big, and one of the club owners dubbed them 'safe-sex handbags' so you'd sort of see all these guys leaving the club having had a good time and they'd be tottering down the street holding these big bags and stuff on their way home.

And we realised that we couldn't sustain that, so we just worker and worked up some ideas and then eventually we kind of like hit on these cardboard kind of like packages that we could then pack with condoms and lube. Two condoms, two sachets of lube, always. And we persuaded the manufacturers over the years to actually increase the size of lube sachets. Originally they were only 5ml and that's all you needed for medical procedures and stuff. We put a bit on for a whole range of different medical procedures. But it wasn't quite enough for some guys, and so having them increased to 10ml made a huge difference and it was something that we were quite proud of.

And we were also the first organisation to go from extra strong condoms to ordinary strength, so there was no evidence at all to support extra strong condoms, but at the time the view was that because anal sex between two men was going to be much more vigorous and much more robust, you know, then what those heterosexuals might do, that there needed to be an extra strong condom. And of course nobody takes in to account the resilience of vaginas, you know, in terms of giving birth and lots of other things. Of course, gay men's sex has to be much more robust and tougher. But there was no evidence at all to suggest that extra strong condoms provided any greater barrier or any greater efficacy. In actual fact, the evidence was that they diminished sensitivity and so we were very careful about the way that we went about that, we canvassed lots of people's opinions and we sort of like laid the ground very carefully just to let people know, but then we were very upfront and we changed it, and again lots of people were a bit nervous. And for a little while we offered both types. Very quickly people realised that we were right and other people changed as well.

But the condom and lube distribution scheme's been going for about 25 years and stuff, and I think it's an incredibly important part of stuff like gay life, certainly in this city, that on every bar of every gay club and in every gay sauna and every gay meeting place there are free condoms and free lube that people can use to protect themselves. I think that's an incredibly fundamental point. And over the years people have threatened it, over the years people have questioned its cost-effectiveness and some commissioners have wanted us to record the postcode of every user and stuff, which of course is totally impossible. Some people have wanted us to go to a condom online scheme where people have to order it and stuff, but we absolutely have maintained that it's really important that people have access to free condoms and lube at the point of where lots and lots of people are copping off. So, a very important part.

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INTERVIEWER 2: Just on that, how do you feel that people responded to your campaigns, like, do you feel that behaviours changed it changes quickly, did people get on board with the message? Do you have any memories of that time, of the kinds of responses that you had from people who were having sex, like gay guys, bi guys, who were having sex?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I mean there's some great, there's great stories of people having, you know, the scheme as something that's kept them alive over the years. There was one brilliant quote that we were given, I think it's tenth anniversary, where 'you've been in my bedside drawer, you've been beside me every single night making sure that I'm safe'. Well that feels brilliant. But I think at the beginning in the early days there were lots of people that were very suspicious of condoms, they were quite resistant to condoms, they didn't like condoms at all, they didn't equate condoms with gay sex and enjoyment. It was seen very much about, this was for birth control, this was for heterosexuals, this was something that

was to stop babies, it wasn't to like, you know, promote positive sex between guys. So there was a lot of resistance to it, and so there's a lot of time where we spent eroticising the condoms itself, eroticising... we did a whole campaign about all the different uses that you could have for condoms and we were quite inventive about what you might be able to do. We had to normalise condom use, we had to encourage people to think about condoms. We had strippers that would demonstrate how to put condoms on in clubs, we had guys being encouraged to put condoms on dildos with their mouths. It was...

I remember one time where we had got a Jeff Stryker dildo and for those of us that remember those things, they were big. In my opinion it was a big dildo. And we thought it would be fantastic, we had all these flavoured condoms, we thought it would be fantastic to teach guys how to put a condom on with their mouth. And we thought it would be a brilliant thing to do with clubs. And it was, it was fantastic, people loved it. The trouble was, very very first guy that we encountered, he just put it on, no gagging, anything, went straight down. And we were like 'oh my God! We have just come across the king of oral application of condoms'. But it kind of spoilt it afterwards because having met somebody who just did it brilliantly first time, all the other people struggling with it, which is what we expected, sort of paled in to insignificance really.

But we used to have-

[00:42:30]

[Break]

INTERVIEWER 2: Oh, can I sorry, pause... I've only got [Missed] [00:42:33] audio at the moment, I'm going to ask you just to, could you just repeat that last anecdote if you can, your radio mic went at the end of it. Just with the guy going down... was he doing down?

[00:42:49]

PARTICIPANT: He was! I hadn't used that term though, Mike. Maybe I should.

