

## Equality Impact Assessment – Little j

### A. Name and the nature of the decision

**Licensing (until 4am) of Little j LGBTQI+ late-night community events venue that is currently subject to a cumulative impact assessment.** The venue provides a safe and inclusive space for arts, culture, wellbeing, and community-led activities.

### B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment

Little j's is the only dedicated LGBTQ+ community venue in York and North Yorkshire. It plays a vital role in advancing equality of opportunity by providing a safe space for the arts, support group activities, safe LGBTQI+ social events, and other community events such as LGBTQI+ yoga, meditation, clothes exchanges, hair/makeup workshops and media initiatives. The venue also fosters good relations between communities by hosting events that are open to both LGBTQ+ people and allies. To sustain and develop this provision, with a licensing application has been submitted to City of York Council. Securing this licence is critical to ensuring the continuation of activities that eliminate discrimination, reduce social isolation and promote community cohesion aligned with the Equality Act, 2010.

### Serious failings of the Council's Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of 10/9/25 – Annex 12

#### Section 1.2 External Considerations?

This list does not include the CYC's own [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) [see Note 1] or the CYC's own published [City of York Council Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2025-2028](#) (APPENDIX C). Only provides a limited list of the duties the licensing authority must have regard to when determining an application. Relevant to highlight sections of following:

- 14.63 [see Note 2] and 14.68 [see Note 3] of the [Section 182 Guidance](#) and Section 4.29 the CYC [Statement of Licensing Policy 2025-2030](#)  
"The Council must have regards to its public sector duty under the Equality Act."

#### Section 1.3 Who are the Stakeholders?

This should include the LGBTQ+ community of York as stakeholders. The needs of the community should be explicitly considered on the basis of both sexual orientation and gender reassignment in particular.

#### Section 1.4 What results/outcomes do we want to achieve and for whom?

The CYC EIA lacks specificity and fails to explain the desired outcomes for service users, staff and/or the wider community nor demonstrate how the proposal links to the Council Plan (2019- 2023) and other corporate strategies and plans e.g.:

- The EIA does not show how the proposal links to the Council plan 'One City For All': one of the [4 core commitments](#) of which is "Equalities and Human Rights"
- The EIA does not demonstrate how the proposal links to section 4.29 or 1.6 the CYC [Statement of Licensing Policy 2025-2030](#):  
"The Council must have regards to its public sector duty under the Equality Act."  
"there is a strong 'business' imperative for CYC to really embed EDI in its practices and services."  
"encouraging a variety and mix of high quality licensed premises that will appeal to a broad spectrum of people, including a well-used city centre, day and night, that is safe and accessible to all."
- Nor is it made clear how these duties will be balanced (see section 5)

#### Section 2.1 Gathering the information and feedback

There are significant data gaps here:

- Lack of detailed data: Section 4 of the EIA frequently quotes the statistic "Section Paragraph 4.17 of the policy references hate crimes, levels of which York is below the national average." However, this

conflates LGBTQ+ hate crimes with others (all forms of which well understood to be underreported) and ignores more nuanced data for the individual protected characteristics (see Littlej EIA).

- There are data gaps in e.g. numbers identifying as LGBTQ+ or trans, numbers of LGBTQ+ people who choose not to engage with existing nighttime economy on safety grounds (unknown).
- These data are critical given that it is a CYC policy objective to “encourage a variety and mix of high quality licensed premises that will appeal to a broad spectrum of people, including a well-used city centre, day and night, that is safe and accessible to all.” (see Littlej EIA).

### 3.1 Gaps in data or knowledge:

The data gaps highlighted above in section 2.1 make the conclusions of section 3.1 incorrect.

Section 4.1 Please consider what the evidence tells you about the likely impact (positive or negative) on people sharing a protected characteristic, i.e. how significant could the impacts be if we did not make any adjustments?

The EIA fails to explicitly consider the negative impact LGBTQ+ people of the council misapplying the above policies or failing to consider how they should give due weight to its public sector equality duty. Including impacts around not being able to equally engage with nighttime economy of the city centre that is safe and accessible to all.

The EIA fails to explicitly state how the policy will encourage or meets its stated aim of "encouraging a diverse city with offerings for everyone." For example, it is not clear how offerings for LGBTQ+ people especially trans people are being encouraged.

Section 5.1 Based on your findings, explain ways you plan to mitigate any unlawful prohibited conduct or unwanted adverse impact. Where positive impacts have been identified, what is been done to optimise opportunities to advance equality or foster good relations?

It is unclear how the promotion of the licensing objectives, licensing policy and guidance issued under Section 182 and CIA will be balanced against the public sector equality duty and CYC's core commitments to Equalities and Human Rights. The EIA claims but fails to demonstrate how this will be achieved. It is essential to clarify this.

Section 6 – Recommendations and conclusions of the assessment.

The lack of clarity in step 5 makes the conclusions in step 6 erroneous.

### Notes:

1. “City of York Council must comply with the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) and have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.”

“[Advancing equality of opportunity](#)” means having due regard, in particular, to the need to: remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their relevant protected characteristics, take steps to meet the different needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic, encourage participation in public life or any other activity by underrepresented groups, take steps to meet the different needs of disabled persons.

2. “14.63 It is recommended that statements of licensing policy should provide clear indications of how the licensing authority will secure the proper integration of its licensing policy with local crime prevention, planning, transport, tourism, equality schemes, cultural strategies and any other plans introduced for the management of town centres and the night-time economy. Many of these strategies are not directly related to the promotion of the licensing objectives, but, indirectly, impact upon them. Co-ordination and integration of such policies, strategies and initiatives are therefore important.”

3. “14.68 A statement of licensing policy should recognise that the Equality Act 2010 places a legal obligation on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; to advance equality of opportunity; and to foster good relations, between persons with different protected characteristics.”

## C. Introduction

Little j is a purpose-built community centre that is now a Safe Space for all the LGBTQI+ community co-created with York LGBT Forum. It was the community hall for the church of St John the Evangelist Micklegate. This was acquired some decades ago by the City of York Council and the University of York who created The Arts Centre, fulfilling the need for the lack of performance and entertainment space at that time. The old church of St John is now the nightclub Jalou, which is open until 3am.

Little j is currently an active LGBTQI+ community centre, which has groups meeting weekly, an LGBTQI+ folk group, theatre/cabaret performance, music, theatre, monthly dance lessons, regular trans-friendly open mic evenings, social meetings, showcasing/confidence building, clothes swaps, yoga, currently an art exhibition etc.

However, the community centre is unable to serve the LGBTQI+ community sufficiently without a premises licence. Little j is a Safe Space and is much needed by the community to host Queer social events and entertainment. As is evidenced below, an LGBTQI+ Safe Space in York centre is so essential to be open alongside mainstream venues particularly late at night. Mainstream venues in York are licenced until 4am. Little j needs to have a licence for events, when needed, to be open to 4am so the Safe Space users can have sanctuary and remain to dissipate at appropriate quieter times.

York has an above average LGBTQI+ population at 5.5%, which is roughly 2% above the national average of 3.2%. This rises to over 10% of the city centre population.<sup>1</sup> This means that a significant portion of York's community miss out on expected LGBTQI+ Safe Spaces and entertainment normally found in comparable cities. This is exacerbated by the higher than average LGBTQI+ residency, and the substantial number of tourists that visit each year. We believe that the licensing of our LGBTQI+ community centre will mitigate crime & public nuisance within the city centre and protect the public from ever rising incidents of hate crime.

York has witnessed a significant increase in hate crimes over recent years. Between November 2022 and October 2023, local police data reported a 73% rise in homophobic and transphobic incidents – from 64 to 111 homophobic reports.<sup>2</sup> This proposal is to licence a dedicated multipurpose events hall that will serve as a Safe Space, both day and night, to promote diversity and inclusion and contribute to reducing antisocial behaviour towards the LGBTQI+ community across the city.

This comes alongside known negative and discriminatory attitudes from the general public and service providers, as well as physical access issues for disabled people, as outlined in a report by healthwatch.<sup>3</sup> Further compounding this is the recent supreme court ruling,<sup>4</sup> which ruled that in order for the Equality Act 2010 to be consistent, the term 'woman' must mean a biological woman. That does not include trans individuals, even if they have obtained a gender recognition certificate (GRC) legally affirming their presented gender.<sup>5</sup> The knock-on effect of this ruling is that, for example, when 'women-only spaces' are present, such as changing rooms and toilets, then a trans individual whom identifies as a woman cannot use them, nor a trans man in some circumstances. This applies to anywhere designated as for one sex in any public place. Little j's has gender neutral toilets, providing a Safe Space for all trans residents and visitors alike.

York prides itself on being a human rights city,<sup>6</sup> a city of sanctuary,<sup>7</sup> a trans-friendly city,<sup>8</sup> as well as an anti-racist city,<sup>9</sup> yet a lack of licenced venues like Little j's only leaves York unbalanced and causes harm. Venues like Little j's would help to correct this imbalance, and provide a necessary amenity to a significant proportion of residents and of the millions of yearly visitors to the city.

We set up a petition and in response to this, a vast array of derogatory and hateful comments were posted, alongside the individual poster's names. These can be found in full in Appendix B.

Many comments have related our cause to fascism, racism, paedophilia, religious extremism and mental health stigmatisation as well as general disgust and distain for LGBTQI+ individuals.

Some more fortunate individuals may very rarely encounter homophobia, bullying and hateful rhetoric, however there are members of the LGBTQI+ community for which this is a common occurrence. Upon stepping into the spotlight by publicising our petition, we are Little j became a target for much homophobia and hate comments on social media.

We hope a small sample of the types of comments copied below serve to exemplify the very strong case for the pressing need to licence a late night Safe Space to 4am at Little j.



**Bob Bell**

Freaks at large again hope there's a gallows there put it to good use

2d Like Reply Message Hide



**Simon Barrett**

So much aids in one picture

5h Like Reply Message Hide



**Marcus Edward**

I would support an application for funding for your mental health needs !

1w Like Reply Hide



**Paul Jacko Jackson**

Burn in hell you revolting scum.

1w Like Reply Hide



**James Garner**

No thanks brainwashing kids.  
Feminising boys at school as theirs no malev primary school teachers or classroom assistants.  
Criminal act .

3d Like Reply Message Hide



**Brian Duncan**

Get rid of that REVOLTING, DISGUSTING FUCKING FLAG .

2w Like Reply Hide



**Paul Beck**



**Stephen Potts**



1w Like Reply Hide



**John Thatcher**

Something must have been put in the water or food.  
This is NOT normal.  
This is all part of Sheeple control and reduction

2w Like Reply Hide

1



**Martyn A Smith**

Fack you and keep the fack out of schools you facking nonces!





Steven James



1w Like Reply Hide

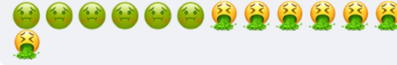


Peter Russell  
Mentally retarded

2w Like Reply Hide



Geni Geri



5h Like Reply Message Hide 1



Brett Sh

Leave the children alone u pedos

2d Like Reply Message Hide



Paul Crowther

Aids carrying you lot should be put to sleep

4d Like Reply Message Hide



Shaun Kirkham

A safe place for that lot would be a deep hole

2w Like Reply Hide



Jason Nicholls



2d Like Reply Message Hide



Jason Nicholls

### WOKE PARENTS



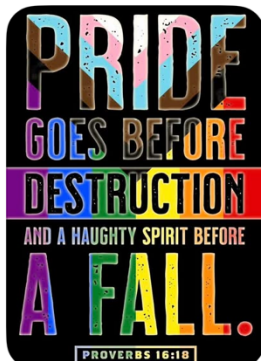
wont spank their kids  
but will cut their nuts off.

2w Like Reply Hide

4



Jamie Hampton



2w Like Reply Hide



### TRANSATAN

you can combine 4 pride flags to  
make ultra pride

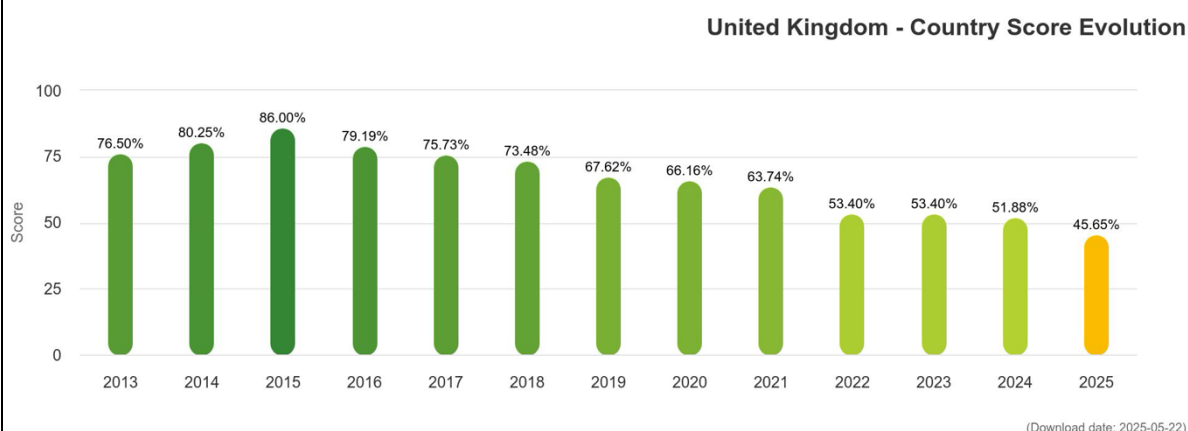


2w Reply Hide

## **Rationale**

Currently, there is a woeful lack of venues that are operating in York to cater for the LGBTQI+ residents and tourists. Queer residents and visitors may avoid York centre, seeking provision in cities such as Leeds and Manchester due to a lack of Safe Spaces for the LGBTQI+ community.

A poignant example is the findings of ILGA-Europe's rainbow map, which is run by ILGA-Europe, and aims to 'work for a world in which each and every LGBTI person is free, equal and safe'. This is achieved by ranking European countries on their respective legal and policy practices for LGBTQI+ people, giving them a score from 0-100%.<sup>15</sup> As shown in Figure 2, the UK has seen a sharp and steady decline from it's high point in 2015, at which time it was also the highest in the ranking at number 1. The latest poll, following the aforementioned increases in hate crimes, as well as recent court judgments etching away of LGBTQI+ rights that the government once defended, has seen the UK as whole plummet to number 22, below the EU average of 51.13%.<sup>15</sup>



*Figure 1: Year on year data detailing the UK's decline in LGBTI standards.<sup>15</sup>*

The rise in hate crimes coupled with the supreme courts regressive approach to LGBTQI+ identities underscores the urgent need for safe, inclusive spaces. Licensing Little j community centre will provide a secure environment where LGBTQI+ individuals can socialise as themselves without fear of being negatively targeted day & night. This would reduce antisocial behaviour and mitigate the conditions that contribute to hate crimes, and, by extension, benefit the wider York community.<sup>16</sup>

The LGBTQI+ community enriches York's cultural fabric through diverse perspectives, creative expression, and innovative ideas. The dedicated space already serves as a venue for art exhibits, cultural events, and community initiatives that celebrate this diversity and strengthen community ties. The historical struggle of the LGBTQI+ community for equal rights and social justice has had far-reaching impacts on broader society. This space acts not only as a venue for events, but as a centre which collaborates with York's LGBTQI+ organisations and offers groups and resources to empower individuals and promotes equality, and needs to be an LGBTQI+ Safe Space at night which is lacking in York. In order to achieve this aim, the granting of an entertainment licence will allow for events such as dance, theatre, entertainment, live singing, karaoke performances, which would facilitate a late-night Safe Space for members of the LGBTQI+ community.

## **Analysis and Comparative Context**

There have been multiple academic studies that have shown how cultural events, such as drag entertainment with refreshments, can have positive impacts on the mental well-being of the

attendees (Baxter and Jones 2022). This would be of benefit to the wider York community, as data collected by the LGBT charity Stonewall in 2018, has shown that:<sup>17</sup>

- 70% of non-binary people had experienced depression
- 71% of trans people (including 79% of non-binary people) had experienced anxiety
- 19% of trans people (including 24% of non-binary people) had experienced an eating disorder
- 46% of trans people (including 50% of non-binary people) have considered taking their own life,
- 35% of trans people (including 41% of non-binary people) have self-harmed.

Hence, the inclusion of a licensed LGBTQI+ Safe Space in York that can host these cultural events particularly at night would be of great benefit to members of the LGBTQI+ community, as well as to the wider York community. Currently, there are no such venues throughout the city of York, and granting a licence to Little j would also be in keeping with York's trans friendly incentive outlined in the introduction.

### **Hate Crimes**

Statistics from North Yorkshire Police for 2024 show that there were 76 reported cases of homophobic hate crimes and 12 cases of transphobia out of a total of 374 incidents of hate crime.<sup>18</sup> This is an increase on previous years, whereby 62 cases of homophobic crime were recorded, alongside 3 cases of transphobia.<sup>19</sup> The same statistics for 2024 show that, of all incidents of hate crime, 125 took place in the Guildhall area of the city, with 66 incidents taking place in and around Micklegate.

