



**James Naish MP**

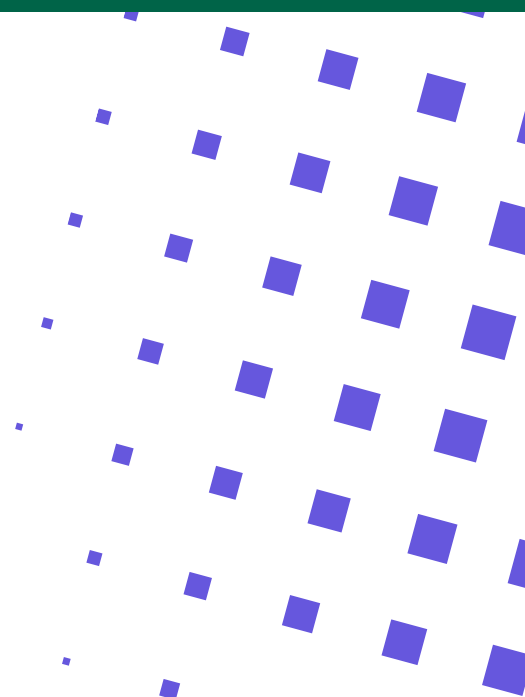
Building a **thriving** Rushcliffe for **everyone**

# ‘Nothing about us without us’:



THE VOICES OF  
RUSHCLIFFE’S  
TRANS  
COMMUNITY

## Roundtable report



# Contact details

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# Foreword

There can be little doubt that the trans community is feeling isolated. Over the past couple of years, after decades of steady changes, there have been at least three key issues – the findings of the Cass Review, changes to the use of puberty blockers and the Supreme Court ruling on the meaning of ‘sex’ in the Equality Act 2010 – that have caused great anxiety within the trans community.

On 4th July 2025, I convened a roundtable with members of the trans community from across my constituency of Rushcliffe. The purpose of the discussion was to hear directly about their lived experiences, focusing on the challenges they face locally and where changes could be implemented to make them feel more comfortable after a period of significant uncertainty.

The discussion was not intended to focus on national policy positions, although the importance of this backdrop was noted throughout the conversation.

Drawing on first-hand accounts, this report notes the Rushcliffe trans community’s persistent sense of fear, exacerbated by shifting political dynamics, inconsistent healthcare access and a lack of civic and organisational representation. Limited direct engagement about trans issues was also a common concern expressed by roundtable participants.

The objective of this report is to capture some of the key points raised by roundtable attendees to share with local authorities, civil society organisations and policymakers about the realities of living as a trans person, and to propose some viable, community-driven responses based on their experiences.

I sincerely thank all participants for their contributions. At least two participants openly expressed at the start of the discussion how nervous they were, sharing their deepest concerns with a room of unfamiliar people. I personally found the conversation enlightening as well as challenging, and hope that the perspectives contained within this report cause everyone to reflect on how we can best support some of our most vulnerable neighbours to live their very best lives.

**James Naish MP**

Member of Parliament for Rushcliffe

# Recommendations

- 1 Formal declaration.** Participants suggested that Rushcliffe Borough Council issue a formal declaration recognising the borough as a “no transphobia zone”.
- 2 Trans-affirming business directory.** A publicly available list of local businesses committed to trans inclusion would serve both practical and symbolic purposes.
- 3 Local Pride event.** The development of a local Pride event, potentially centred in West Bridgford, received strong support from roundtable participants.
- 4 Purposeful education and dialogue.** There was widespread agreement that education remains a cornerstone of long-term cultural acceptance – but this needs local sponsorship.
- 5 Better, meaningful representation.** Trans residents should be consulted and genuinely represented in decision-making processes that impact them.
- 6 Institutional accountability.** Participants stressed the importance of holding national bodies accountable for their role in shaping legal and cultural attitudes.

# Report statistics

0.54%

of people aged 16+ identified as having a gender identity different from their sex at birth (2021)

50%

of participants had experienced discrimination or harassment in the past 12 months

67%

felt ‘somewhat uncomfortable’ being open about their gender identity in Rushcliffe

100%

said they’d found supportive networks for LGBTQIA+ people locally

67%

said the rejection of NC21 by the Labour government was ‘important’

5.0

Score out of 10 for feeling trans voices are currently heard **locally**

2.5

Score out of 10 for feeling trans voices are currently heard **nationally**

1.9

Score out of 10 for optimism about trans rights in 2024 to 2029



## Section 1. Local lived experiences

### Context

Like many MPs, my inbox has been flooded during my first year in office – I’d received over 25,000 emails at the last count – with winter fuel allowance changes, assisted dying views, the conflict in Gaza and potential welfare changes being among the most prominent topics covered. But there has also been a steady stream of contacts about gender matters.