[00:42:56]

INTERVIEWER 1: Is it alright like that?

[00:42:58]

INTERVIEWER 2: It's fine, I just need to turn it on. Okay, we're back on.

[00:43:03]

PARTICIPANT: So we used to do great safer sex events in night clubs across Manchester, again with different audiences of guys. And they were very popular, really well attended and people loved them, and all sorts of great events. I remember one time, this whole campaign to familiarise guys and eroticise condoms, and we hit on this idea of using a Jeff Stryker dildo and encouraging guys to go down on that a dildo with a condom in their mouth, to put it on... so these were actually different ways that you could put a condom on, you just have to sort of like turn the light on and roll it on and interrupt sort of like what you were doing, that's actually other ways that you could do it much more simply and unobtrusively. So using your

mouth was a way that we kind of hit on and stuff, and we had this idea that, we got this Jeff Stryker dildo, and for those people that have never come across a Jeff Stryker dildo they are big. In my opinion they are very big. And we thought it would be great fun, we got all these flavoured condoms, for guys to put these condoms on with their mouths, on this Jeff Stryker dildo. And it was, it was a great success, it was brilliant.

The trouble was, the very first [person] that we approached ended up being a master at oral application of condoms, because he just went down. No gag. Obviously he's mastered the gag reflex many years ago and he just went down perfectly in one fell swoop. And we were all stood around him, agog and kind of like 'again, again' and every single time he did it. Again and again, perfectly. And whilst other guys did what we expect of them to do when we carried on doing it, and sort of like struggle and splutter and sort of like gag, it was never quite as funny as it would have been had that guy not just done it perfectly first time. So you never know what hidden talents are out there in gay bars and clubs, and that's why it's important to ask.

[00:44:55]

INTERVIEWER 1: I was going to ask, how you're talking about the condom and lube campaign, and how it was so important, what other campaigns do you think were important at those times?

PARTICIPANT: It's hard to remember a lot of the detail of them. I think that a lot... our central golden thread message was about promoting safer sex, we never promoted safe sex, there's no such concept of something being 100% safe, so it was always safer sex. We tried to give guys permission to say to their lovers 'I don't want to fuck' or 'I want to fuck with a condom'. And I think introducing the way in which you can do that, introducing the language for that was quite important. I think there was an incredibly important series of work we did around confidence and around communication. We also attended to other sexually transmitted infections as well, so when syphilis reared its head we did some very targeted work with that. We did Hep B vaccinations and we started to try and persuade the powers that be to let us do much more clinical work. And to encourage people to do work in gay bars and gay clubs and in gay community spaces.

But a lot of it was all connected to taking care of yourself and taking care of the guy that you fancied or that you loved. And so, you know, encouraging people to talk about sex to stay alive was very important, to making sure that people had the kind of sex that they wanted, to making sure that people felt confident to say 'no', to making sure that people felt confident to articulate what it was that turned them on, to get the sex that they wanted. So there was never any single one campaign that I remember, they were all kind of part and parcel of the same essential truth, which was 'take care of yourself, take care of others'.

And I think what was really important about that process was that we tried wherever possible to use lots of different guys and to try and reach other to try and hear lots of different voices. We tried to have a bit of a megaphone to the differences within the gay and bi men's communities, the different tribes that people sort of like join and feel connected to. And trying to work with the different groups that existed to get them to communicate to people in their group themselves and the language that they were most comfortable with, with the images that they were most comfortable with. So some of it was written down, some of it was evaluated, but you know, in many ways, as a movement for change it hasn't been documented in the way that maybe other movements have been. So again, this oral history

is important, to get these fragment of memories, these fragments of ideas, these fragments of experiences, kind of blended together to sort of like see what other people's recollections were. Because this is my recollection, this is my truth, this is what I set out to achieve, this is what I thought that I was doing, these are my experiences. Other people will have completely different views and completely different opinions. Some of them will be sort of like similar, others will be fundamentally different. Or I'm hoping they will be, I'm hoping there'll be the diversity of different voices that we reach in this project.

[00:48:31]

INTERVIEWER 2: Okay. I was going to ask if you could say a little bit about the work today. You've kind of described that arc [?] [00:48:41] in a way, and if you could describe where we're at today in terms of the LGBT Foundation and maybe reflecting back any thoughts about that process of change and what has changed, and maybe a little bit about challenges in the moment and challenges that are to come, and opportunities as well that are in the future.