Moreover, whilst this provides some evidence that issue of LGBTQI+ directed hate crimes are an issue in York, surveys by Stonewall and other charities indicate that 80% of victims do not report such incidents to the police.<sup>17,20,21</sup> Much of the hate crime takes place in public spaces, with one in six LGBTQI+ people having been victims of hate crime in the last 12 months when they visited a café, restaurant, bar or nightclub.<sup>17,20–23</sup> Incidents such as these are expected to rise following the courts ruling on biological sex. Licensing Little j LGBTQI+ community centre as a late night LGBTQI+ Safe Space would serve to reduce crime and disorder.

The same survey further found the most common type of hate incident experienced by the LGBTQI+ community was being “insulted, pestered, intimidated or harassed” – with nearly 90% of responses stating they have received such treatment.<sup>17,20–23</sup> Another area highlighted was that involving unwanted sexual contact, alongside threats of violence, which were reported by 26% and 21% of respondents respectively.<sup>17,20–23</sup> The report shows that fear of discrimination and harassment in public places pervades the LGBTQI+ community, with one in five LGBTQI+ people who have been a victim of hate crime in the last year not feeling safe where they live. <sup>17,20–23</sup>

As a result of rampant abuse, 30% LGBTQI+ people said they avoid certain streets because they do not feel safe there, while more than a third (36 per cent) said they don't feel comfortable walking in public while holding their partner's hand.<sup>20–22</sup>

These figures highlight not only the immediate need for a Safe Space in the area that Little j's proposes operating a licenced community venue, but also demonstrate how targeted community initiatives can potentially play a role in reducing such incidents over time. Moreover, when analysing the prevalence of these reports over time, there is no particular month which stands out as an outlier for increased occurrence. Hence, the inclusion of a year-round licenced LGBTQI+ venue is needed within the centre of York.

### **Social Inclusion and Reduced Isolation**

Another major effect of LGBTQI+ venues is the reduction of social isolation and the promotion of social inclusion. LGBTQI+ people often report feeling alone or “out of place,” especially if they lack supportive family or live in areas without visible queer communities. Queer venues actively combat

this by creating a welcoming space where people can find friendship, peer support, and a sense of belonging.

By providing inclusive gatherings, venues have been shown to dramatically reduce isolation. In a 2022 survey of 500+ LGBTQI+ Londoners one example put forth by a female respondent stated she went from knowing nobody in town to having friends and a support network through the venue.<sup>24</sup> She noted that after her initial crisis passed, the “social and communal activities” kept her with coming back and connecting with others. “A place like this really does give you those friendships and opportunities,” said the respondent, emphasizing how her outlook on life brightened once she found a community of peers. This sentiment is common. Especially for younger and older LGBTQI+ people, who may be most vulnerable to loneliness, the LGBTQI+ venues serve as a “lifeline” for meeting people like themselves, facilitating peer bonding that might not happen otherwise. More research by LGBTQI+ Foundation during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed alarming isolation: 30% of LGBTQI+ respondents were living alone (40% among those over 50) and a quarter wanted support specifically to reduce their isolation.<sup>25</sup> Many also felt uncomfortable or unsafe in general community settings during lockdown. These findings underscore that dedicated LGBTQI+ spaces are crucial in reducing loneliness – a role that became even more vital as other venues and events shut down in the pandemic.

Venues also foster inclusion by reaching diverse subgroups within the LGBTQI+ population. They often run targeted events (e.g. for BAME LGBTQI+ people, queer women, trans and non-binary individuals, LGBTQI+ refugees or youth groups), ensuring that everyone finds a place where they “feel welcome and supported”. The absence of judgement and shared understanding in these spaces allows individuals to open up and form authentic connections, which in turn improves their confidence and sense of self. Reducing social isolation has direct mental health benefits too: patrons report less loneliness and greater well-being, which lowers the risk of depression.<sup>26</sup> Overall, by building supportive peer networks and a family-like community, LGBTQI+ venues significantly improve users’ social inclusion and day-to-day quality of life.

### **Community Engagement and Support**

Local groups — such as the York LGBT Forum, Queer Arts, York Pride, Generate, and other community leaders — indicate strong support for licensing Little j. Surveys and focus groups reveal a clear demand for a hub where residents can find support, share experiences, and participate in inclusive activities.<sup>16</sup>

For example, a survey undertaken by York LGBTQI+ forum found that 73% of respondents indicated that there was a need for an LGBTQI+ centre, with a further 82% stating that an LGBTQI+ meeting space was ‘essential’. The same survey also highlights how over half of the respondents felt that performance/arts events were needed.<sup>16</sup> Other findings from similar surveys include:

- **Improved Mental Health and Lower Suicide Risk:** As noted, LGBTQI+ individuals in accepting communities (with access to affirming spaces) have significantly lower suicide attempt rates (16% vs 27%) and lower levels of depression and anxiety than those in unaccepting environments.<sup>27</sup> This correlation suggests that venues, by creating accepting local environments, help reduce severe mental health risks like suicide and self-harm. Feedback often highlights reduced depression and stress.<sup>27</sup>
- **Reduction in Isolation and Loneliness:** Surveys conducted during the pandemic showed 25% of LGBTQI+ people explicitly sought help to reduce isolation.<sup>28</sup> Venue interventions have been credited with mitigating lockdown loneliness for many. Outside of the pandemic, case studies demonstrate that a person’s social network and confidence can flourish once they attend LGBT venues, in turn decreasing chronic loneliness. Qualitatively, participants commonly describe a sense of “family” or community that improves their outlook on life.
- **Personal Development and Community Engagement:** The LGBT Foundation’s trans community showed increased confidence and resilience (outcomes which indirectly improve mental

health and reduce marginalization).<sup>17</sup> Additionally, many who benefit from venues (such as Little j's) go on to "give back" as volunteers, creating a positive cycle of engagement. This increased community engagement is linked with improved well-being, as helping others can be validating and reduce one's own feelings of helplessness or victimisation.

The overall evidence from studies strongly indicates positive impacts. As stated in a quote taken from a respondent of a survey conducted by LBGT foundation, a person stated the venue "made a huge positive impact on my life".<sup>29</sup> Such testimonials, along with survey metrics, underline that LGBTQI+ venues contribute to higher quality of life and reduced health risks (be it mental distress, isolation, or even discrimination-related stress) for LGBTQI+ people.

Overall, LGBTQI+ venues in the UK significantly enhance the well-being of LGBTQI+ individuals by addressing key challenges like mental health, isolation, lack of Safe Spaces etc. Academic research and third-sector reports alike affirm that these centres provide vital mental health support (from counselling to peer groups) and that being connected to an affirming community can lower depression, anxiety, and suicide risk.<sup>27,30,31</sup> Case studies and surveys show that attendees of LGBTQI+ venues often experience improved quality of life – gaining friends, confidence, and a sense of belonging that buffers against the discrimination and marginalization many have faced.<sup>31</sup>

As an unlicensed community centre, Little j is hindered from the full array of events it can hold, as well as the length of time and time of day events can run for. The community centre is unsustainable and restrained from providing refreshments and entertainment, limiting the types of events it can host and impeding support it can provide to the LGBTQI+ community particularly during the night hours.

Granting a premises licence to Little j will help broaden the scope of the Safe Space that can be provided, helping foster connections and provide the space to sing, dance, connect, perform, explore, entertain, practice, show, watch, interact, support, transform, accept, socialise, create and much more.

Typically, venues that cater to the LGBTQI+ community hold a wide range of differing forms of entertainment in their Safe Spaces typically late into the evenings and making their model sustainable. Without a licence, the current Little j venue is unable to provide entertainment-focused events and adequately cater to the needs of the LGBTQI+ community and would not be sustainable long-term.

### **Comparative Success Stories**

LGBTQI+ venues play a broader social role by strengthening community cohesion and providing safe public spaces for the LGBTQI+ population. Historically, gay bars and clubs were the main physical venues for LGBTQI+ community gathering. This creates opportunities for inclusive community-building: intergenerational events, arts and culture, and more. In doing so, venues help knit together the diverse segments of the LGBTQI+ community (across ages, genders, ethnicities, and orientations). The importance of this has grown in recent years – the UK has seen a steep decline in pubs in general (one third of all pubs have closed since 2000).<sup>36</sup> LGBTQI+ bars have not been immune in this decline, with nearly 60% of LGBTQI+ bars in London having closed over the past couple of decades.<sup>37</sup> Activists note that this loss of community venues "increases social isolation and reduces community cohesion". The emergence of new multi-use centres is a direct response to that problem, aiming to rebuild a sense of collective space and identity.

The London LGBTQI+ Community Centre, for example, which opened as a pop-up in 2021, explicitly frames its mission around community cohesion. It is described as an 'intersectional community centre and café bar where all LGBTQI+ people are welcome, supported, can build connections and flourish... Our vision is for a more connected, belonging and thriving LGBTQI+ community'. In its first year, the centre's survey found 85% of respondents felt there were too few LGBTQI+ spaces in the city and an overwhelming number said they craved inclusive spaces welcoming to everyone.<sup>24</sup> By hosting a several events the centre creates a hub that brings people

together who might otherwise never cross paths. This not only reduces isolation (as discussed) but also fosters solidarity and understanding across the LGBTQI+ spectrum, thereby strengthening the overall community fabric. Case studies have shown that when such centres thrive, they become anchors of local LGBTQI+ life – a place to celebrate identity (e.g. holding Pride month activities), organise collective actions, and simply meet casually in a safe atmosphere.

Crucially, community centres offer a visible safe haven from discrimination. Knowing that there is a public space where LGBTQI+ identity is the norm – where one can hold hands with a same-sex partner or use one's correct pronouns without stares – significantly improves everyday mental comfort. This visibility and permanence (having a physical venue) can also improve community confidence. For example, older LGBTQI+ adults often feel 'invisible' or unwelcome in general venues; an LGBTQI+ venue can give them back a sense of belonging and community pride. There is evidence that community connectedness increases group-level resilience: one systematic review found that higher 'trans community connectedness was associated with lower depression and anxiety' among transgender people, likely because it facilitates group coping and peer encouragement.<sup>38</sup> Participants in activities taking place in an LGBTQI+ venue also report feeling empowered to engage more with society at large after finding their own community. In essence, these centres act as symbols of inclusion and cohesion, showing that the LGBTQI+ community is active, united, and supported. This can spill over to benefit society more broadly by promoting acceptance and reducing prejudice at the local level.

As previously outlined in the introduction, York is a major tourist destination, and one which is woefully lacking in a licensed LGBTQI+ Safe Space. Hence, the granting of a late 4am licence to Little j's would allow for the venue to be used to its full potential for events and making the proposed drag entertainment, cabaret nights, theatre, music, performances and exhibitions much more impactful and meaningful to the community it caters for.

### **Objectives and Outcomes**

- Reduce local hate crimes and antisocial incidents by creating a safe, inclusive environment.
- Minimising conflicts in single sex bathrooms enforced in mainstream venues.
- Increase community engagement among the LGBTQI+ community.
- Foster collaboration between community organisations.

Establishing a dedicated multipurpose licensed venue in York is a proactive step toward addressing the rising trend of hate crimes and fostering a more inclusive, resilient community. With strong local data supporting the need, an Approval of late licensing for Little j's would not only responds to current challenges but provide a safer and more vibrant community. By supporting Little j's application, York can demonstrate its commitment to diversity, equality, and long-term community wellbeing, as well as align with its ambition to be a Human Rights City,<sup>6</sup> City of Sanctuary,<sup>7</sup> and Trans-Friendly City.<sup>8</sup>



## D. Equality and diversity considerations

Describe the ways in which the groups below may be impacted. The impact may be negative or positive. There are some example questions below to aid your thinking (delete any that are not relevant):

While we have provided statements for each protected characteristic as required, we understand that people's lives are shaped by the interplay of multiple identities. An individual's experience of social isolation or discrimination is not solely based on their sexual orientation or gender identity but may also be influenced by other characteristics.

For example, a person who is both a member of the LGBTQ+ community and has a disability may face different and more complex barriers than someone who has just one of those identities. By adopting an intersectional lens, we are committed to ensuring our venue is a truly safe and inclusive space for all, recognising and addressing the unique challenges that arise from the intersection of different characteristics. This goes beyond adhering to the Equality Act, 2010 but truly embraces the fluidity of diversity and inclusion.

### **LGBTQ+ (Sexual Orientation, Sex (including intersex) and Gender Reassignment)**

There is a demonstrable need for a safe and dedicated LGBTQ+ community hub until 4am (or 3am mid-week), serving York and North Yorkshire. There is no comparable venue in York and North Yorkshire region. [LGBTQ+ hate crime](#)<sup>39</sup> has been on the rise in the city and is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest after race. In particular, the trans and non binary community has experienced an increasingly hostile environment this year. The evidence for these incidents has been supplemented in statements from local LGBTQ+ support groups who have canvassed their members [See appendix A]. Reports include both everyday harassment and serious physical assaults, contributing to heightened fear and social withdrawal within the community., Members of the LGBTQ+ community in York have experienced a significant rise in incidents over the past 12-18 months. Anecdotally, members of the trans and non binary community in particular have reported going out less due to the lack of late-night safe spaces, and fears about using toilet facilities.

The lack of safe, inclusive spaces particularly late at night has resulted in some LGBTQ+ people — especially trans and non-binary individuals — limiting their participation in public and social life. This undermines equality of opportunity and increases the risk of social isolation. Little J's 4am application directly addresses this need by providing a safe environment where individuals can participate in cultural, social, and wellbeing activities free from harassment and discrimination.

We note the positive attitude of City of York Council in general towards the LGBTQ+ community, and the benefits which this offers the wider community. This is a key opportunity for the council to support a very important space, with great benefits to the LGBTQ+ community and beyond.

Little J's needs a late-night entertainment licence to continue its work. There are a number of activities which it has already supported or booked in, where appropriate using temporary licenses:

- A Pride event until 4am, showcasing a diverse range of performers from York and beyond. This was a safe and inclusive event, by and for the community, but open to all. These events are community-led, safe, and inclusive, while also being open to allies and the wider public. They advance equality of opportunity by creating visible LGBTQ+ representation and foster good relations by encouraging inclusive participation.

- Regular open mic nights (branded as Moral Panic) until 2am. These nights have been very well attended, with a waiting list for performers (unheard of for open mic nights). LGBTQ performers have been able to perform in a safe space to a supportive audience. Performers have included original music, dance, poetry, demonstrations of self-built instruments, inspirational story telling, drag and comedy. Many performers have never performed before, or would not feel comfortable in a regular venue. These events welcome all, and non LGBTQ allies always make up a good number of the audience and performers. This enhances community cohesion and encourages mutual respect. A version of this event ran for two years at the Portal Bookshop in York, but the lack of space and lack of accessibility or toilet facilities severely limited the scope of the event, and the people who were able to attend. Little J's has allowed a fully inclusive and accessible event on a much bigger scale.

Ruby, singer and performer, writes:

*"Of all the open mics I've been to so far in York, I felt the greatest sense of safety and acceptance at Moral Panic. Beyond my own performing experience it also made me feel really happy and encouraged to see LGBTQ+ people and allies - but especially trans and non-binary people - being able to freely express themselves on the stage, in a time where our government is actively working against trans people. The sense of community at Moral Panic was obvious and I think Little Js represents a space where we can support each other and feel hopeful about the future."*

Daniella, an event attendee writes:

*"Attending Moral Panic enables me to enjoy a night of entertainment in a safe and welcoming space. As a neurodivergent person, I've found it to be extremely inclusive and accessible - this is not something that I can say for the majority of other venues (licensed or unlicensed) in York!"*

[See appendix A]

- Stubborn Roots trans and non-binary acapella folk group. This is a part music, part support group, who rehearse once a week. Many members have never sung before, and many speak of the confidence they have gained, and fellowship they have found. From humble beginnings a few months ago in one of their member's living room, the rehearsal space at Little J's has allowed them to flourish. In that time, they have performed at the Citty Screen basement, and York Crescent. The group illustrates how the venue advances equality of opportunity by enabling marginalised individuals to participate in cultural life on equal terms [See appendix A, Bigby]
- Theatre productions. Local performer Stevie Hook recently performed their acclaimed touring production Wheel of Nouns. Stevie is a non binary writer, comedian and performer who wrote the show to address issues in the trans and non binary community in an entertaining yet thought provoking way. The space was ideally suited to an intimate show, and was perfect for finding a supportive and appreciative audience.

