



The Magician by Kadisha Kayani.



Sahir House is a grassroots LGBTQ+ charitable organisation based in Liverpool that has been supporting LGBTQ+ communities including those seeking asylum, refugees and those living with HIV and AIDS since 1985, thus making it the oldest and largest operating LGBTQ+ charity in the Liverpool city region. Sahir House was formed during this time from the merging of two former groups, Merseyside AIDS support group and Merseyside body positive, with the name chosen as it means 'positive' in Arabic.



For the past 40 years, the charity has been dedicated to working hand-in-hand with Merseyside's local LGBTQ+ community to support them, by offering a range of different services. These include individual support and information on housing, benefits, education, employment and helping users to form new social connections. They also run a wide range of support groups for the LGBTQ+ community which includes a peer group for 18-25 yr olds, a 'Brothers' peer group for LGBT men and masc-presenting

people, a 'Sisters' peer group for LGBT women and femme-presenting people and the 'Many Hands One Heart' group for LGBT people seeking asylum and refugees in Liverpool. They also run many support and social groups for those living with HIV, with a total of 16 groups across the city including in the Wirral and St Helens.

This work all helps to reduce the stigma towards the LGBTQ+ community, including those who are seeking asylum, refugees and those living with HIV. There were 1,185 hate crimes towards LGBTQ+ people in Liverpool in 2024 and this does not account for the amount of unreported hate crimes experienced by LGBTQ+ people in the city. Over 95% of all LGBTQ+ hate crimes reported in Liverpool in the past three years remain unresolved, showing how Merseyside Police are failing to support the LGBTQ+ community sufficiently. Furthermore, racially targeted hate crimes accounted for over two-thirds of hate crimes in England and Wales in the year ending March 2024, showing the need for more work to combat racist attitudes in our current society.

These statistics stress the importance of working with the public to reduce the stigma towards the LGBTQ+ community as well as the need to support them adequately and to protect their safety.

The work that Sahir House do connects to the role of the magician archetype as the magician represents transformation, innovation and growth. Sahir House are working to support LGBTQ+ people in the Merseyside community on their journeys with their LGBTQ+ identity and their growth within this. They work to empower the LGBTQ+ community to live authentically as themselves in this harsh political climate and they do this by

connecting them with other members in the community, helping them to feel a sense of belonging within it.

Sahir House reflects the magician's transformative skill as they work to transform public attitudes which are hostile towards the LGBTQ+ community and to create social change within the local community.

With the continuous stark and shocking decisions that the government are making over our lives, safe spaces for the LGBTQ+ community to be able to come to for support, for advice, to be themselves and see their community and simply to exist in as free human beings, are as important as ever.

A recent report revealed that LGBTQ+ charities and community groups receive just 0.1% of total charitable income in the UK, which equates to just 10p in every £100 being given to these organisations per year. This means that charities such as Sahir House are heavily reliant on the generosity of the wider community to fund their work, with 97% of LGBTQ+ charities also relying on volunteers.

The lack of support from the government reflected in these statistics is brutal and oppressive given the vulnerability of the LGBTQ+ community. For instance, that 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ people have experienced homelessness in their lives and that LGBTQ+ workers are paid 16% less on average than their straight counterparts. The cost-of-living crisis in the UK has disproportionately affected the LGBTQ+ community, leading to further financial strain and social isolation.

For the past 40 years, Sahir House, the longest standing LGBTQ+ charity in Merseyside, have been working to empower, support and connect the LGBTQ+ community and those living with HIV. In the light of the recent Supreme Court ruling, places of safety and support such as Sahir House are a lifeline for the LGBTQ+ community.

The journey ahead will remain challenging but our hope remains alive with spaces such as Sahir House that continue to offer guidance, support and inspiration to our community. I chose to dedicate my work on this project to Sahir House as a Queer South Asian person living in Merseyside who continues to fight for the rights of our community.