PARTICIPANT: Okay. So if I stand in modern time and look, reflect back, it feels that we have moved a tremendous amount. We've covered a huge amount of ground. And we have come on in leaps and bounds as lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people. The legal rights that we have are phenomenal. And you know, rightly so. Hard-fought, hard-won, rightly so. But I think that there are similarities now as they were thirty years ago that still play a part in causing difficulties and challenges for LGBT communities. I still think that many of us carry around feelings of shame about who we are, about our identities, about who love. And I think those feelings of shame come from the mainstream. I think they come from schools, I think they come from some families, I think they come from religious, I think they come from institutions.

[00:50:18]

I still think that the whole society... I'm not really going to attend to the rest of the world because I mean, that's too big a task, but in this country, yes, we recently got a cheque from some young people at schools that had done a bake sale and had sort of done a fundraising event under the auspices of one of our campaign slogans 'Equality Wins'. And the school's LGBT+ Society, who had decided to do this and regularly does assemblies and regularly does events and activities for the whole student body, and recently brought in an LGBT theatre and education play, were very proud that they had done this event. So the concept of having an LGBT+ Society at my school, I mean, it's beyond the pleasure dome, you know, it's unbelievable.

So there are fantastic examples of how the world has moved on. I was really struck by this school's mission statement, and if I recall it exactly, at the bottom of the letterhead from the LGBT+ Society it said 'Aim high, work hard, be nice, no excuses'. And that just felt that, if young people were being brought up with those values and those behaviours then the world's going to be a really good place. But it's not everywhere, it's not widespread. This must be an exceptional school with an exceptional range of teachers and parents being supportive and, you know, a head teacher and governance. You know, that's not replicated everywhere, so whilst we see these examples of brilliance, all too often people's experience of school, people's experience of being bullied at school... and that's where I think most of the work that we end up doing, that's where it starts. People's first experience of rejection, people's first experience of discrimination, people's first experience of otherness. Being

different, being outside of the norm, not conforming, not fitting in. Not being like anybody else. And if you're lucky you manage that and you work that through. If you're not so lucky then what happens is that your otherness just grows and you can then start to experience discrimination.

I recently did some work with some young people who are part of the theatre group at the Royal Exchange and they wanted to know... I'm obviously getting to that stage of my life and my career where people want to hear about what it was like back then. But even through that discussion, their own experiences, and you know people were confident in that space to come out as being gender variant or gender questioning or genderfluid or bi or pansexual. But hearing some of their stories, hearing some of their rejection, some of the discrimination they felt. Same core of the rejection and the discrimination that I felt when I was at school, that other people would have felt much more before them. So I think that we still, as an LGBT communities, will continue to need specialised and dedicated support and attention to some of the needs that we might display in later life, so we may well be having an over-reliance on alcohol or drugs, or self-medicate. We may well engage in harmful or self-harming behaviours. And you know we can get ourselves in to real difficulties and we can create some very dangerous situations for ourselves because of some of the experiences that we might have had when we were younger, some of the experiences we might be having now, and how we've internalised that and how we are trying to manage that.

So I think that many of the people that come to us, very quickly identify homophobia, biphobia or transphobia as the root cause for their mental, sexual, physical, drug and alcohol addictions, that ill health and stuff. It's often the same cause. Being treated differently, being discriminated against, because they are somehow 'other'.

[00:54:55]

So I think that where we currently are now is in a much better place to challenge some of that. We don't have to fight quite as much as we used to, but we can still see really shining examples of inequality that exist. We can see that there's still yet to be any significant football player that is playing currently to feel safe enough to come out. We also can see that for very many athletes, for many other sports people, they only come out at the end of their career. That's a very visible example of why the world is not as safe as it could or should be. We also can see the dreadful targeting of trans communities at the moment in the mainstream press, and we absolutely can see how being trans, being genderfluid, being non-binary, is seen as somehow exotic and different and bad at the moment, and that is heart-breaking when you think about how people are interpreting that, how people are responding to that, how that makes them feel. Even resilient robust, big strong trans activists are still, I've seen them reduced to tears just because of a casual transphobia remark that people feel is absolutely acceptable. 'Oh, you were born with a penis, weren't you?' As if somehow that's polite conversation to open a conversation with. Or to report in a national paper as part of that person's identity. It's not acceptable, and it can still take people by surprise, and people are still having to fight very hard for who they are and the right to love who they love. So we've still got many many miles still to travel, much better than it was, much more progressive, much much more accessible, much much more tolerant and welcoming, but still lots of ground to cover.

And also something that we should never take for granted. I was recently in the States and talking to some people there, people very frightened that rights that they had been gained only recently through the Obama administration, sort of like very fragile, particularly as a lot

of LGBT equality in the States was by Presidential, sort of, whatever the mechanism is, Presidential Order I think it is. And those orders can be overturned quite easily by the new president. So lots done, still much more to do.