Stevie has described their experience very eloquently in appendix A. For example:

*"The show was sold out, and in a survey asking how the event made them feel, people said they felt "I have never felt so wholly safe, supported, and entertained at a show before", "playful, infinite, empowered, connected", "Loved, seen", "Hopeful", and "full of warmth,*

*kindness and hope for a brighter world where people will be able to live as themselves without fear of prejudice.” When asked about the venue in the survey, people described Little js as “Welcoming” “Accessible” “inclusive” “central” and “a great queer venue!”.*

Such opportunities are rare, as emerging LGBTQ+ artists often struggle to secure venues that are both willing to host their work and accessible to their intended community. Little J’s therefore plays a critical role in eliminating barriers to cultural participation. Stevie writes:

*“I believe this experience wouldn’t have been possible without Little js because with a different venue, the queer and trans audience members who got so much from the event would have been dissuaded from attending at a different venue. Earlier this year I put on The Wheel of Nouns at Theatre@41 in York, which is a lovely venue, but not an explicitly queer space, and almost all of the queer and trans people I knew who expressed interest in making it to the show did not come to the show. When I did the show at Little js the audience was full of queer and trans people, and the show was sold out. I think this is hugely related to how safe people felt about attending the venue.”*

[See appendix A, Stevie Hook]

- **Dance classes**  
Hosted by QueerArts and led by a professional performer, this is your chance to step into the fabulous world of burlesque, this is open to all genders and all experience levels, in a welcoming safe space provided by Little j in town!
  - ◆ Saturday Taster Session – a fun and welcoming intro to the course!
  - ◆ Followed by Sunday sessions (each month), specially designed to help you grow in confidence, explore performance, and learn the art of burlesque.
- **Wig and hair workshop**  
Wigs and Hair Workshop for Nonbinary and Transgender Group in York  
Generate creative and supportive workshop focused on wigs and hair styling, specifically designed for the nonbinary and transgender community in York that have joined prior through Generate. This is a fantastic opportunity to explore different styles, learn techniques, and express your individuality in a welcoming environment.
- **Dykes N Dice**  
Lesbian D&D Group Meeting for Character Creation  
Welcome to our exciting character creation session! This gathering is all about collaboration, creativity, and crafting unique characters for our upcoming Dungeons & Dragons campaign. Below are some key elements to consider during our meeting:  
Party Role: Consider how your character will fit into the party. Will they be a healer, a damage dealer, or a support character?  
Relationships: Think about how your character might interact with others in the group. Are there potential friendships, rivalries, or romantic interests?  
Art and Visuals: Bring along any artwork or images that inspire your character.  
Online Resources: Utilize websites like D&D Beyond or Roll20 for character creation tools.  
Books and Guides: Refer to the Player's Handbook and other D&D resources for additional options and ideas.  
Wrap-Up--At the end of our session, we'll share our characters with the group, highlighting their unique traits and backgrounds.

- **Photography exhibitions**  
Queer Britain in the 1990's. An exhibition of photographs by Stuart Linden Rhodes  
A collection of photographs taken by Stuart Linden Rhodes of the 1990's gay scene from across the UK. Originally taken for publication in All Points North and Gay Times magazines the negatives lay in Stuart's attic for some 30 years before being rediscovered during the covid years, digitised and now. Stuart's photographs have been exhibited in London, Leeds, Blackpool, acquired by Manchester City Art Gallery and published in numerous international magazines.
- **Art exhibitions**  
"Meet the artist" social event, in conjunction with York St John University for the launch of the Aesthetica Art Prize 2025 exhibition at the York Art Gallery from 18 Sept - 21 Jan. Some artists for that exhibition are LGBTQI+ and there are some specialist gender/racial films.  
"The ongoing fight for gender equality and racial justice".
- **Folk Against Transphobia**  
Join us for a special event as folk singers unite to support the LGBTQI+ community in the fight against transphobia and the loss of rights. This gig aims to raise awareness and promote inclusivity through the power of music.
- **Why God created Lesbians**  
Clare Summerskill Presents: In her brand-new one-woman show, Clare Summerskill attempts to explain the point of the perplexing sexual minority to which she belongs, asking why lesbians exist? Is it to ease the pressure on cat rescue centres? Is it to ensure that Shibden Hall remains a viable tourist attraction? Or is it to write one-woman comedy shows featuring songs, standup and storytelling?  
After decades of field research, she thinks she has the answer.  
Expect silliness, satire and self-deprecation from crowd-pleaser Clare Summerskill as she hits the road with her funniest show yet. Clare will share the previously unheard story of the lesbian squirrel on the Ark, forced to take up a complaint about compulsory heterosexuality with Noah himself; and she will finally uncover the Almighty's real opinion about women-loving-women.  
A packed comedy show from 'one of the funniest women in the country' (What's On) with a keen fanbase across the UK (gay and straight!).  
Clare has previously written for BBC Radio 4's Weekending and Heated Rollers and toured her shows to theatres in the UK and the US.  
Praise for Clare Summerskill's previous shows  
'Engaging and Charming' Time Out  
A lesbian Victoria Wood' Woman's Hour  
'Fantastic show, hilarious, witty, intelligent and moving' \*\*\*\*\* Audience member  
'Gritty, funny comedy – great evening' \*\*\*\*\* Audience member  
'What are you waiting for? Grab your tickets now!' Diva
- **Performance/webcasts**  
Fortnightly cabaret with Monarkki & Pop-tart, and alternately with Hook.
- **Christmas Market – Queer Affaire crafts**  
Saturday 13 December, queer craft fair Christmas market
- **Christmas Party – Generate charity**

Festive celebration at our private event and fundraiser. This gathering is for friends and family and Generate members.

- **LGBTQI+ Clothes swap**

The swaps Tans Support Hub run are for the LGBTQ+ community in general, they're a great way to revamp your wardrobe, be environmentally friendly and connect with the community. We put a huge emphasis on supporting the trans community by inviting tailors, stylists, personal trainers etc to talk to people about gender affirming style/training and general well-being. We have five clothes rails, two large tables and a pop-up changing room, so we will need a good amount of space for people to move around and a space that's wheelchair accessible.

### **Disability**

Little J's actively promotes accessibility for all members of the LGBTQ+ community, including those who are disabled. The venue provides street-level access, wheelchair access, many handrails, wheelchair ramps, assistance bells at steps and in toilets, accessible toilets, and inclusive spaces for people with mobility or sensory impairments. Events such as open mic nights and rehearsals are designed to accommodate diverse needs, ensuring that disabled can participate fully in cultural, social, and wellbeing activities. Many of the people who have engaged with Little J identify as being disabled. By removing physical and social barriers, Little J's advances equality of opportunity and fosters inclusion for disabled LGBTQ+ individuals.

### **Race**

Little J's welcomes people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds and works to create an environment that is safe and inclusive for everyone. Performers and participants at events reflect the city's cultural diversity, promoting representation and visibility of LGBTQ+ people from different racial and ethnic groups. Intersectional issues, such as the experiences of LGBTQ+ people of colour, are recognised, and the venue provides a supportive space to celebrate diversity while combating discrimination based on both race and sexual orientation or gender identity. The venue is aiming to engage with a queer person of colour artist who is exhibiting in the Aesthetica festival.

### **Age**

Little J's offers activities and events that are accessible and welcoming to anyone over the age of 18. Open mic nights, Pride events, and cultural workshops engage young people, adults, and older members of the LGBTQ+ community, promoting intergenerational interaction and community cohesion. By providing a safe space for LGBTQ+ individuals of all ages to participate in cultural and social life, Little J's helps reduce social isolation and ensures equality of opportunity across age groups. This, in turn will create intergenerational opportunities.

### **Religion and Faith**

Little J's is open to all members of the LGBTQ+ community regardless of their religion or belief. The venue fosters a culture of respect and inclusivity, welcoming people with diverse faith backgrounds as well as those with no religious affiliation. By encouraging participation from people of varying beliefs, Little J's promotes mutual understanding and strengthens community cohesion

## Marriage and civil partnership

Little J's recognises and celebrates LGBTQ+ relationships, including marriage and civil partnerships. Community events, social activities, and cultural programmes are inclusive of same-sex couples and civil partners, providing a safe space for celebration, social interaction, and community support. By acknowledging and supporting LGBTQ+ relationships, the venue contributes to equality of opportunity and fosters positive social relations. Members of the community have accessed if they can host their wedding or civil partnership party at the venue.

## Benefits

There are few to no options in York or North Yorkshire for these activities. For example, in theory a drag event could be run in a regular bar such as Yates. An open mic could be run in a pub. However, these would not be safe spaces for many in the community, and the greater focus on alcohol would put off a lot of people. By contrast, at Little J's, the focus is on providing a safe and supportive space, and alcohol is not the primary purpose. A licence until 4am (3am mid-week) is needed to provide the equivalent night-time safe space to mainstream hours and is needed for the safe dispersal of customers to avoid flashpoints and harassment in the cumulative impact area.

There are numerous benefits in a range of areas:

- There are no other local spaces where LGBTQ people from 18 to pension age can mix and enjoy the same events. Nightlife can often be ghettoised by age, but Little J's provides a multi-generational space.  
**Protected characteristics addressed:** Sexual Orientation, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Age  
**Impact:** Promotes intergenerational inclusion and equality of opportunity for LGBTQ+ people of all ages.
- Trans and non binary people. All events at Little J's are trans inclusive. Attendees know they will find sanctuary, and they are free to enjoy the evening or activity without fear of harassment. This is increasingly important when harassment is worsening in the wider world and a safe space at Little J's is needed late at night.

All events at Little J's are trans inclusive. Attendees know they will find sanctuary, free from harassment. This is increasingly important as harassment of trans and non-binary people worsens in wider society.

**Protected characteristics addressed:** Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation, Sex

**Impact:** Provides safety, inclusion, and equal participation for marginalized gender identities.

## Disability / mental health

The only other community space is the Over the Rainbow café, which is not accessible, seats a maximum of 15 people, and is rarely open in the evenings, although it does provide a wonderful benefit to the community. Little J's provides vital space for people with access needs. Many LGBTQ+ attendees have neurodiverse conditions such as autism, dysphoria, or anxiety. A safe space can mean the difference between participating in community life or remaining isolated. The Moral Panic open mic events have given a platform to neurodiverse performers who would not perform in non-LGBTQ safe spaces.

**Protected characteristics addressed:** Disability, Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment, Mental Health

**Impact:** Enhances equality of opportunity and inclusion for disabled and neurodiverse individuals.



- Community cohesion. Many events are open to all, such as the open mics, or theatre performances. There is a huge benefit to reaching out to the wider community, particularly late at night. LGBTQ allies regularly attend and perform at open mic shows, which further boosts the sense of solidarity and fosters mutual understanding and respect.

Many events are open to all, including open mics and theatre performances. LGBTQ allies regularly attend and perform, fostering mutual understanding and solidarity.

**Protected characteristics addressed:** Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion and Belief

**Impact:** Promotes good relations between different groups and strengthens community cohesion.

- Low incomes. Most events are free to attend. Ticketed events are either pay as you feel, or have a subsidised option for those who can't afford to pay. This makes the venue truly inclusive.

Most events are free. Ticketed events are either pay-as-you-feel or subsidised for those who cannot afford to pay.

**Protected characteristics addressed:** All

**Impact:** Reduces financial barriers to participation, ensuring inclusivity regardless of income.

The above are the benefits of Little J's, which would be secured and enhanced by a successful 4am (3am midweek) licence application. It is vital that any license does not have overly restrictive conditions attached to it: as can be seen, many of these activities are run for free, with no cost to the organisers.

If a licence were refused or hours curtailed from those applied for, or restrictions added beyond similar community organisations, the consequences would be considerable:

- **Non-commercial activities could not go ahead**  
*Protected characteristics:* Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment, Disability, Age
- **Open mic nights could not continue**  
*Protected characteristics:* Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment, Disability
- **Emerging LGBTQ writers and performers would have no venue**  
*Protected characteristics:* Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment, Sex
- **Folk group would lose a safe rehearsal space**  
*Protected characteristics:* Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation, Disability
- **Support group activities could not proceed**  
*Protected characteristics:* Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment, Disability, Mental Health

## E. Evidencing Impact

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. Is there any information available about the people who will be involved in or affected? (E.g. demographic info, scoping of need etc)

There has been considerable consultation of the wider LGBTQ+ community in York, many of whom have intersectional characteristics. A number of organisations have written supportive statements. [See appendix A]

2. Are there any gaps in evidence/ insufficient information to properly assess the impact, and how will this be addressed?

No, extensive evidence gathering has been implemented:

Statements have been gathered from LGBTQ organisations, performers and private individuals. It is not possible to fully assess the impact of losing Little J's as a community space. There would be a significant impact on organisations which currently use the space, such as QueerArts, the LGBT Forum, Stubborn Roots folk group, and Moral Panic. Moreover, the impact on individuals would be great, but harder to quantify. For years, York has needed an LGBTQ community hub. It would cause significant distress to many in the community to achieve it, and have it taken away. [See appendix A]

3. Does anything disproportionately affect any one group named above?

The LGBTQ, and trans / non binary community in particular, would be disproportionately affected if Little J's license were refused. There are many other licensed premises in York. However, this is the only dedicated LGBTQ space of its type in York and North Yorkshire, so there would be a wide negative impact on this community across the region.

There would also be a clear negative impact on the LGBTQ community if restrictive conditions were placed on a license over and beyond what would be required of a similar venue or activity. For example requiring excessive security at open mic events, when the vast majority of the many dozens of open mic nights take place across the city with no such security. Requiring security for a closed door rehearsal would not be a requirement for any other arts organisation. If there is a perceived increased risk to the LGBTQ community due to potential hate crime, then other ways of mitigating this could be explored: it would not be reasonable to add a financial burden on the community which experiences the discrimination.

4. Will anything lead to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, or less favourable treatment of people with protected characteristics?

Rejecting the license application would lead to people in the LGBTQ community either:

- a. Going to non LGBTQ safe spaces and having to experience harassment
- b. Staying at home, and being socially isolated

The impact would be heightened for members of the LGBTQ community with mental health issues (already a disproportionate number compared to the general population).

5. Does anything contribute to advancing equality of opportunity?

There are many positive benefits which have been highlighted above. Supporting Little J's license application provides a rare opportunity to support a true multi use community space which will draw LGBTQ people from across the region.

6. Is there an opportunity for anything to foster good relations between groups?

As set out above, many events are open to all and provide a wonderful opportunity to foster positive appreciation and support between communities.

7. Do you need to make any reasonable adjustments to anything to avoid discrimination or advance equality of opportunity? This may include adjusting interview questions so they are more accessible or making changes to the way events are managed.

It would be a reasonable adjustment to weigh the benefits to a range of protected groups against any proposed license restrictions. For example, a requirement for bouncers at closed door rehearsals and the like would have a disproportionate impact on protected groups. Allowing a later finish would allow dispersal over a longer period of time at the end of an event, avoiding a potential flash point of vulnerable members of the LGBTQ community having to leave in an abrupt way in a very busy and sometimes intimidating part of town at night.

8. How is communication made accessible to all groups?

Little J's encourages a range of community use, often at no cost. Every effort has been made to provide accessible and inclusive bathroom facilities, within the constraints of an old building.

9. How are you engaging people with a wide range of protected characteristics in the development, review and/or monitoring?

At Little J's, we have taken an intersectional approach with many members and organisations engaged representing a cross-section of society.

## F. EqIA Outcome

Select one of the four options below to indicate how the development or review will be progressed and state the rationale for the decision. (Delete the options that do not apply):

**Option 1:** No change required – the assessment is/will be robust.

~~**Option 2:** Adjust – this involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations.~~

~~**Option 3:** Continue despite the potential for adverse impact with mitigation in place~~

~~**Option 4:** Stop as there are adverse effects which cannot be prevented/mitigated.~~

### G. Action and Monitoring

Please specify the actions required to implement the findings of this EqlA and how the equality impact will be monitored in the future. It may be helpful to complete the table.

	Activity in each quarter				What steps will you take to measure this activity is taking place	What will successful completion look like?	Date of completion?  Please note this by quarters				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	

### H. Review

Date of next review: 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026

### H. Sign-off

EqlA undertaken by (name and job title): Dr Graham Mark Dykes, premises owner  
Date: 17<sup>th</sup> September 2025

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## **Appendix A: Little J's Community Impact Statements**

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### **Stevie Hook, writer and performer of Wheel of Nouns**

At this time, York does not have any explicitly queer safe spaces that are open in the evening. No bars, no venues, no night clubs. If a queer person, especially a trans person, wants to go out and enjoy an evening of art, drinks, or dancing there is no establishment for us to go to where we can feel protected from trans and queer related harassment and hate. Similarly, if we are a queer artist and we want to put on a queer focused event, we don't have any venues that we can book that allow us to create a fully trans and queer inclusive environment for our desired audiences. As the government and the EHRC provide rhetoric and "guidance" that makes going out increasingly dangerous for queer and especially trans people, a lack of safety to be openly queer and trans in a space is a huge barrier for queer people when deciding to go out. This is a barrier that straight cisgender people do not have to navigate, and should be considered when trying to achieve equity.

To provide an example of the importance of Little js, this September I put on an incredibly successful queer dry, community and cabaret event at Little js that would not have been possible at another venue. The event, facilitated by an all trans team, created a safe space for people to come to Little js, socialise, look at and buy queer art, and watch a cabaret comedy about gender identity called The Wheel of Nouns. The show was sold out, and in a survey asking how the event made them feel, people said they felt "I have never felt so wholly safe, supported, and entertained at a show before", "playful, infinite, empowered, connected", "Loved, seen", "Hopeful", and "full of warmth, kindness and hope for a brighter world where people will be able to live as themselves without fear of prejudice." When asked about the venue in the survey, people described Little js as "Welcoming" "Accessible" "inclusive" "central" and "a great queer venue!".

