

Councils and us



**1977 to
2008**

1977

By 1977, Nottingham CHE had had useful meetings with all the local MPs. To continue this approach, Howard Hyman invited the Conservative leader of the County Council to speak to the group. He received the following reply

Sir,

I must say that I consider it an impertinence for you to send me a letter. I have always regarded homosexuality as one form of perversion and I very much regret the progress on permissive lines that have taken place during the last few years. I also take exception to the use of the word "gay". ***From time to time I am gay, but at no time queer.*** I have reason to believe that public opinion is on my side.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Wright.

Shortly afterwards, Councillor Wright wrote a letter "inviting" Nottingham CVS to remove CHE and Switchboard from their premises. The letter was also signed by Councillor Michael Gallagher, the leader of the Labour group. It was suggested that not taking up the "invitation" would have potential implications for NCVS's grant. Ron Collier, the then Director of Nottingham CVS, refused to cooperate and backed CHE and Switchboard.

The threats evaporated and it eventually became public that the two councillors did not have the backing of their parties, but were acting as individuals.

This was the year when Nottingham Switchboard got its first grant from Nottinghamshire County Council. The £330 grant paid for the installation of a new phone line and an answerphone.

1983

1984

The precarious nature of employment for many lesbians and gay men was emphasised in 1984 by a policy decision of the Tory led Rugby Council.

“In future any homosexuals will not be employed by the Council. They may be the best applicant, but they will not get the job”. In attempting to justify the move, a councillor said “We would not employ a known rapist in the typing pool”.

The City Council elections in 1983 saw Richard McCance elected. Richard was formerly a member of CHE, GLF and Switchboard and was then involved with the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights. He did not hide his sexuality; his election stance was that of an “out” gay man. The new Labour controlled Council had a majority of one, which gave Richard some leverage on issues about which he felt strongly.

1985

In 1985 the Council set up lesbian and gay Equal Opportunities sub-committees equivalent to those for ethnic minorities. Two part-time workers, one lesbian (Jo Fraser) and one gay man (Ben Benson), were taken on at the Equal Opportunities unit. The Tories weighed in with predictable comments about wasting rate-payers’ money while failing to acknowledge that lesbians and gay men paid rates too.



Jo Fraser

Ben Benson

The two part-time workers employed by Nottingham City Council in 1985 to look at lesbian and gay issues in the City's Equal Opportunities unit.

Staffordshire Tory Councillor Bill Brownhill made a statement saying that ***“all gays should be gassed”***. A group of people from GLYP, the Nottingham group for gay and lesbian young people, went to protest outside the councillor’s house.

12 of the protestors were arrested and locked up over Christmas, but all charges were later dropped. Sometime later, one of the people arrested received compensation of £30,000 for the way she was treated by the police.

1986

1987

The local elections brought the Tories back into power. The lesbian and gay sub-committees were immediately closed down, the Equal Opportunities Unit was reorganised and the lesbian and gay workers had to work out their notice.

The Nottingham equivalent of Staffordshire’s Councillor Brownhill chose to remain anonymous when he sent a letter to Outhouse saying ***“You lot should be put down”***.

This led to a major protest which climaxed with “The Coffin Parade”.

1993

These days both City and County Council back Nottingham Pride festival and Lesbian and Gay Switchboard. Both councils also have support groups for LGBT employees and are making some progress in trying to tackle equality issues which relate to sexual orientation though they still have much to do. The City Council has set up a forum through which LGBT people can express their concerns on matters over which the council has control. The County Council hopes to follow this example.

We are well aware that some councillors would like to reverse this trend.

A volunteer on Lesbian and Gay Switchboard was told that the Tories would stop Switchboard's (very small) grant if they returned to power.

1999

2006

The leader of the Conservatives on the County Council, wrote a letter to the Nottingham Evening Post criticising the Council for supporting Nottingham Pride.

The formerly homophobic Evening Post did not seem to agree and, as usual these days, devoted a large space to reporting about Pride.



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Guide to Council services

proud to support pride

This Guide contains Information on Civil Partnerships, Job and Career Support, Fostering and Adoption, advice on Harassment and Bullying and lots lots more.

www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk

NOTTINGHAM PRIDE 2005

The Pink Passport To Our Services

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL,
SUPPORTERS OF GAY PRIDE

THIS GUIDE CONTAINS INFORMATION ON:
The Civil Partnership, Job and Career Support,
Fostering and Adoption, Harassment Advice
and Bullying.