[00:57:43]

INTERVIEWER 2: I was going to ask you, thinking specifically about sexual health, how do you feel that treatment as prevention, PEP, PrEP, are going to change the landscape of safer sex, or are changing the landscape?

PARTICIPANT: Yep. I think that we can see from early results in London that PrEP is the game-changer that we always thought it was going to be. The approach in London has been very much focussed around testing and testing often, and using and encouraging the use of both PEP and PrEP to protect yourself and your partners. And we're seeing tremendous results, and I think that the PrEP trial was fundamentally successful and whilst NHS England's been very slow in the national roll-out we will hopefully see a continuation of the impact that, the positive impact that PrEP will have. And I think that the more we encourage people to know their HIV status, the more we encourage people to take control of the choices that they make, and the more that we encourage people to take care of themselves and their sexual partners, the better we will be. And I think that we, we as an organisation are currently working on a strategy where we will see the eradication of HIV within a generation. And we generally believe that we have the tools available for that to happen. I think there's still big issues about how people behave, in terms of their confidence and their approach and their understanding. I think that people can still get caught up in the heat of the moment, people can still make choices for themselves that might not be as positive as you might want them to be. But I think that ultimately we are heading in a direction where HIV will not be any more problematic for communities than managing something like diabetes. I mean, we've seen extraordinary progress with HIV meds, so currently people with HIV are much more likely to die of other long-term conditions at a much later stage of their life, as they would be expected to, than actually from HIV itself. So that in itself, I never thought I would see that in my lifetime.

[01:00:16]

I think the introduction of gay marriage and civil partnerships is a really interesting one, I think that for some members of the LGBT community the idea of being in relationships, long-term relationships that are sexually exclusive, that are monogamous, was sort of sometimes frowned upon. So, I'm a serial monogamist, so you know I'm very comfortable with that, but I have been judged of being too heteronormative in the past by some friends and certainly from some colleagues in terms of, why is it you want to get married and emulate heterosexuality? Well because that's what suits me down to the ground, thank you very much. So I think the way in which we view our sex lives has changed, particularly with the introduction of gay marriage.

I worry about sex apps, I worry about the impact it has on people's emotional health and mental health. It does worry me that we have people that are feeling quite isolated and feeling quite excluded. There's, it's a clear beauty parade and you know, people are judged based on what they present to the world and the photographs. I've always found it much more horny to kind of like be seduced by what's between someone's ears than what's between their legs, and yet it feels that we've got generations at the moment with very explicit pictures of themselves, sort of like, swirling around social media. And I worry about

the implications of that. And there's a lot of slut shaming going on, and that feels kind of retrograde, and that worries me a bit as well. I suppose I'm of the generation where I make judgements based upon what people present to me, but increasingly I feel that I'm one of the minorities, that I haven't checked out people that I might be meeting or might be interviewing or might be coming in to contact with, that I haven't checked them out on social media. Lots of my friends and some of my colleagues here will have done that prior to meeting somebody new, and that just feels quite alien to me, so...

But making judgements about what people put on their Facebook page or on their Twitter, you know we've seen a lot of that at the moment in terms of very inappropriate remarks from many years ago being brought to life. I'm not quite sure how I feel about that because, whilst I clearly don't support the language or the things that people have said, if I don't believe that people have the right to change and that people have, you know, the right to be listened to and the right for their apology to be listened to, then I don't know what I mean, do you know what I mean? Because as an educator I think that part of my job is to change the hearts and minds of people that don't agree with what I believe in. So if I can't accept that people have changed and that they're apologising, it's just often the manner of the apology, isn't it? It's about, you know, only coming out when they're caught, it's only coming out because it's the way to try and change the narrative and change the story. Kevin Spacey is a good example in point, you know. For many years most of us assumed he was a gay man, you know. Clearly lots and lots of people enabled him to be, you know, a reported abuser. And then when he was caught he came out, to change the narrative. Well it hasn't changed the narrative and he's still potentially going to be prosecuted for his crimes. And let's not forget, sexually assaulting minors is a crime, you know. It was a word.