I believe this experience wouldn't have been possible without Little js because with a different venue, the queer and trans audience members who got so much from the event would have been dissuaded from attending at a different venue. Earlier this year I put on The Wheel of Nouns at Theatre@41 in York, which is a lovely venue, but not an explicitly queer space, and almost all of the queer and trans people I knew who expressed interest in making it to the show did not come to the show. When I did the show at Little js the audience was full of queer and trans people, and the show was sold out. I think this is hugely related to how safe people felt about attending the venue.

For York to be able to have a thriving queer arts scene, queer people need to have somewhere to go to see queer art, and queer artists need to have a shot at making art sustainably by having events that queer people buy tickets to. Having Little j as a venue and safe space is a huge step toward making that a reality. The City of York claims to be committed to achieve true equity, so I hope you'll consider that in order for queer people to be able to safely contribute to York's proudly diverse and and inclusive creative community, the Council needs to take into account the barriers we face to do so sustainably, and recognise the importance of Little js as a community arts venue.

### **Bigby, musical director of Stubborn Roots**

The matter of unfair and discriminatory handling over the licencing of Little J's has shaken and upset both myself, and the thirty members of the Support group for Trans and Non-binary individuals that I run by the name of Stubborn Roots, and left us questioning the position of the Council regarding their support for queer folk. We feel this is a far cry from, and not at all in line with, messages of support for the community that the council have previously made, as well as the official legal titles York holds including "Human Rights City".

The knowledge that we may no longer have access to the Little J's community safe space and venue, which previously gave us great joy and sanctuary, over something like unfair licencing handling, has left our recent meetings feeling bittersweet and downcast. I find it very difficult, as someone who runs the support group, to inspire hope in the attendees when we're facing the grim reality that we may not even have a venue to operate out of soon.

I've already faced great and disheartening difficulty approaching other venues for compatible facilitation and treatment, including a great deal of coldness, unkindness, and clear discrimination on the face that we are a Trans and Nonbinary group. I find myself frustrated that I have, as I feel, needlessly experienced this at the irresponsible hands of a council that would see my group ousted from an explicitly safe environment that the support group attendees delighted in.

I would urge the council to consider the ramifications of this, the risk it puts us at, and impact their decision making has on our community

### **Phil – co-host of Moral Panic**

Moral Panic at Little J's is a unique event. It is a trans forward LGBTQ+ open mic and cabaret show. We give a voice and a platform to performers who struggle to find a safe space or supportive audience elsewhere. We used to run a version of this event in the Over the Rainbow café. This is a wonderful place, but we were limited to around 15 people, and there are no bathroom facilities or accessible access. We needed a bigger space, but struggled for over a year to find one. We worked with Little J's for several months before launching as Moral Panic. Graham was incredibly supportive and keen to give us whatever we needed to make the event safe and inclusive. We have filled the room, showing the need and desire for an event which showcases LGBTQ+ talent. We have enjoyed original music, Brazilian folk, home made instruments, poetry, inspirational talks, dancing, drag, and much more. I have a lot of experience of other open mics in York and beyond, and this is truly a unique event. We struggled for a year to find a suitable venue, and if Little J's was not available then I fear this wonderful opportunity would be lost. I am also proud that this event welcomes allies – both as attendees and performers. All of our communities have benefitted from celebrating each others' talents and diversity.

### **Alice – event attendee and technical director for Wheel of Nouns**

Littlej has been a safe haven for me these past few months in a way I struggle to articulate. No other place in York have I felt so at home in so quickly, and that is in no small part because of how effectively it has become a place of community for queer people in York.

Since it has opened it has hosted open mics, folk singing, burlesque lessons, and amateur theatre - all of which I have taken part in directly, and all of which represent the potential and diversity of it as a venue, as well as being a queer bar.

The space that Graham, Ashley, and others have built here is worthy of the highest praise, and I feel so much pride in how the community has embraced it, and the thought of it being stifled through unnecessarily strict restrictions fills me with dread.

### **Miss Diagnosis – performer**



As someone who has been an active drag performer in York the past four years, I can't stress the importance of having a queer safe space.

Usually any queer night in York is sharing a venue with non queer people, there are plenty of queer people in York who are not comfortable hanging around Yates, the crescent and the city screen due to being bothered and because of the homophobia still present in the city.

Little js will ensure queer people have a safe space to come watch a show, somewhere where they aren't worried about attending the venue.

And also it gives us artists somewhere to put on more shows that wouldn't necessarily happen at other non queer venues.

I think it's so important we have this place and would be an awful shame and waste for it not to succeed.

### **Trixie – performer**

As someone who has been through hell and back for who they are, doing drag has been one of the best forms of escapism I have ever found.

However it was hard, it was hard to find somewhere that'd accept me, I had no stage to sing and dance on purely because I was a boy in a dress.

It's been hard to be a gay person in England as a whole too. I never feel safe, especially not after Brianna Ghey in 2023, the fact that any day and at any moment I could be stabbed, beaten, etc for existing is taking years off my life with the stress.

Which is why it was so wonderful when I finally found Little J's, somewhere where I felt I could belong and somewhere I could really shine and be me.

Without spaces like Little J's there will be no safety for my community, and no sparkle either.

Please just allow us somewhere we can be us, be safe and be happy.

### **Tommy Boy – performer**

As an LGBTQ+ woman it has become increasingly dangerous to exist in today's world. With York being deemed the safest city in Europe and a trans friendly city I moved here to undertake 2 separate degrees and attempted to find an event space I felt safe. After being spiked and assaulted in 3 separate bars in York I finally felt safe when I discovered the drag scene in 2023, however this was quickly muted by the lack of a designated space for us to exist. Being an audience member at these shows I witnessed and experienced gender based discrimination and harassment from the public in the same venue which was only prevented by a ticket only event system.

When venues started turning drag and LGBTQ+ events away we had no space left and the one off locations we used saw a spike in danger.

Audience members walking home hand in hand with same sex partners were attacked and when I began performing I had to be escorted to taxis to avoid assault. When little js opened for pride 2025 there was a level of safety I had never experienced outside of gay villages like Manchester and London. The unbridled joy and relaxation I felt was unmatched and I was thankful to Graeme and the city for finally proving us with this space. To learn that, unlike other bars in the city and even the cinemas, we cannot have a licence after 11pm has come as a shock.

For the community to have to leave our only designated safe area, as crimes against queer and trans people increase across the country, after 11pm is simply inviting attacks. This is the time of night when all other clubs and bars surrounding the location will have the busiest entry queues and rowdiest customers, statistically the highest risk time for an incident.

The request for 2 bouncers at all time suggests it is expected that we will be a target for harassment so forcing us to leave early in a visible group seems counterintuitive. All we ask for is a safe space with equal opportunities for performers as that which you would receive in a non-lgbtq+ bar and event space.

### **Ruby – singer and performer**

I haven't been going out and doing things in the community for very long, but going to Little Js just once had a really positive impact for me. Of all the open mics I've been to so far in York, I felt the greatest sense of safety and acceptance at Moral Panic. Beyond my own performing experience it also made me feel really happy and encouraged to see LGBTQ+ people and allies - but especially trans and non-binary people - being able to freely express themselves on the stage, in a time where our government is actively working against trans people. The sense of community at Moral Panic was obvious and I think Little Js represents a space where we can support each other and feel hopeful about the future.

### **Mal - poet and co host of Moral Panic**

Little J's has provided an amazing, welcoming, safe and inclusive space for Moral Panic to use for events. This is true for every group that uses it. We used to use Over the Rainbow cafe, which is up a flight of stairs above Portal Bookshop, and only has space for the performers plus maybe 3 or 4 other people, and with a performance area of around 1m<sup>2</sup>, and no room to move. As such, we spent months looking for an accessible space large enough to hold an audience, and with a stage large enough for movement, opening the event up to more physical acts such as dancers, where our attendees would feel safe and welcomed, and Little J's is the answer to every requirement and need we have to put on our event. In any other venue in York, we'd be open to attack and harassment, as those spaces are not expressly queer spaces, and non queer people often resent or outright despise our presence within the space. Little J's provides a space free from that harassment, and thus a space that is free of fear and anxiety.

If Little J's fails because they are denied the licence that allows the lgbtqia+ community the right to the same sort of nightlife as the cis heterosexual community, it would greatly reduce happiness, joy, community cohesion and community safety in York, as well as damaging the belief that the council is genuinely on our side.

Little J's is important, and we need it.

### **Frost – poet and co host of Moral Panic**

I have lived, studied, and worked in York for over 10 years. In this time, I have witnessed and experienced growing hostility towards the LGBTQ+ community who make our home here. Little J's is one of the only safe venues in the city where we can celebrate and support one another without fear of harassment. Creating and maintaining spaces is vitally important for the wellbeing of our community, both in terms of creative expression and social support. Moral Panic, the open mic

hosted at Little J's, fulfils both these roles. As a City of Sanctuary, and the UK's first Human Rights City, I have hope that York will continue to support one of its most vulnerable populations.

#### **Rachel – event attendee**

It's been simply wonderful having the little J space in York, it would be wonderful to see it open fully, as we don't have a night establishment of our own, so it would be nice if the York community as a whole would get behind this, and support us having a safe space, especially when this country is becoming more violent towards us.

#### **Grace – event attendee**

Little J's has had a profoundly positive impact on my life. It has provided me with a sense of community that I have not felt before. I remember walking into an event the first time I went to Little J's, and I was overwhelmed with comfort and joy because I saw a whole row of my friends. People in the queer community that were all here to socialise together. Everyone knew me. I've never felt that before. Little J's is something that York needs. It's something the LGBTQ community in this city needs.

#### **Aly – event attendee**

I moved to York recently and it having queer spaces like little J's has been a really huge boost to feeling safe and comfortable in the city, the places I grew up in didn't have a particularly visible LGBT culture which very much led to feeling less confident in expressing myself and being openly trans. It's also been very good for meeting new people and community building which was not something I was comfortable doing a lot of the time previously due to the lack of spaces available for meeting other trans and queer people.

#### **Bee – event attendee**

Safe spaces for LGBT people are needed now more than ever. It would be a crushing blow to lose Little J's.

#### **Iz – event attendee and performer**

York has very few queer spaces, and only one queer nightlife space: Little J's. If you deprive Little J of its right to exist, you deprive us of our only consistent source of queer performance, expression, and nightlife community. This is not just a matter of business and entertainment; to stifle Little J's would be to erase a fundamental aspect of queer existence in York. If the council wishes to declare itself a non-homophobic body, it must lift the ridiculous limits it is imposing on Little J's. As a queer performer and resident of York, Little J represents, to me, that community and vibrant expression that York is so deeply lacking. It is a space, yes, but is so much more than that. It is a source of joy, a bright colour in the wonderful, culturally rich tapestry of York. By pushing these restrictions on Little J's, the council would rob York of its colour. Please, provide Little J's with support, not limitations. Thank you.

#### **Finn – event attendee**

It's really important to me and so many others that we have a queer specific space in York. Having a place like Little J's to be creative and express ourselves with our identities and our passions is wonderful and the thought of having that restricted is a really depressing one.

**Daniella – event attendee**

Attending Moral Panic enables me to enjoy a night of entertainment in a safe and welcoming space. As a neurodivergent person, I've found it to be extremely inclusive and accessible - this is not something that I can say for the majority of other venues (licensed or unlicensed) in York!

**Sarah – event attendee**

Little j's is an important venue not only for the LGBTQ+ community in York but as an example of a multi-use space. This safe and inclusive venue is a creative haven and could be an integral example of the kind of venues we need to see more of in York, if it is allowed to flourish. From quiet community gatherings to sold out performances, York needs to embrace this model of venue to keep life on the high street and embrace not only our wonderful historic architecture (the chapel that Little J's is situated in is a beautiful place to visit) but our city's centre-stage role as a modern and thriving society in the north or England. York has always been a tourist hotspot but with venues like Little j's we have the chance to become a creative centre to rival Bristol and Edinburgh. The council needs to look at this case within this context and with a mind to the future of a thriving York.

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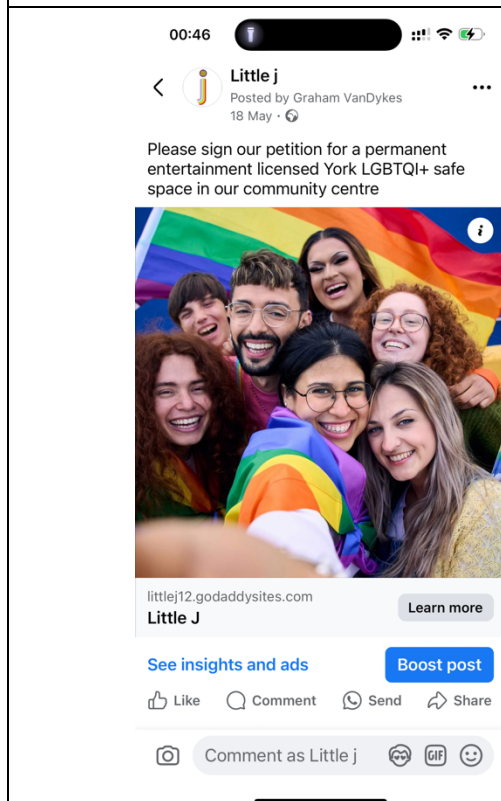
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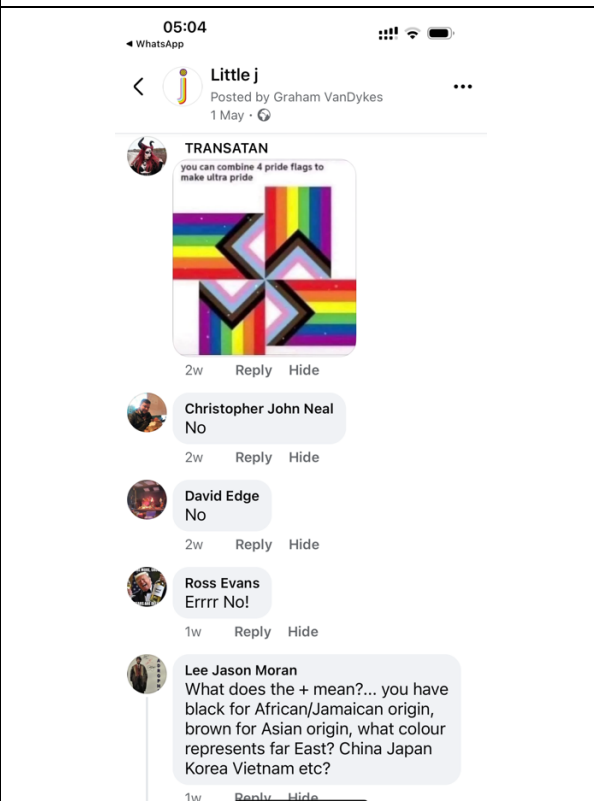


## Appendix B – Social Media Comments on Petition

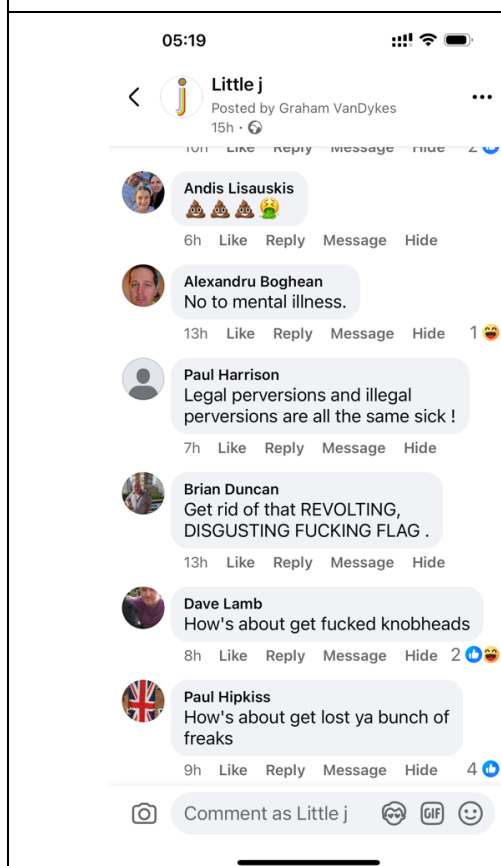
– 1: The original Facebook post detailing the petition for Little j's.