It would be wrong to assert that there has been a single, consistent view of trans *experiences* locally, but there has definitely been an underlying sense of fear and distrust communicated by trans people themselves. This was notable on the doorsteps before the general election.

Before becoming an MP, I was very conscious that arguments played out on X (formerly Twitter) had polarised and politicised the issue, and felt it was important to talk to the trans community in a more structured way than one-on-one surgery appointments.

“ I wanted to talk to trans people directly. They are, after all, disproportionately talked **about** rather than **with**, which was one of the key points made by several participants during the roundtable. ”

It was in this context that I decided to organise and host a roundtable with trans constituents from Rushcliffe on 4th July 2025. Many of them had emailed me about national matters but their emails often referred to a lonely and isolated local life. I

wanted to learn more about how in Rushcliffe at least, as an open-minded and progressive community, that could be changed.

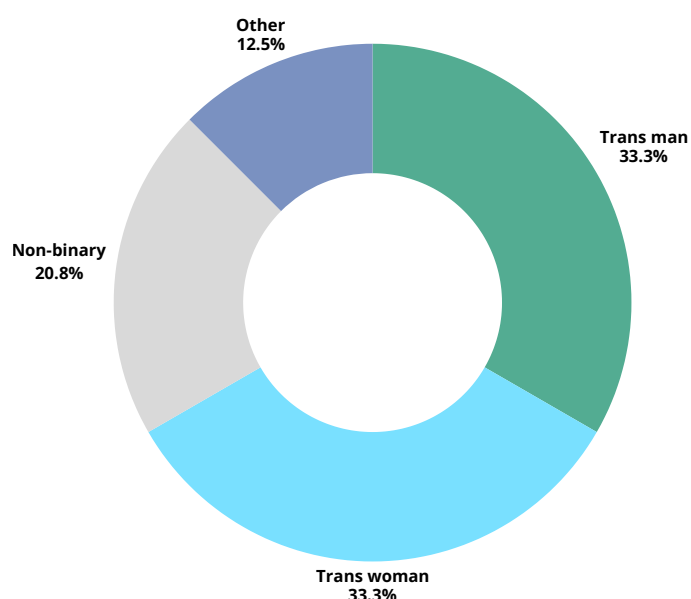
### Navigating community life

The roundtable started by thinking about day-to-day experiences of living as a trans person in a particular village or community within Rushcliffe.

A prominent theme that emerged was the concept of “self-policing” which was described as a crucial survival mechanism. Trans participants described how everyday decisions such as carefully planning routes, steering clear of certain places or limiting social activities altogether helped to reduce the fear or reality of abuse ... but this led to restricting individual freedoms. This internalised form of risk management was described as “exhausting”, with trans people constantly weighing up questions of safety and social acceptability. Participants shared how they’d often avoid eye contact in shops, dress in ways that attract less attention or carry objects designed to help them “blend in”, highlighting the ongoing challenges of navigating public spaces. As one participant said, “by self-policing, while you may avoid the grossest forms of abuse, we are essentially limiting our own lives.”

While self-policing was described as a survival strategy employed by many trans people, it was genuinely agreed during the discussion that it’s a more important coping mechanism in smaller (often rural) communities. Participants from Rushcliffe’s smaller settlements said they had experienced direct verbal harassment including misgendering, pointed remarks and occasional public confrontations.

**Breakdown of specified trans genders in the 2021 UK census**



These incidents highlighted how self-policing is not just an internalised coping mechanism but can also be a response to genuine hostility. One participant said they stopped using a local sandwich bar after an owner referred to them as “that person”. They said: “you know what they’re thinking and saying, so you second guess whether you want to go back there.”

Roundtable attendees suggested that this type of attitude may be down to a lack of guidance about social integration given to less diverse communities. It was suggested that stronger support and education networks are needed in more traditional parts of the UK, combined with efforts to acknowledge and recognise businesses and organisations that help to foster a culture where anti-trans behaviour – purposeful or not – isn’t tolerated.

### Broader climate of hostility

Although Rushcliffe trans residents may not experience frequent verbal harassment or hate crimes, roundtable attendees alluded to a growing undercurrent of suspicion,

discomfort and unspoken prejudice, with a recurring fear expressed about being filmed or photographed without consent, particularly in or near public toilets or when running daily errands.