And I think that, you know, some cynical PR stunt to try and change the narrative by Kevin Spacey coming out is kind of despicable. So we can still see that coming out is still a big deal, you know. It's not become normalised, it's still a big deal. And so in terms of the road ahead, I think that there are lots and lots of challenges, not least of which the multiple identities that many parts of our community kind of have, and the intersectionality of those identities. We're doing a lot of work now at the moment about the different identities that people have across our broad community and the different language they use to describe themselves. I'm, in my work I do a lot of focus around monitoring of sexual orientation because if you're not counter you don't count in the allocation of resources. And so getting sexual orientation monitoring questions asked across the public sector, it's been a big deal for me over the last couple of years.

[01:05:19]

And just as that gets agreed by the system, just as the sexual orientation monitoring information standard gets formally approved and we will now be asked across healthcare whether we are lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual, just at that moment, big parts of our communities are saying 'yeah, that doesn't fit me, I'm pansexual, I'm queer, I'm genderfluid, I'm...' whatever it might be. And so whilst the bureaucracy is always going to lag behind where people are I think there are huge debates to be had about how we describe ourselves, how we present ourselves, and that there is a need for another change if you like, do you know what I mean? So whilst we might talk, we kind of used to talk about lesbian and gay equality, then we started to include bi equality, although I don't think that bisexual people have been meaningfully involved in the way they should be. And then we started to talk about trans equality, and I think that that debate is very strong and is very vibrant and has

moved ahead considerably. I think that lots and lots of people are talking in very positive terms about public policy, about including trans people.

But I think the narrative needs to change again because people are identifying in very different ways and are identifying in, using words and a language that many people, including myself, are quite unfamiliar with. So you know, the concept of me referring to myself as cisgender, it's still taking some getting used to because whenever I hear the term cisgender, I hear the 'cis' and for me thirty years ago being called a 'sissy' was something that kind of liked help shape who I am, so I'm not going to respond very positively to being called cis because I hear something else than what people mean.

I'm also worried about being clinically defined or medically defined, I'm much more in to social models, but the vast majority of the world don't understand what cisgendered kind of means, and so there's another piece of work that needs to be undertaken about people understanding that. The concept of non-binary identities, the fact that gender can be fluid for many people, that's really difficult for a lot of people to kind of conceptualise or deal with or even understand, so the use of language is becoming really important. I'm just currently reading Christine Burns' Pressing Matters, and in it she talks about the language from the mid-... probably early-Nineties through to kind of the early-Noughties, and about how 'trans' was introduced by Press for Change as a term, and the resistance from some core parts of the community around that word, and the way in which people had described themselves before and that in the Eighties and early-Nineties it was perfectly acceptable for trans activists to talk about having brain disorders as a way to describe transexualism. And even for me, that was around at that time, that still feels very alien, it doesn't feel right, it doesn't feel where I'm at. And so I've been struggling reading the book in terms of her describing how the passage of the use of words and language has changed, and where people... and how people have been brought forward.

So I can see that we're, I think, reading another crossroads quite quickly, and particularly because a lot of the anti-trans sentiment in the mainstream press has been around the use of the word language, and how today there's a story in the Mail about how somebody at a conference yesterday was talking about not describing young women as 'ladies' or 'girls' or not talking about young men as 'boys' because of the impact that might have on them, where it might take them, or the way it might misgender them. I think it was like, Piers Morgan has come in 'let boys be boys and let girls be girls!' and 'political correctness gone mad' and that kind of like, establishment rhetoric, and I think that we are nearing that point where... or maybe it's an ongoing thing, maybe the use of language and the definition of language is an on-going constant.

[01:10:01]

But I think there is definitely a need to agree a way to codify where we currently and who we currently are because I think if we have too many conversations then it makes it very difficult to do my job, which is about social change, about public policy, about allocation of resources, about inclusion. I have to have a language that's relatively fixed because changing the questions to be asked of you in a public sector service environment will cost millions of pounds, and the system won't agree to that, so we've got to be fairly right. So just at the time I'm encouraging the system to ask if you're lesbian, gay or bisexual, you know, people are going 'yeah, it doesn't work for me'. But that's always how it's been, I guess.

[01:10:54]

INTERVIEWER 2: Great. Erm... Paul, unless you have any other questions I was going to say, is there anything you want to add, anything you haven't covered that you feel should be mentioned? Anything else? Basically over to you.

PARTICIPANT: I think trying to sum up nearly 30 years in an hour and a half is always going to be problematic and difficult. I'm really happy to come back if there are any specific questions that you have. I mean, there's any number of different things that I can talk about. I've genuinely not thought about this interview so that I can respond to your questions in the same way I didn't really think about what I said on the night. So yeah, I'm happy to be asked to come about specific questions. Because it's quite interesting, because I'm being reminded of lots of things that I'd forgotten, which is kind of quite nice.

[01:11:51] End of transcript.