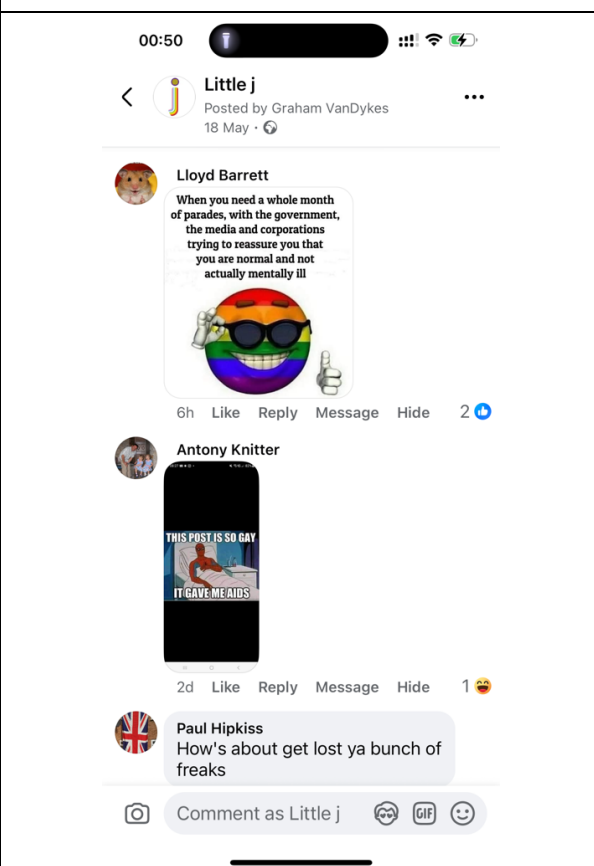
– 2: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



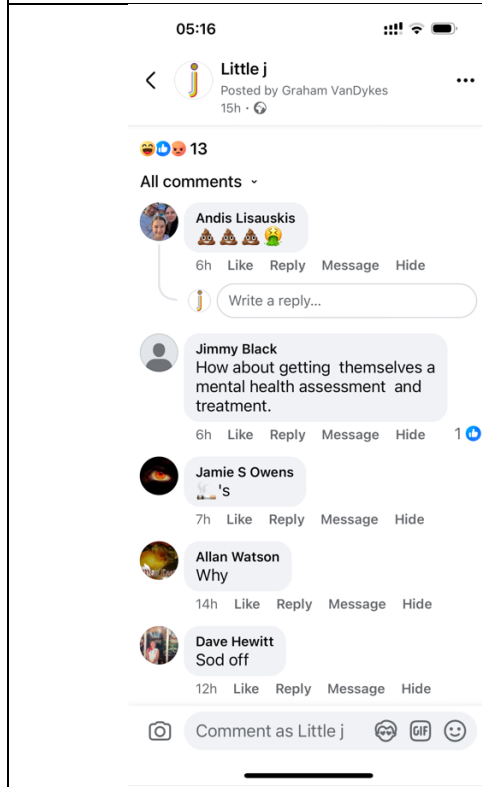
– 3: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



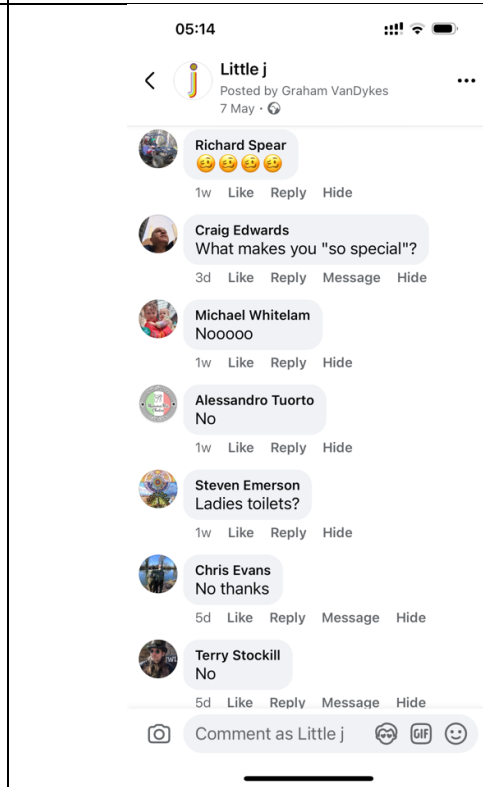
– 4: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



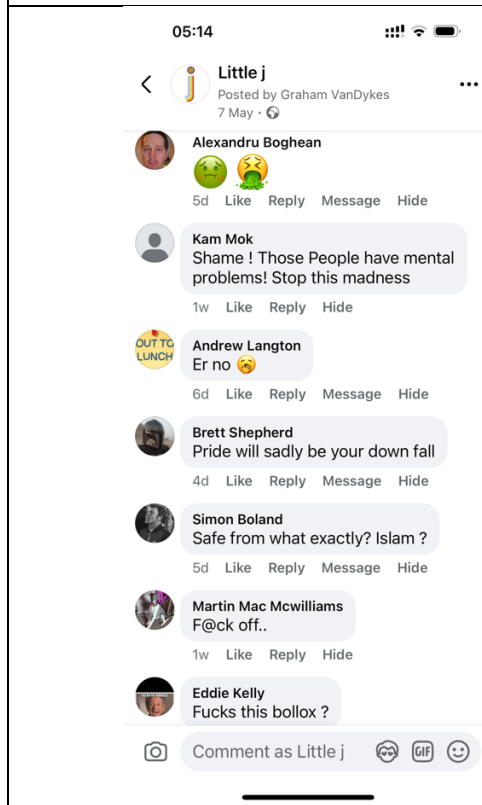
– 5: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



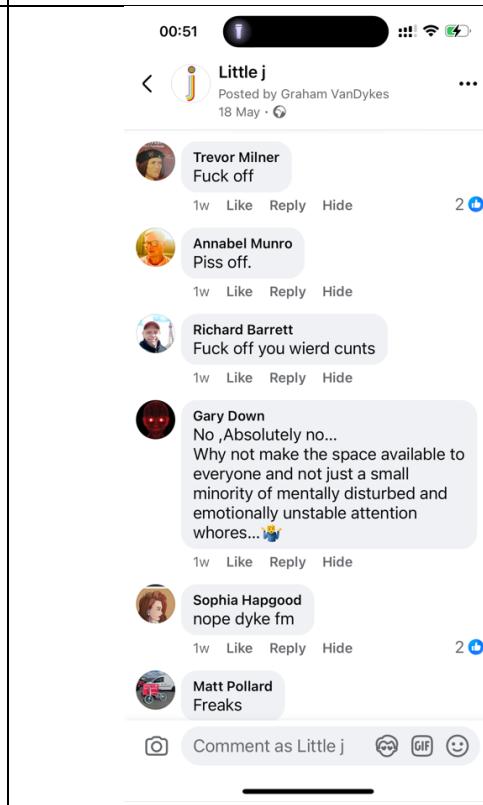
– 6: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



– 7: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



– 8: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



– 9: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition. Marcin Kulig's Comment translates from Polish as 'fuck all you fuckers'.

00:50

Little j  
Posted by Graham VanDykes  
18 May · 🌐

Marcin Kulig  
jebać was wszystkich popierdoleńców  
See translation  
1w Like Reply Hide 4 🙄

View 1 reply...

Oliver Hopkins  
"LGBT SAFE SPACES" guys grow tf up. Nowhere is safe for anyone.  
2w Like Reply Hide

Mick Gyles  
It's time all this utter bullshit stopped  
🙄

  
5d Like Reply Message Hide 2 🙄

Gary Stothard

Comment as Little j 📷 GIF 😊

– 10: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.

00:50

Little j  
Posted by Graham VanDykes  
18 May · 🌐

Jason Gatus  
Adam & eve not Steve  
2w Like Reply Hide

Alan Broome  
Na  
2w Like Reply Hide

Philip Conroy  
Bugger off  
2w Like Reply Hide 2 🙄

View 1 reply...

Ben Lynch  
No way diddy  
2w Like Reply Hide 3 🙄

Allan Watson  
Why  
2w Like Reply Hide

Ian Smith  
A load of bollocks  
1d Like Reply Message Hide 1 🙄

Tim Cottrell

Comment as Little j 📷 GIF 😊

– 11: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.


00:49

Little j  
Posted by Graham VanDykes  
18 May · 🌐

Fabio Coelho  
Mike Ch-Pi 🙄🙄🙄  
I need? 🙄  
Fuck of u cunt and your suggestions 🙄  
2w Like Reply Hide

Write a reply...

Write a reply...

Patrick Lynch  
  
6h Like Reply Message Hide 4 🙄

Michael Hart  
Looks like a set of c@#£@ too me  
1w Like Reply Hide

Comment as Little j 📷 GIF 😊

– 12: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.

00:48

Little j  
Posted by Graham VanDykes  
18 May · 🌐

Christopher John Neal  
How about no and go get your heads checked  
2w Like Reply Hide

Ray Weldrand  
Why am I seeing this rubbish  
2w Like Reply Hide 2 🙄

Qniunm Qniunm  
Yawn yawn  
4h Like Reply Message Hide 1 🙄

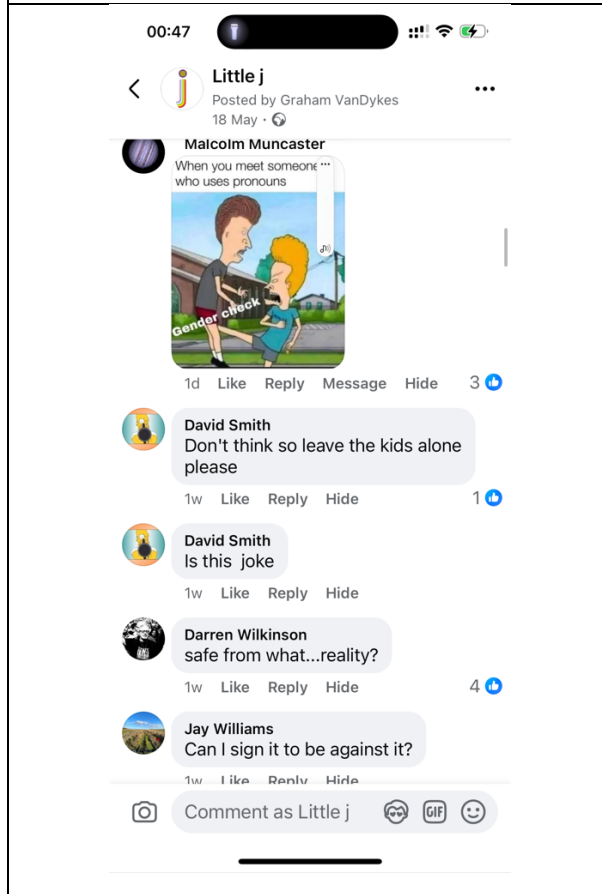
Eileen Caulfield  
F##K Right off, you've all hijacked the LGB Community who worked really hard to get where they are today 🙄  
5d Like Reply Message Hide

Bob Bell  
Freaks at large again hope there's a gallows there put it to good use  
2d Like Reply Message Hide

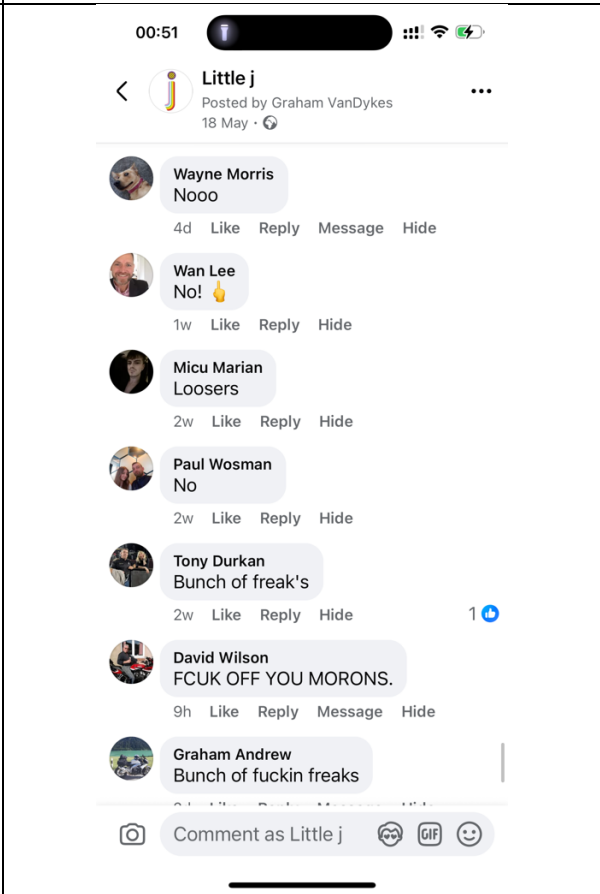
Neil Waddington  
I'll sign to get it banned .. where do I  
🙄

Comment as Little j 📷 GIF 😊

– 13: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



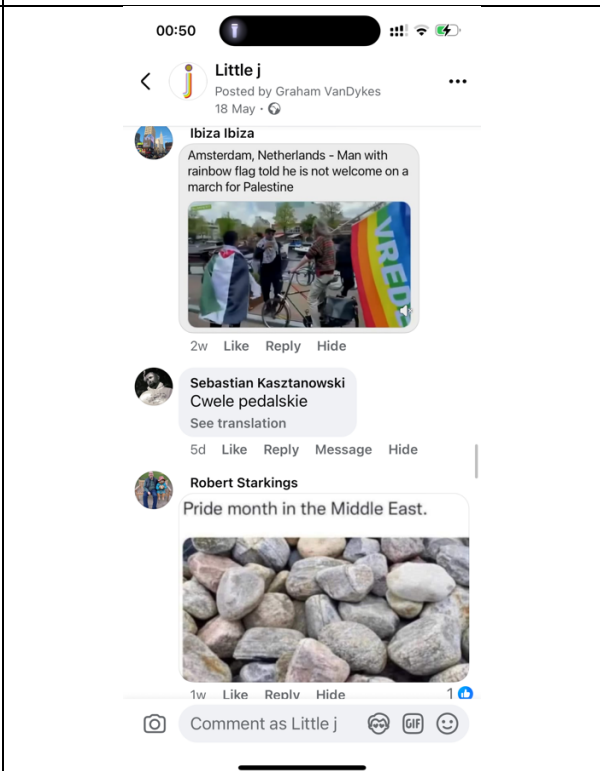
– 14: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



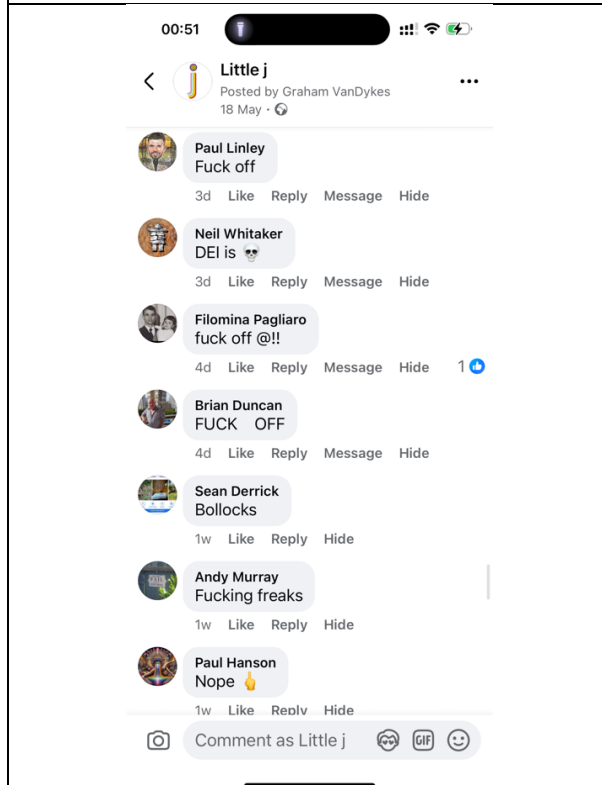
– 15: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



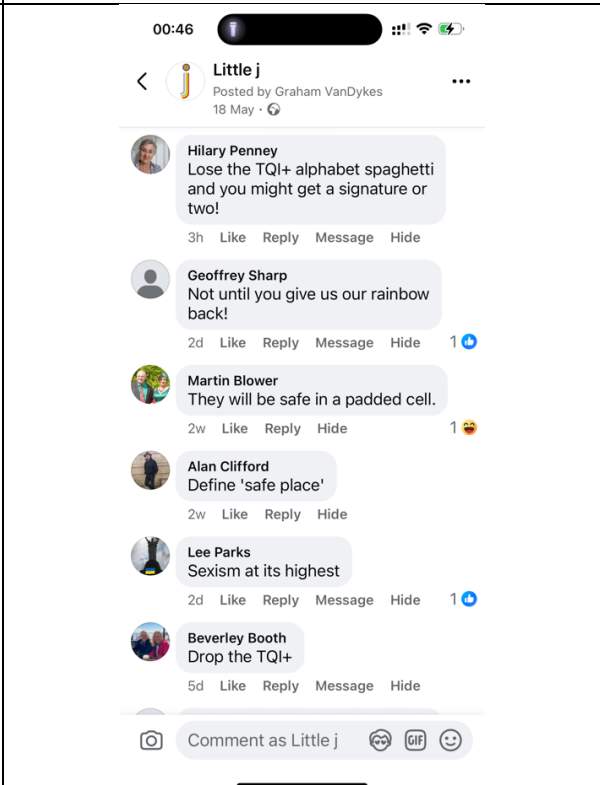
– 16: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition. Sebastian Kasztanowski's comments translates from Polish too 'filthy queer scum'.