Unprompted, participants said that recent political changes at Nottinghamshire County Council were responsible for intensifying local concerns. The change of leadership at the Council in May 2025 was seen not merely as a political shift, but interpreted as being reflective of a broader cultural realignment in which trans lives are becoming increasingly politicised and problematised.

Referencing a recent Pride event elsewhere in the UK where a councillor was arrested for assault and criminal damage, participants said that they felt there was growing potential for institutions to act with hostility towards trans individuals and communities, including through exerting pressure on local businesses to exhibit (or stop) certain behaviours. Attendees expressed a growing fear that the UK is moving towards a polarised state locally and nationally, with hostile anti-trans agendas described by one participant as the “first domino” in further discrimination towards other marginalised communities.

The role of the media in polarising the issue was noted. Most participants felt that anti-trans voices have moved from expressing disagreement with trans rights campaigners to actively seeking to push them and trans people out of the conversation and, in worst case scenarios, out of public life altogether. The mirroring of trends from the United States was noted.

Linked to this, the broader atmosphere in

the UK was described as being “like a whispering campaign” in which there was a slow but quiet growth in anti-trans views in locations such as schools, workplaces and online forums. Participants noted that while such views were often expressed indirectly rather than directly – for example, through humour rather than open hostility – this can make it more difficult to challenge opposing views, particularly in tight-knit communities where social relationships are often more deeply entrenched.

“While all participants agreed Rushcliffe was generally **less polarised** than other parts of Nottinghamshire, it was noted that **risks are still present** and that these extend beyond the trans community itself.”

It was also noted that some cisgender women – notably those who naturally appear more masculine – are reporting increased harassment and invasive scrutiny. This highlights how gender policy potentially affects a broad spectrum of people who don’t, at first glance, appear to align with patriarchal norms. One participant noted that this was increasingly common in the sporting world (e.g. Imane Khelif at the Paris Olympics).

The psychological consequences of this can be severe, with several roundtable participants expressing how they avoid public transport and community centres due to a sense of exclusion. This can, in turn, lead to a form of social segregation, not enforced by the law but by perceptions and experiences of local and national culture.

## Section 2. Healthcare access, safety and support services

### Inconsistent support across providers

The second part of the roundtable focused on institutional responses and support for the trans community. Feedback on schools / councils was limited, with greater feedback offered on healthcare and local businesses.

On the whole, medical professionals – as individuals – were described as being understanding and sympathetic on trans matters. Some participants described their local GP practices as highly supportive, offering care that one participant described as “incredible”.

However, all attendees acknowledged that this wasn’t everyone’s experience. Some trans constituents had encountered resistance when seeking support, with a lack of consistent commissioning often causing problems. Other reported issues included refusal to prescribe medication, poorly informed staff and inaccurate referrals. One person recounted being referred to the police by social services when accessing transition-related care, leaving them feeling stigmatised and criminalised.

Since starting this piece of work and engaging Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board about its policy position on trans healthcare, it has started a “a listening exercise to help inform the commissioning of a new, permanent service to prescribe and monitor hormones and blockers for adult transgender patients in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.” This is welcomed and important, given that existing care pathways are inconsistent and can lead to a breakdown of communication between patients and service providers. However, it was noted during the discussion that families of trans children have reported



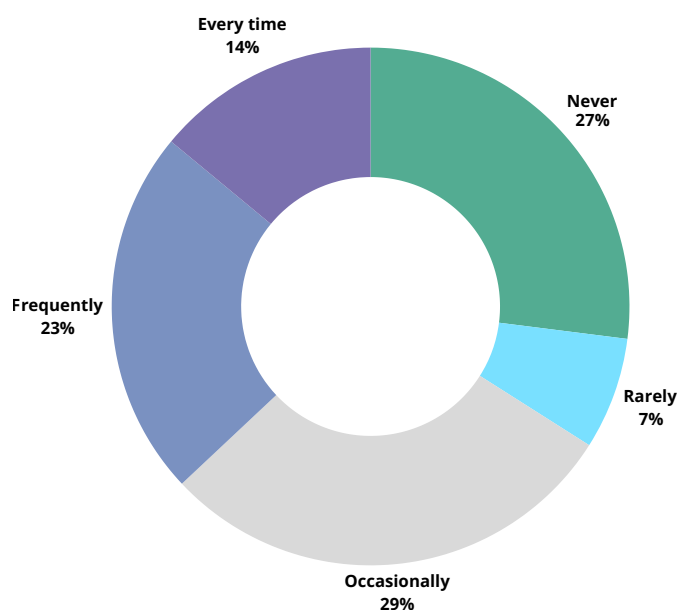
being forced to turn to private providers or informal networks – despite potential legal and safety risks – to secure support for their children. It is noted that this consultation will not review any services or support offered to under 18s and/or their families. This feels like a missed opportunity.