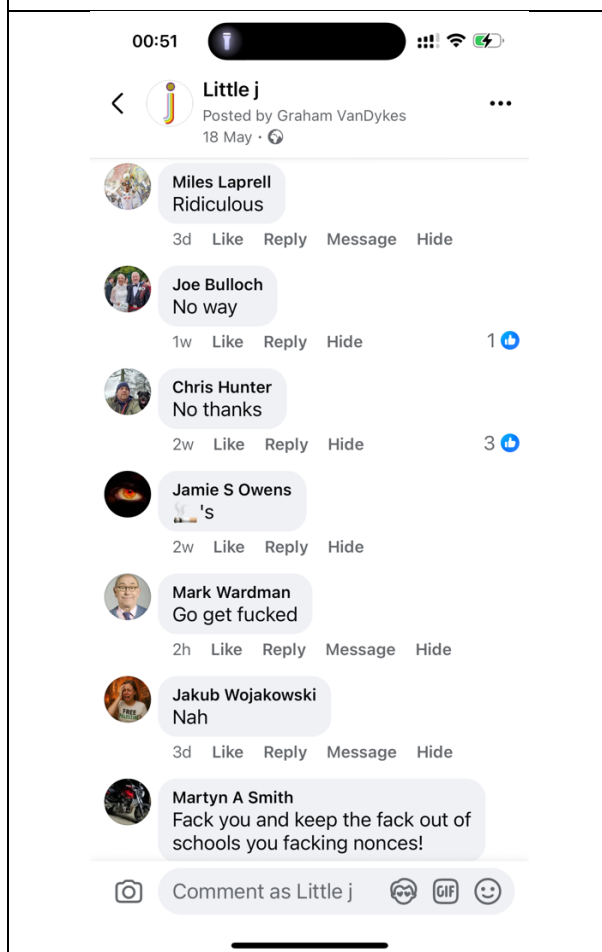
– 17: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



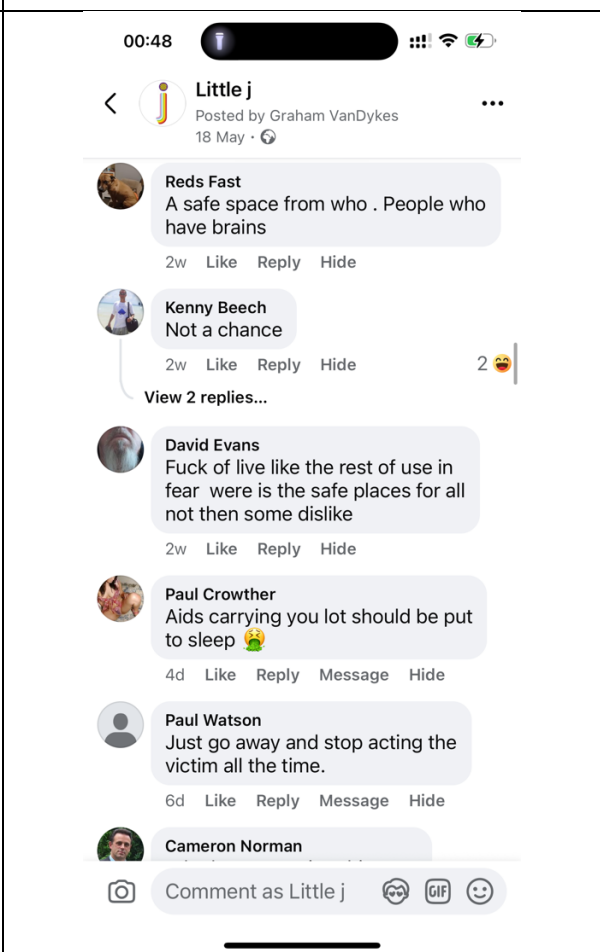
– 18: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



– 19: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



– 20: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.





– 21: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.

00:46

< **Little j**  
Posted by Graham VanDykes  
18 May · 🌐

**Graham Rose**  
All comments edited out, that says it all.  
2d Like Reply Message Hide

**Jason Oakes**  
Get of facebook  
2w Like Reply Hide 1 🤔

View 3 replies...

**Lyn Harrison**  
I'm sorry but no thank you  
2w Like Reply Hide

**Max Welsh**  
How do I sign against this?  
3d Like Reply Message Hide 1 🙌

**Mark Philip Hudson**  
How about no  
1w Like Reply Hide

**Russell Blinman**  
If there was a market/need for it, there'd be one already. Obviously such a venue is not economically viable

📷 Comment as Little j 🗨️ 📺 😊

– 22: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.

00:48

< **Little j**  
Posted by Graham VanDykes  
18 May · 🌐

**Craig Charles**  
No special treatment than anyone else  
2w Like Reply Hide

**Tommy Oreilly**  
More chance of plating fog  
3d Like Reply Message Hide

**Andrew Cheetham**  
These are the people who destroy my weekends having pointless protests  
2w Like Reply Hide 1 🙌

**Col Semper**  
Wouldn't this go completely against the equality stance you yearn for so much?  
1w Like Reply Hide

**Clint Cumberland**  
Give me some attention plz 🙏  
4d Like Reply Message Hide

**Dave Raper**  
Should be a day a year like most

📷 Comment as Little j 🗨️ 📺 😊

– 23: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.

00:51

< **Little j**  
Posted by Graham VanDykes  
18 May · 🌐

**James Garner**  
No thanks .. don't want my kids brainwashed  
1w Like Reply Hide 1 🙌

**Ziggy Beckham**  
Mentally ill  
1w Like Reply Hide

**Jason Nicholls** ✓

**WOKE PARENTS**  
  
wont spank their kids but will cut their nuts off.  
2w Like Reply Hide 4 🙌

**Tony Hubbard**  
Feck right off !  
5d Like Reply Message Hide

**Paul Kirby**  
No

📷 Comment as Little j 🗨️ 📺 😊

– 24: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.

00:46

< **Little j**  
Posted by Graham VanDykes  
18 May · 🌐

🙌 🤔 🙏 282

1 share

All comments ▾

**Bobby Davro**  
Are heterosexuals allowed or are you just inclusive when it suits?  
1h Like Reply Message Hide

👤 Write a reply...

**Steve McLoughlin**  
Pay for it yourself  
2w Like Reply Hide 5 🙌

**Terry Kennedy**  
Looks like we may have 11 homophobes who seem to be angry by this. I can't see any other reason why they would be angry by this. Love is love. We should accept everyone. So to the 11 homophobes who put a angry emoji. Hard luck.  
2w Like Reply Hide

**Matthew Naylor**  
[Terry Kennedy](#) Love is love. Even

📷 Comment as Little j 🗨️ 📺 😊

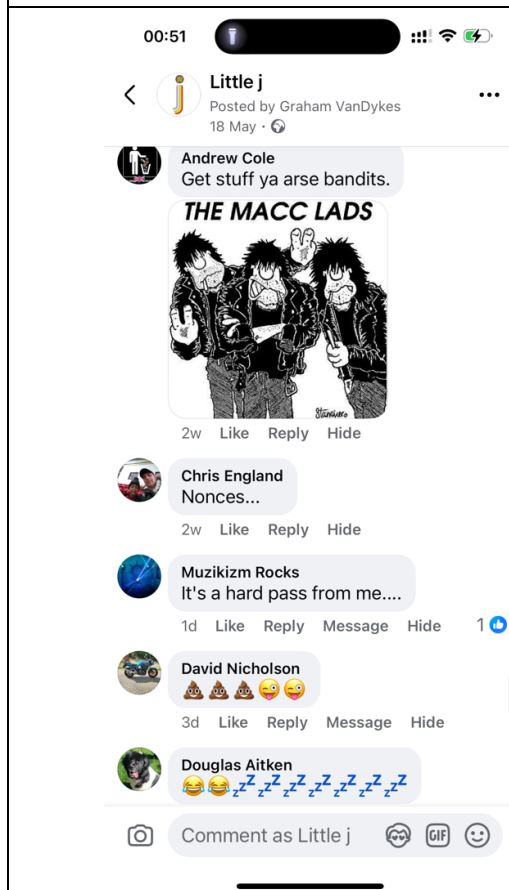
– 25: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



– 26: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



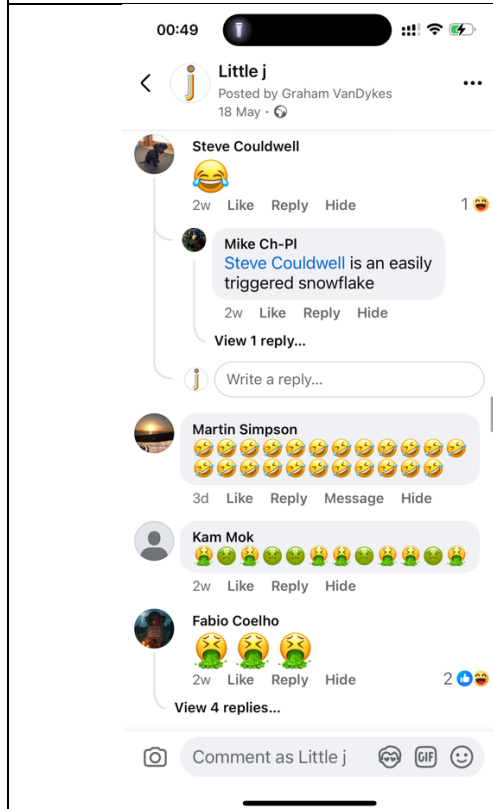
– 27: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



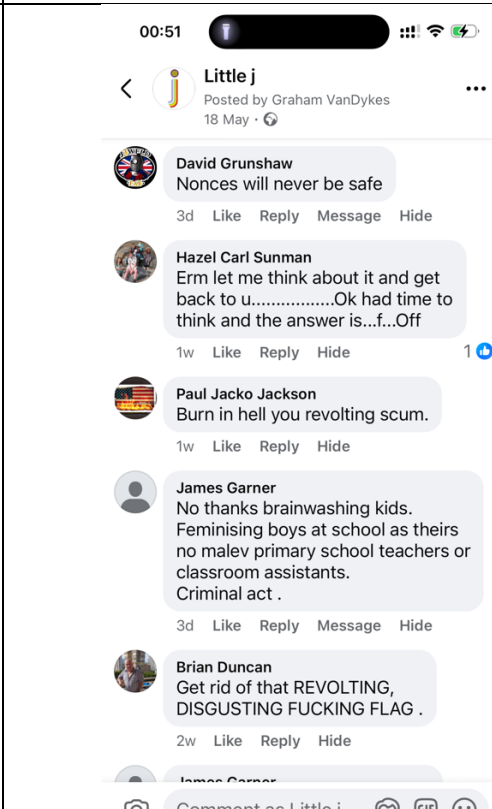
– 28: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



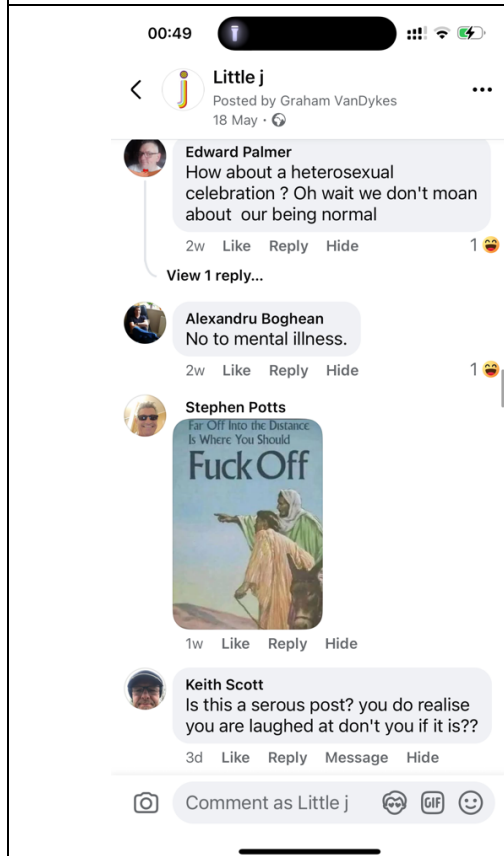
– 29: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



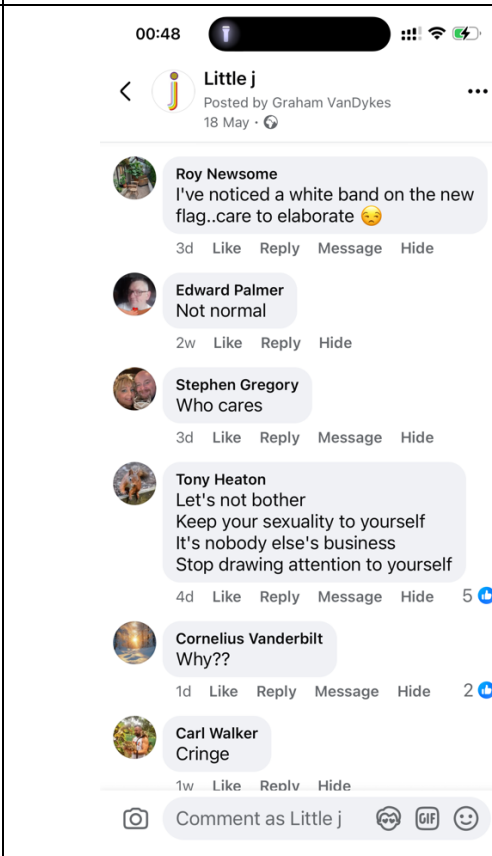
– 30: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



– 31: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.

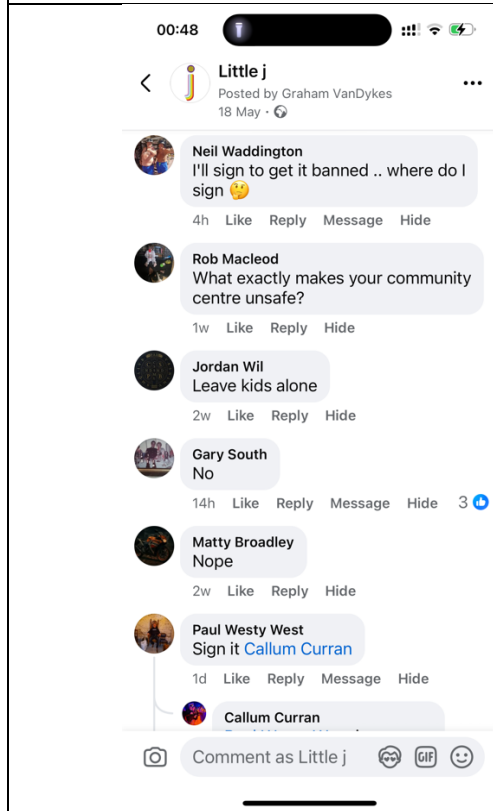


– 32: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.

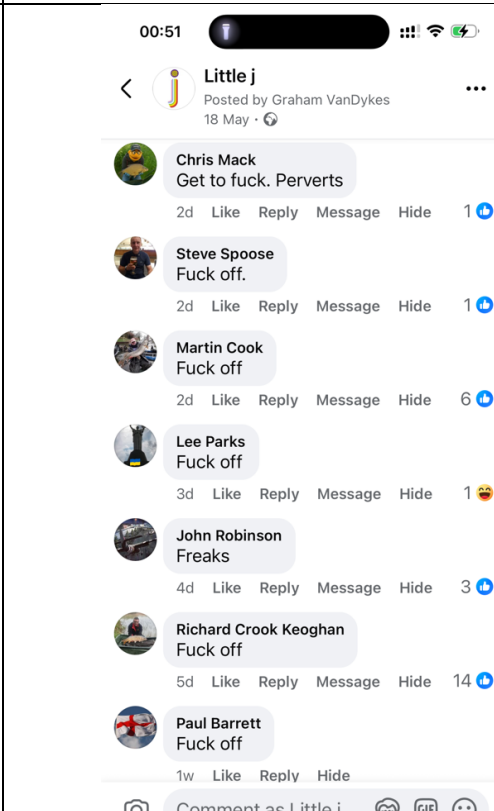




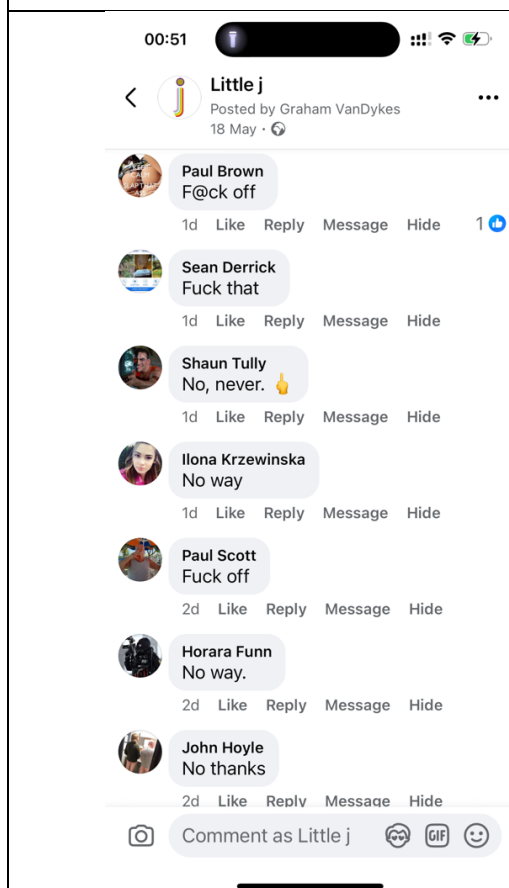
– 33: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



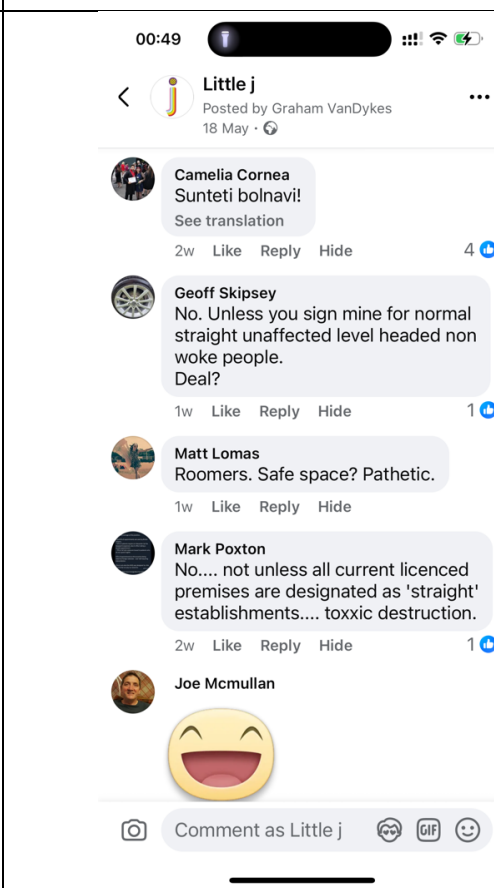
– 34: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



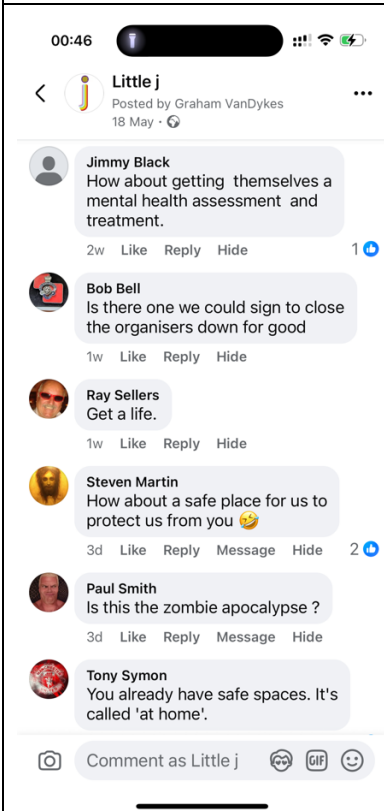
– 35: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



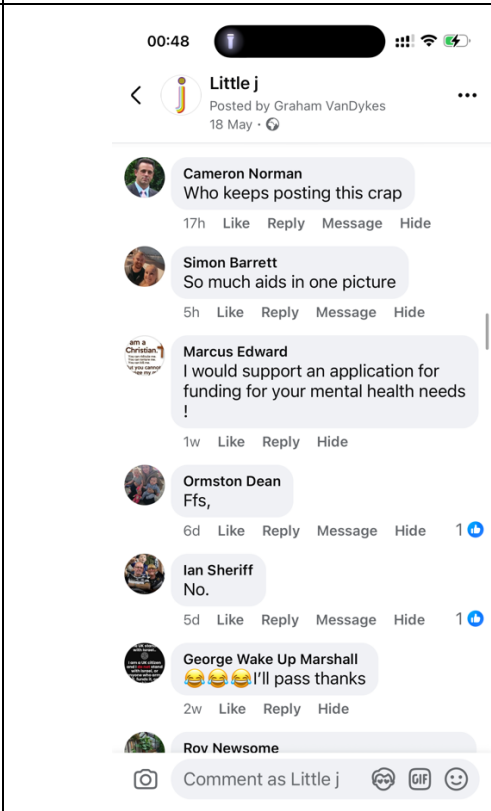
– 36: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition. Translated from Romanian as 'Are you sick?'



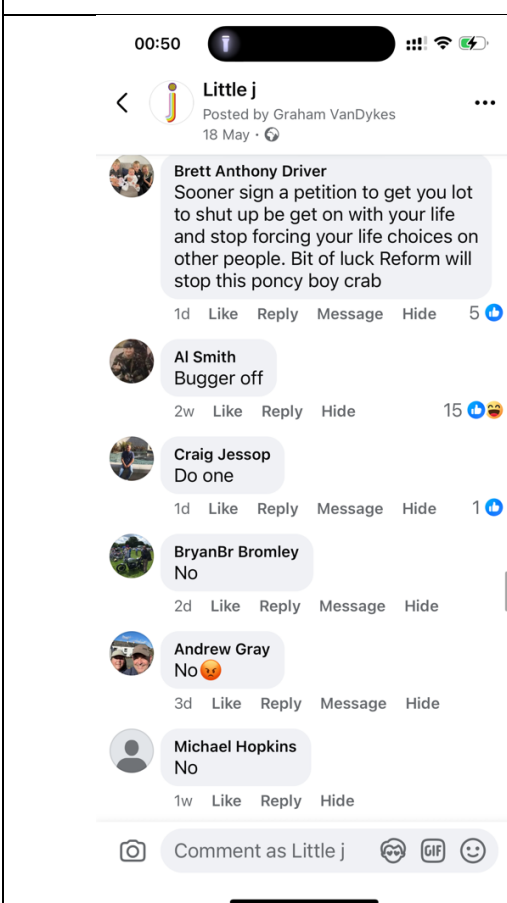
– 37: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



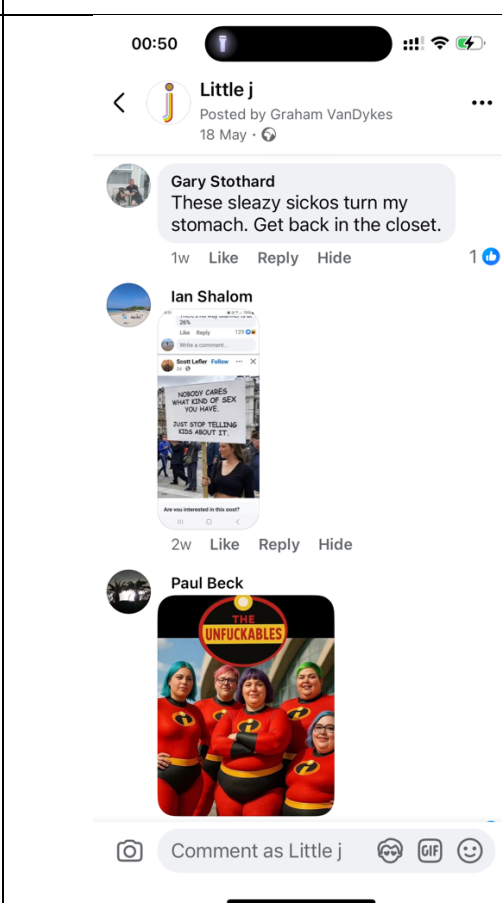
– 38: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



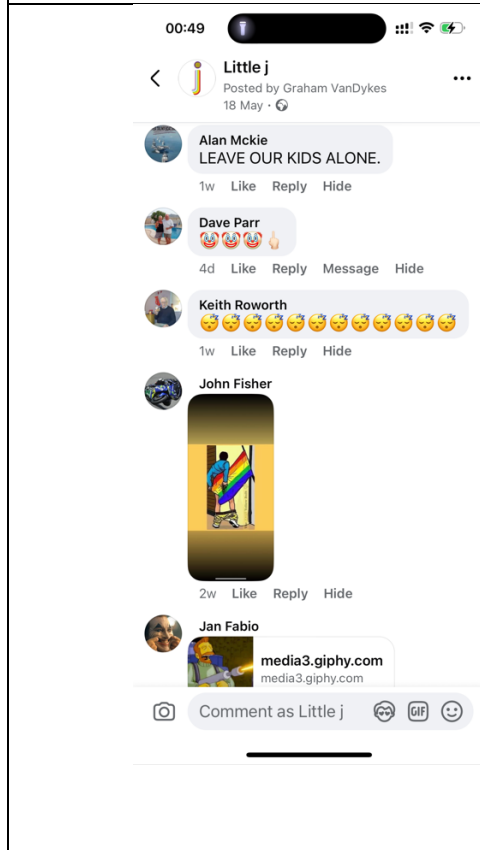
– 39: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



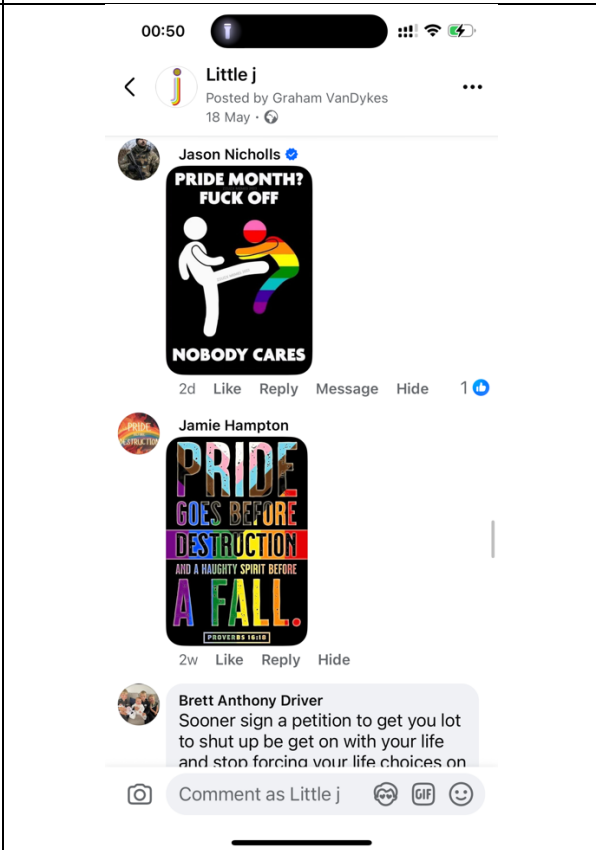
– 40: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



– 41: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



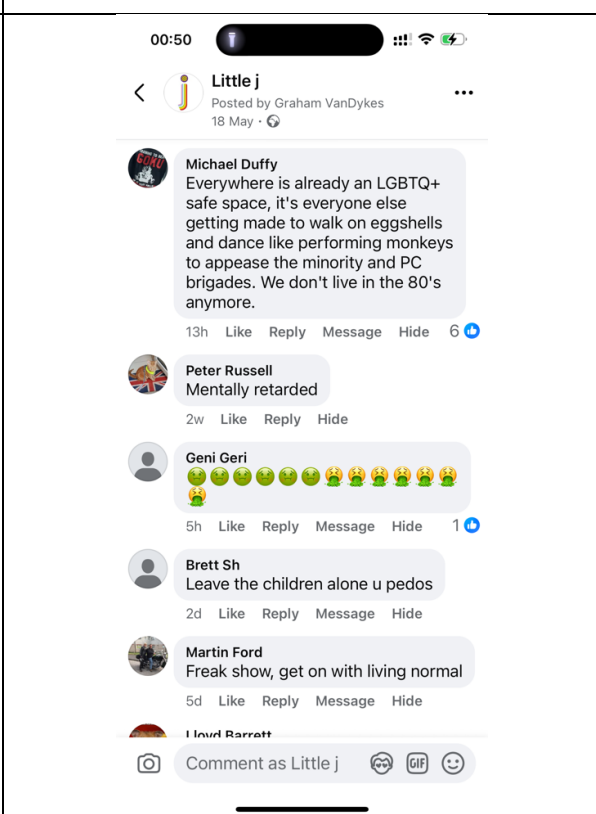
– 42: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



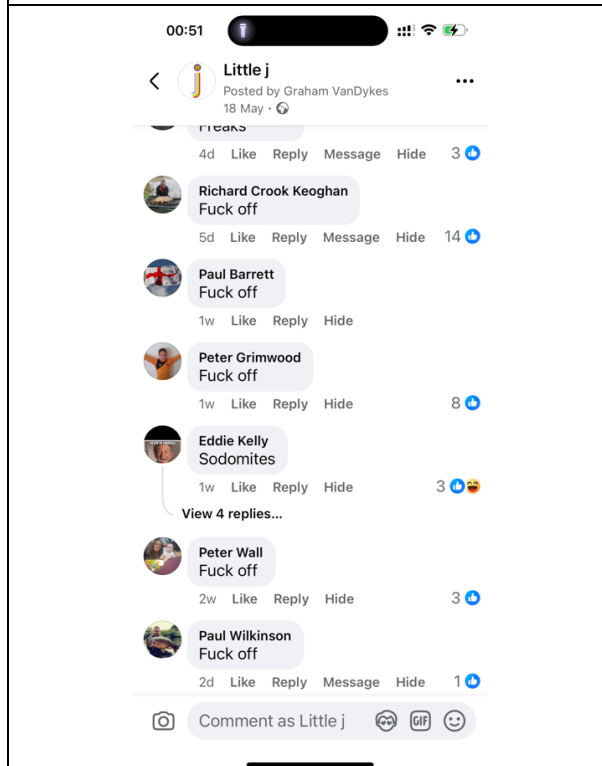
– 43: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



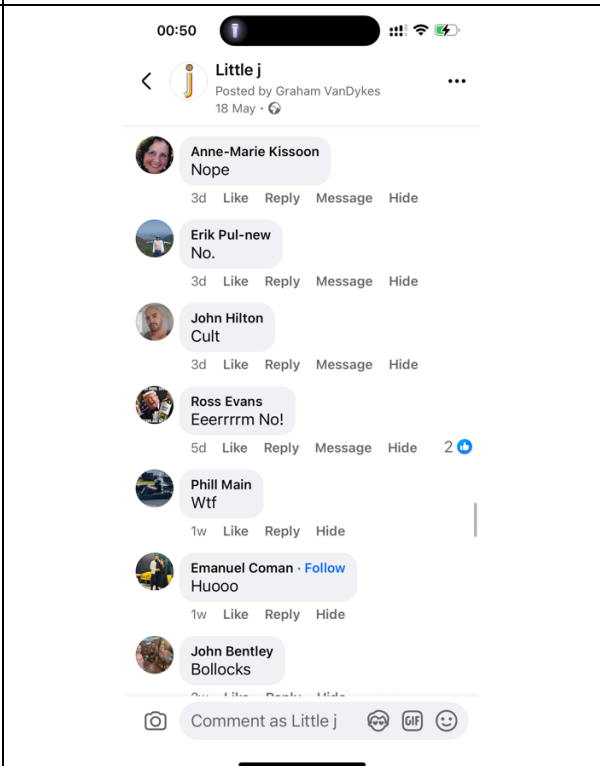
– 44: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition. Translated from Romanian as 'Are you sick?'