Of particular concern was the fragility of ‘shared care’ arrangements between GPs and gender identity clinics. Their agreements were described as “informal” and “vulnerable to sudden withdrawal”, leading to medical uncertainty for trans patients and their families. A lack of continuity can contribute to increased mental health anxiety for patients.

### Rural inequalities in healthcare

Accessing medical support was generally perceived to be more challenging – and services described as more inconsistent – in rural parts of Rushcliffe, reinforcing the idea that reliable access to standardised care is one of the trans community’s most significant barriers.

**Experience of transphobia while seeking employment (TransLivesSurvey, 2021)**



Indeed, attendees said the trans community often faced multi-year waits for specialist care. These delays often have profound effects on trans people and their families. As noted earlier, some children and families turn to accessing drugs and tests online which are self-administered at home and, therefore, carry alternative risks. All participants recognised the need to produce and follow world-class guidelines on transgender care for young people as soon as possible.

One participant expressed frustration about a systemic disconnect between health decision-makers and patients. They said: “Everything is done by cisgender people sitting on a body, deciding how we get healthcare and how we’re treated.” While many healthcare interactions are positive, participants said this disconnect undermined trust, and constant requests for organisations to follow standard practices could be an exhausting and demoralising process that fostered feelings of exclusion.

This challenge can be further compounded by the multi-dimensional nature of trans people’s needs which often require healthcare professionals to adopt a more holistic and informed approach. One participant recounted being denied care due to their autism, with a GP practice questioning their ability to fully understand their own experiences as a result of their autism. This reinforced the need for better guidance and training about autism generally across the NHS, to ensure that care for all autistic people is affirming, inclusive and responsive to the whole person.

Finally, the quantitative data and qualitative discussion suggested that local businesses

were generally felt to have good relationships with the trans community, with an equal number of participants describing their experiences as being “often” or “sometimes” positive. However, larger national corporations were generally criticised by participants due to recent decisions to reduce or withdraw support from diversity agendas. This was seen to reinforce the concept of “rainbow capitalism” (the practice of businesses profiting by using rainbow imagery while failing to demonstrate genuine, ongoing support for the LGBTQ+ community).

### Section 3: Political and institutional abandonment

#### Local and institutional responses

A key point that emerged from the roundtable discussion was that symbolic gestures are increasingly being seen by the trans community as hollow and performative because – at an organisational level – they rarely coincide with meaningful power-sharing, policy change or tangible improvements in lived experiences.

*“It was in this part of the discussion that the phrase **“nothing about us without us”** was used by participants to underscore a **core principle of self-determination** and genuine inclusion.*

It reflects an ask that discussions, policies and decisions affecting the trans community only take place or are developed / made with its direct involvement. This challenges the top-down convention whereby institutions, policymakers and LGBTQIA+ allies shape policy impacting minority

groups, without necessarily consulting them directly. Participants wanted to see more trans people holding seats around the table, not just as representatives but as active agents shaping outcomes – in healthcare, community services, and local and national governance. Participants reported feeling side-lined in conversations about access to services, safety and social support, and felt that without trans voices being central to shaping these processes, policies risked being out of touch, ineffective or even harmful.

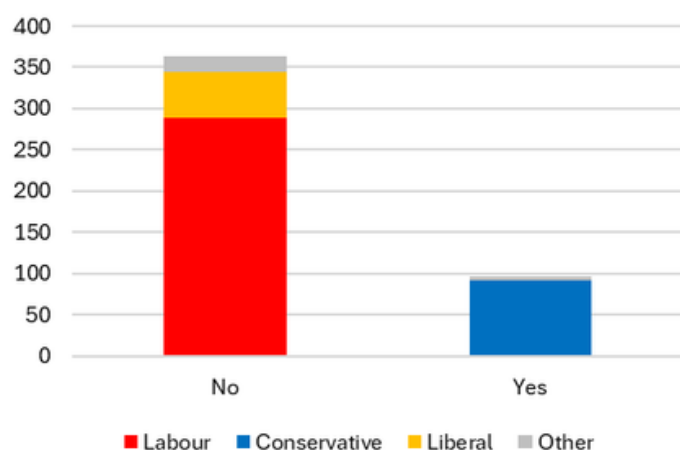
For some, this means rainbow flags or diversity-themed posters now serve as a reminder of the lack of substantive action and unfulfilled promises about representation, amplifying frustrations. Participants stressed that without structural changes such as embedding trans perspectives in decision-making, active consultation and robust anti-discrimination enforcement, at a time of fraught national conversation, these symbols risk being perceived as superficial branding rather than genuine commitments.