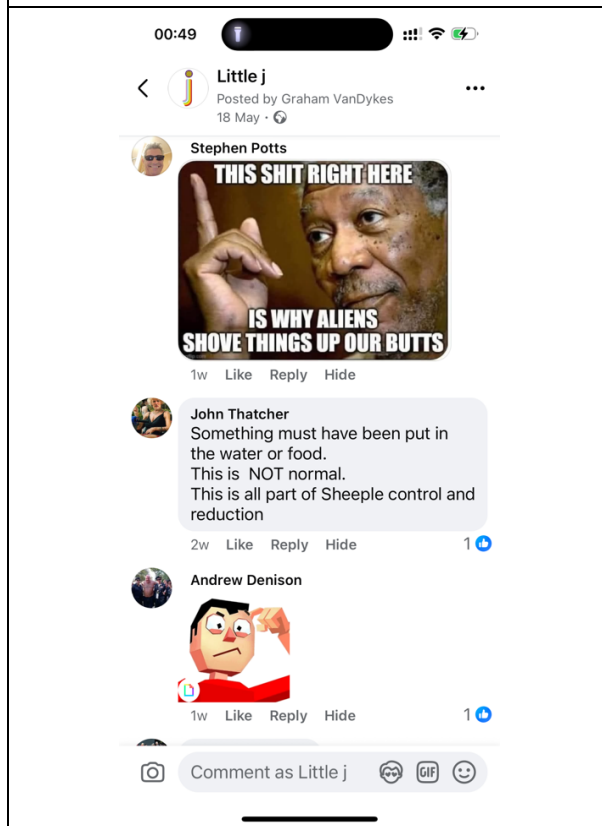
– 45: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



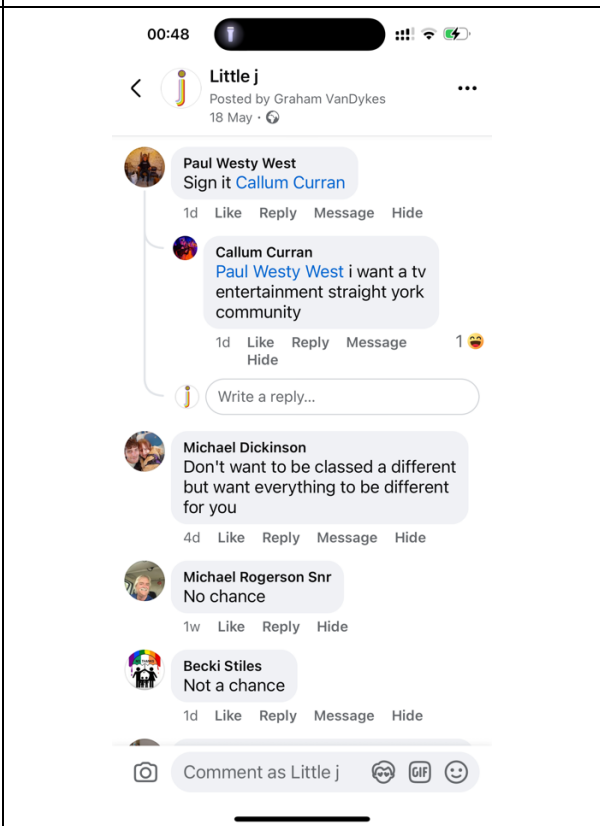
– 46: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



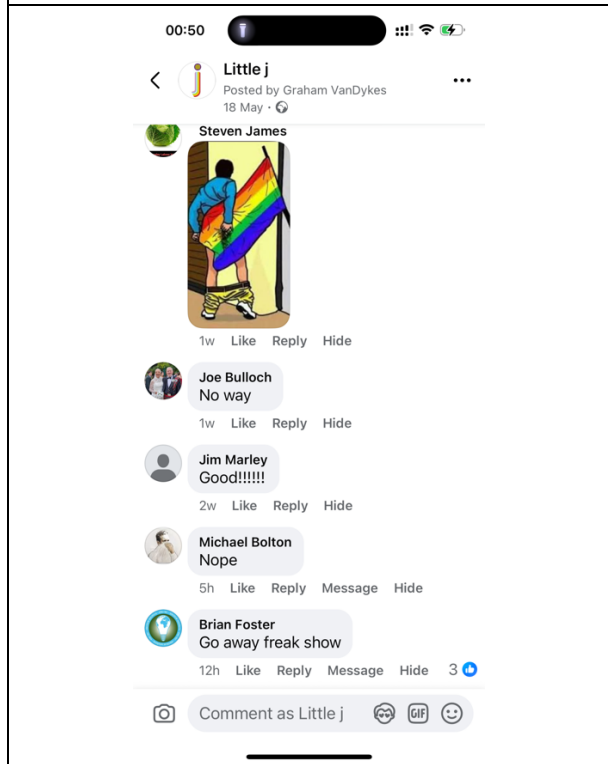
– 47: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



– 48: Hate comments made in response to the Little j's Facebook petition.



– 49: Hate comments made in response to the Little j’s Facebook petition.



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## **Appendix C**

# **City of York Council Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2025-2028**

## Contents

1. Our Vision
2. Definitions and current state
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4. Our Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Commitment and Promise
5. What we will do
6. Responsibilities
7. Monitoring and Evaluating the Strategy
8. Appendix

## Our Vision

As a core commitment within our Council Plan, we are ambitious for, and committed to, achieving continuous improvement and equity across all our services and functions.

Why is equity, diversity and inclusion important to CYC? First and foremost, accelerating equity, diversity and inclusion is simply the right thing to do. Secondly, there is a strong 'business' imperative for CYC to really embed EDI in its practices and services, borne out by the data. We have seen a 200% increase in racial hate crime in the last year in our city. YouGov data shows that 78% of UK 18-24 year olds consider "acceptance and inclusion of employees of all backgrounds" when searching for jobs. Research by McKinsey found that having diverse teams leads to an increase in problem-solving, and ultimately better decision making and performance.

We aim to deliver services that are equally accessible to all our customers and to implement robust strategies and policies that are person centred and considerate of needs. As an employer we will ensure equity in the recruitment, training and promotion of our employees. We will also celebrate diversity within the workplace and our city, encourage our employees to embrace continuous learning and development in all aspects of their role as officers and as individuals supporting our communities. Our Equity, Diversity & Inclusion strategy ensures we deliver on our commitments and drive change at all levels of the Council.

We will collaborate with our strategic partners, as well as employees, trade unions, community groups, service users, citizens and customers to co-produce initiatives and deliver the change we aspire to. We are proud to continue deliver against our commitments as a Human Rights City and City of Sanctuary and seek to support and include all members of our



communities to be the best they can be in our city.

Our Equity, Diversity & Inclusion strategy is a living document, which will be constantly under review by our Corporate Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Group as well as our external stakeholders. We welcome any comments and collaborative working, which may inform the process. We will report annually on the progress we have made and include any new actions.

We believe that this strategy and action plan not only highlights the council's commitment to achieve true equity, celebrate diversity and secure the inclusion of all, but also makes us transparent and accountable.

Finally, we would like to express our support for and commitment to this strategy and look forward to seeing positive outcomes and benefits emerge from its implementation.

**Cllr Claire Douglas**

**Ian Floyd**

Leader of the Council

Chief Operating Officer

## 1. Definitions and current state of play

### Equity

*Equity* is about the fair treatment for all people, so that strategies, policies, procedures and practices that are being implemented ensure that protected characteristic identity is not predictive of life chances, opportunities and outcomes.

*Equality* presumes that all people should be treated the same. However, equity has a different approach. Equity takes into consideration a person's or a community's protected characteristics, for example disability, race/ethnicity (including Gypsy & Traveller ethnic groups), sex, religion/belief, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment/identity, social class, maternity/paternity, marriage or civil partnership and promotes the adjustments to service or employment practice to ensure that the outcome is equal. Equity recognises that structures, bias and lack of opportunities lead to disadvantage.

### Diversity

The Council values *diversity* and recognises that different people bring different perspectives, ideas, knowledge and culture and that this difference brings great strength. A wider talent pool provides new perspectives and is proven to create innovation.

We believe that discrimination or exclusion based on characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010, which are age; disability; sex; gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sexual orientation; represents a waste of talent and a denial of opportunity for self-fulfilment.

Furthermore, we recognise the following as protected characteristics in the



work of the Council; carers; care experience; and socio-economic background (includes low income groups and the digitally excluded). We expect commitment and involvement from all our staff, partners and providers of goods and services in working towards the achievement of our vision.

## **Inclusion**

*Inclusion* in a workplace context is about workplace experiences and the degree to which employers involve and embrace all employees, recognise that their diversity adds to value to the council, it's service users, communities, external stakeholders and create more innovative solutions and meaningful contributions. National and international evidence illustrates that inclusive cultures lead to diverse workplaces.

Wider than the workplace, inclusion is ensuring our citizens, service users and staff feel a sense of belonging, respected and valued for who they are. Inclusion is ensuring everyone has a voice and can be at their best.

## **Merit and positive action**

We will endeavour to achieve all of this through *positive action* to promote inclusion. There is an important distinction between positive action and positive discrimination. Positive action is lawful and aims to address disadvantages by encouraging participation and removing barriers. Positive discrimination is unlawful and involves giving preferential treatment based solely on protected characteristics.

We will always recruit or promote the best person for the job, positive action is not about preferential treatment, it aims to ensure that all candidates have an equal opportunity to be considered.

## **Intersectionality**

*Intersectionality* is about how multiple categories of identity or the intersection of several characteristics, can shape our experiences and lead to distinct forms of discrimination or disadvantage.

This also highlights the risk of too much emphasis on categorising people by protected characteristics, can lead to groups feeling their challenges are being overlooked. There is a further risk of alienating people who don't feel they fit into any particular category. Our strategy focuses on the importance of the universal issues of dignity and respect.

## **Current state of play**

CYC workforce diversity breakdown – from CYC Workforce Profile  
30/09/2024

Characteristic	York population	CYC
Disabled	17%	8%
Male / Female	48% / 52%	37% / 63%
Gender reassignment or Trans/non-binary	1%	>less than 10
Black, Asian, Ethnic Minority <sup>[1]</sup>	13%	7%
Has religion/belief	47%	39.5%
Heterosexual / Non Heterosexual	86.5% / 5.5%	95% / 5%

## What the public say

Our recent public consultation revealed a wide range of opinions and experiences about equity, diversity and inclusion. These are some quotes from members of the public:

*‘I have had mixed raced friends and those from minority groups made to feel discriminated by council employees who have demonstrated ignorance of their cultures/lived experiences’.*

*‘I recently had a really positive experience in dealing with the housing service - applying for the council housing list. I explained that I had autism and member of staff actually anticipated correctly the reasonable adjustments I would need to for this meeting – i.e. in person, in a quiet room, their emails set out clearly in different sections. I had no feelings of distress’.*

*‘I’ve loved living in York because it's peaceful...When it comes to making choice...You don't have a black Barber in York and it's really hard for someone that doesn't understand the texture of my hair to barb my hair... And there are no African restaurants in York, I always have to cook for myself or go to Leeds or Manchester’.*

## 2. Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 brings all existing discrimination laws together into one piece of legislation that addresses employment, provision of goods and services, and property.

The Equality Act 2010 created nine **protected characteristics**\* which are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

The Act also created a number of **prohibited conducts** in relation to people with a protected characteristic, these are: discrimination; (failing) the duty to

make adjustments for disabled people; harassment; and victimisation.

The **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)** consists of two parts, which the council must meet when carrying out its functions:

**(1) The General Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) requires the council to have due regard to the need to:**

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different communities

**To advance equality of opportunity, the council must have due regard to the need to:**

removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics

- taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
- encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

This includes treating some people more favourably than others in order to redress existing inequality and taking into account the needs of disabled people\*\*.

\*These protected characteristics are explained in more detail on the City of York council's website: [Equality Act 2010 – City of York Council](#)

\*\* Marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity only apply to the first aims of the general duty, not to the other aims (i.e. “advancing equality of opportunity” and “good relations”)

**(2) The Specific Duties, set out below, are legal requirements designed to help the council meet the general duties of the PSED.**

**They are:**

- Publishing equality information on its workforce and service in an accessible way annually thereafter.
- Publishing its own equality objectives. These objectives must be based on equality evidence and analysis, they must be specific and measurable and be reviewed and revised at least every four years.

**Scope:**

The scope of this strategy and action plan incorporates other policy developments and commitments such as:

- The Social Model of Disability
- Anti-Racism Strategy and Action Plan (City and Council)
- Gypsy and Traveller Action Plan

## **Human Rights Act (1998)**

The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic British law. The Human Rights Act came into force in the UK in October 2000.

It requires all public bodies (like courts, police, local authorities, hospitals and publicly funded schools) and other bodies carrying out public functions to respect and protect your human rights.

## **3. Our Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Promise and Commitment**

We believe that equity is essential to building strong cohesive communities. A truly inclusive city benefits all. Our promise is to ensure that EDI is an essential ingredient in becoming a vibrant community. The challenge for our EDI Strategy is to be able to live up to and embrace the commitments made in our Council Plan 2023 – 2027 ‘One City for All’

Our Council Plan commits us to demonstrate both equity and equality to all York’s, citizens, service users, our staff and the people who visit us.

City of York Council promises to:

- value diversity in our communities;
- promote an equitable, inclusive and engaged society;
- take a zero tolerance stance on intolerance, discrimination, harassment and victimisation in all of its forms

## **4. What we will do**

### **This strategy pledges us to:**

#### **1. Develop and promote anti-discrimination policies and practices at all levels of the council, and, in the delivery of our services to the public.**

This means:

- Our employment policies and practices are fit for purpose and up to date in order to effectively tackle issues. This includes those dealing with recruitment, promotion, training, grievance, discipline and retention.
- We improve the representation of people with protected characteristics at all levels of the council so that our workforce better reflects York’s diversity
- Using the data we have on our diverse communities to inform policy and practice

- Engaging with diverse communities to co-develop policy and practice
- We take positive action to prevent harassment and victimisation of citizens, service users and employees

## **2. Ensuring best practice in equity, diversity and inclusion at corporate, service and individual levels throughout the council.**

This means:

- Services are truly accessible, welcoming, culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of our diverse city and communities.
- Services are co-designed with diverse communities and incorporate lived experience to manage diversity effectively by tackling inequality and social exclusion.
- We promote diversity and fight intolerance through our work with all our partners, across public, private and third sectors, locally and regionally
- Ensure there is no discrimination in the distribution of grants and other resources to reflect the diverse needs within the city

## **3. Launch our unique process of conducting human rights and equity impact analysis, across all service areas as an integral part of decision-making processes.**

This means:

- We engage in effective equality analysis of policies and procedures impacting staff and citizens, making them fit for purpose
- We widen this analysis to include human rights and embed it at the start of all decision-making processes.

## **4. Provide training and support for staff and members to help them to meet their duties under the Equality Act and ensure citizens of York are treated with dignity and respect.**

This means:

- We ensure that we enable people and communities to fully participate in consultations over the planning and delivery of council services that affect them.
- We are providing support and training to ensure this strategy is implemented and makes a difference
- We report on progress of this strategy, meeting the duties under Equality Act (2010) and ensuring citizens are treated with dignity and respect

## **5. Implement our Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan and ensure we are leading edge as an inclusive employer and service provider**

This means:

- We effectively monitor, and report on, how well we are achieving our goals to eradicate discrimination, hate crime and anti-social behaviour from York
- We work with our partners to pursue agreed EDI objectives across the public, voluntary and business sectors of York.
- We conduct regular and effective monitoring of this strategy, action plan and Key Performance Indicators so that we demonstrate how we are making a difference

## **5. Responsibilities**

The Executive has collective councillor responsibility for the delivery of the EDI Strategy. Each Executive Member also has responsibility for reviewing and evaluating equalities as appropriate for their portfolio area.

The Human Rights and Equalities Board alongside our Scrutiny Committees will be able to scrutinise the delivery of the plan.

We will secure a mechanism by which citizen and stakeholder voices can be heard to feed into the development of policies and strategies, with consideration of their rights through Human Rights and Equity Analysis tool.

The Chief Operating Officer will take the lead responsibility for the overall management of the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy and Chair the Council's Corporate Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Group.

Directors and Heads of Service are expected to demonstrate commitment to ensuring that the EDI Strategy is implemented at every level of the organisation.

- All members of staff are required to support the EDI strategy, policies, initiatives and ensure that members of the public, service users or employees are not discriminated against on the grounds of their age; disability; sex; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership status; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; or sexual orientation; carers; care experience and socio-economic background (includes low income groups and the digitally excluded).

## **Monitoring and Evaluating the Strategy & Plan.**



## **We will publish an annual report which will:**

- Report on completion of actions, outcomes and related key performance measures;
- Update the action plan; and
- Update this strategy in response to any changes in the council and city's strategic and policy framework.

## **What does success look like?**

In taking the actions and meeting our obligations which are set out below, we will expect to achieve a number of outcomes which show real improvements over a period of time.

### **These are:**

- A workforce that better represents the communities in York, and an improved employee profile at all levels of the organisation.
- Better access to services and more accessible services.
- A caring and responsive council which meets the needs of all members of the community
- Increased customer satisfaction across all areas.
- Improved service provision which reflects the needs of the people of York.
- Meet their duties under the Equality Act of 2010, raise awareness of this strategy and ensure citizens of the City are treated with dignity and respect as we deliver services.

More details on how we will measure the impact of our services, functions and policies is available in the Appendix.

## **Appendix**

### **Measuring the impact of our services, functions and policies**

We will undertake impact analysis across all our key functions in relation to all protected characteristics using our Human Rights and Equity Analysis Tool.

### **We will:**

- Establish clear aims and objectives for the policy to be assessed.
- Consider available qualitative and quantitative data.

- Assess how each option being considered will directly or indirectly impact on our communities.
- Consult data and feedback from relevant stakeholders which will primarily include service users, voluntary and community organisations, staff members and their associations and trade unions.
- Monitor and review the changes made to the policy or service.
- Publish the results of the Human Rights and Equity Analysis.

We will ensure that our service plans address issues in a tangible manner that is open to inspection. We will follow the principles of:

- Challenge – whether the service meets the needs of all sections of the community.
- Compare – how well our services are performing from the point of view of all groups, against other service providers.
- Consult – effectively over services and ensuring that we include all hard to reach groups and carry out the consultation in a non-discriminatory and inclusive manner.
- Compete – Ensure that service providers conduct equity analysis and set equity objectives effectively.

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[1] Some organisations record minorities in a much more restrictive way, focusing only on visible minorities. It is also known that the census and other counts substantially undercount certain minorities, including some South Asian minorities and Travellers, for example, because of non-response for various reasons.

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