This disconnect is worsened by silence from politicians who seem to worry about causing offence in either direction. This fosters a lack of trust in institutions that, by default, should prioritise defining, promoting and safeguarding equality.

#### The national picture

As the new party of government, the Labour Party was criticised by many roundtable participants. The government’s decision to vote down two minor anti-trans measures earlier in 2025 was welcomed; however, several participants described Labour’s response to major trans policy issues as “a

Voting on NC21, Data (Use and Access) Bill  
Division 190: held on 7th May 2025



retreat into silence”. There was a general sense that national leaders were reluctant to take a principled stand or, worse still, to change their position to suit the times. This was deemed a grave disappointment given Labour’s manifesto commitment to treating everyone “with respect and dignity”, although participants acknowledged that the Party hadn’t committed to more radical action at the 2024 general election.

The absence of transgender Members of Parliament was highlighted as evidence of underrepresentation across all political parties. To achieve proportional representation, participants suggested there should be at least three transgender MPs to reflect the size of the trans community’s population in the UK.

Participants’ disappointment extended beyond political parties to national institutions such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The appointment of Baroness Falkner of Margravine – perceived by many participants as unsupportive of trans equality – has become a flashpoint for broader distrust, as has ongoing engagement with “gender critical activist groups”. Falkner’s prior reputation was

described as raising questions about the EHRC’s commitment to defending marginalised groups, and her appointment has undermined confidence that national institutions will actively uphold trans rights or effectively challenge discrimination.

Reflecting this pessimism, when asked about their optimism for trans rights in the UK during the current parliamentary term (2024-2029), over 80% of roundtable participants gave low scores of either 1 or 2 out of 10. In person, roundtable attendees said that they anticipated regression rather than progress, attributing their negative outlook to the lack of supportive legislation and the mainstreaming of gender-critical narratives in the media, as well as a growth in the number of political parties willing to openly and actively criticise trans people. These sentiments highlighted a significant and growing gap between words, actions and promises which, I fear, will be very difficult to bridge in the short term.

#### Section 4: Inclusion, visibility and representation

Despite the challenges outlined in earlier sections of this report, roundtable participants expressed a strong commitment to change, offering a range of practical and hopeful proposals to improve the lives of trans people in Rushcliffe and beyond. Most of these ideas were grounded in participants’ lived experiences and driven by a desire for incremental, meaningful progress – reflecting a community that is not only aware of the barriers it faces, but one that continues to be actively invested in and committed to overcoming them.

However, it was clear that there was limited desire to engage people with opposing views

directly due to historic campaign tactics. In my experience and through my work on the International Development Committee, I believe that some conflicts can only be resolved through dialogue ... but in this case, there was genuine fear about – and a lack of belief in – the value of direct engagement due to entrenched positions. I have reflected on this and believe clashes online have created a huge, seemingly immovable wedge between the two sides. It will be hard to make progress quickly without meaningful engagement, as people hear and learn from the experiences and views of others – but I hope that this report evidences how conversations can be insightful, thought-provoking and challenging at the same time. It feels that we are some way off being able to facilitate conciliatory dialogue that helps to improve real, lived experiences.

Nonetheless, as mentioned at the start of the report, I purposefully wanted to explore what could be done locally to address some of the concerns raised in trans constituents' emails, and to propose some viable, community-driven responses based on their experiences. The points below aim to enhance inclusivity and build stronger support networks – while recognising that shifting community perspectives will likely be a lengthier, less tangible exercise.

### **1. No transphobia zones**

*Participants suggested that Rushcliffe Borough Council issue a formal declaration recognising the borough as a “no transphobia zone”. Backed by signage and public statements, this would set a visible baseline of institutional support for the trans community. Similar ideas such as a “hate-free zone” have been adopted by other local authorities and could serve as a*

*helpful model.*

### **2. Trans-affirming business directory**

*Participants suggested that a publicly available list of local businesses committed to trans inclusion would serve both practical and symbolic purposes. Developed in collaboration with organisations such as the Pastel Project as part of the wider effort to establish Nottingham as the UK's first trans sanctuary city, such a directory would help trans residents navigate public spaces more safely. It would also incentivise businesses to take a clear, visible stance in support of equality while fostering a more inclusive local economy.*

### **3. Local Pride events**

*The creation of a local Pride event, potentially centred in West Bridgford, received strong support from participants. Similar events are already taking root across Nottinghamshire and other towns across the country, and a dedicated Pride event in Rushcliffe could enhance visibility, strengthen community ties and affirm that trans people are an integral part of the borough's cultural and social fabric. Many individuals noted that current opportunities for local connection and celebration are limited, and a Pride event would help address that gap.*

### **4. Purposeful education and dialogue**

*There was widespread agreement that education remains a cornerstone of long-term cultural acceptance. While participants recognised that many people are opposed to top-down messaging telling people how they should think, many*

*believed that open, respectful, local conversations could foster greater understanding. Institutions such as schools, libraries and community centres were identified as key venues for workshops, talks and forums, and were seen as spaces where constructive dialogue can take place and misconceptions can be challenged through the sharing of lived experiences. There was an undeniable nervousness about personal involvement, however.*

### **5. Better, meaningful representation**

*Ensuring that trans residents are not just consulted but genuinely represented in decision-making processes was a recurring theme throughout the roundtable. Inclusion on local boards, school governing bodies and political party branches were all described as priorities. There were also calls for political and healthcare organisations to reform their internal structures to better support and elevate trans voices, ensuring that policies are informed by those most affected from the earliest stages of development.*

### **6. Institutional accountability**

*Finally, while many of the structural issues discussed extend beyond the remit of local governance, participants stressed the importance of holding national bodies – such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) – accountable for their role in shaping both legal frameworks and cultural attitudes. Local leaders were urged to use their platforms to advocate for national reform, especially when institutional trust has been broken in the eyes of the trans community.*

## **Personal reflections**

During the roundtable, I heard first-hand about the trans community's experience living in Rushcliffe. While this was, on the whole, described as a relatively positive experience, it was very clear that the trans community faces a complex and interconnected set of challenges – especially in more remote areas.

When taken individually, its issues may not be seen as significant but, taken together, they represent a threat to living what most people would describe as an 'ordinary life', notably due to the degree of self-policing. Participants were forthright in emphasising that their fears were not abstract or based on isolated incidents, but rooted in the lived consequences of persistent systemic failings which urgently need reviewing and addressing.

This report aims to capture lived realities and to amplify the voices of trans people who are talked about but rarely consulted. Local and national government bodies and policymakers would benefit listening more closely and carefully to trans residents to break down existing barriers – especially those which have been erected over recent years – to ensure they can't be accused of tokenism.

While major points of contention – such as those arising from the recent UK Supreme Court ruling on the Equality Act 2010 – lie beyond local control, participants were clear that this doesn't and shouldn't diminish the responsibility of local leaders. It was recognised that small, local communities are where lives are built and sustained, and that visible civic leadership, consistent healthcare provision and trans-



sympathetic community infrastructure were natural starting points for improving lived experiences. The fight for all types of equality could – and probably should – be taking place in town halls every day, rather than waiting for Westminster.

I hope that the recommendations extracted from July's roundtable will be considered by a range of local decision-makers. Despite being in a relatively good place, it is clear that through shared responsibility and targeted action, Rushcliffe can become safer, more welcoming and more equitable for trans residents. To achieve this, public and private organisations need to move beyond tokenistic gestures towards systemic changes that promote equality, dignity and genuine inclusion and influence. I hope and believe that if these actions are taken in Rushcliffe, they will resonate more broadly and ultimately be reflected on a national scale.



# Useful contacts

The following organisations were all referenced by roundtable participants as being helpful and supportive to the trans community as part of the discussions:

**FFLAG -**

<https://www.fflag.org.uk/>

**Nottingham Against Transphobia -**

<https://nottingham-against-transphobia.teemill.com/>

**Nottingham Chameleons -**

<https://www.nottinghamchameleons.co.uk/>

**Nottinghamshire Hurricanes RFC -**

<https://www.facebook.com/NottinghamshireHurricanes/>

**Notts LGBT+ Network -**

<https://www.nottslgbt.com/>

**Notts Trans Hub -**

<https://www.nottstranshub.org/>

**Notts Trans Pride -**

<https://www.facebook.com/nottstranspride/>



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