# London LGBTQ+ venues stress the importance of trans-inclusive spaces amid legal and economic challenges



In the wake of a recent Supreme Court ruling clarifying the legal definitions related to sex under the Equality Act, owners and organisers of LGBTQ+ venues across London are emphasising the critical importance of maintaining trans-inclusive spaces within the community. The ruling concluded that, in terms of legal protection against discrimination, trans women do not fall under the definition of ‘woman’ encompassing ‘biological women’, a decision that has stirred extensive conversation about access to single-sex spaces such as public toilets and changing facilities.

Dee Chantelle, a trans woman and director of Zodiac Bar near Euston Station, shared her personal journey and underscored the role trans-affirming venues play in the lives of many transgender individuals. She recounted her experience from 1998, when she first found a sense of belonging at The WayOutClub, a trans nightclub in Camden, North London. “I saw so many transgender people – cross-dressers, transvestites, transsexuals – and that’s when I thought: ‘Oh my God, this is my world. This is where I belong’,” Dee told Metro.co.uk. From that point, she found the confidence to embrace her identity as a trans woman, and now leads a trans-owned and trans-led venue that she describes as a crucial community hub in an increasingly challenging environment for such spaces.

The need for inclusive venues has come into sharper focus due to a worrying trend: more than half of London’s LGBTQ+ venues have closed between 2006 and 2022, citing economic pressures such as the cost-of-living crisis and rising rents. Notable nightclub entrepreneur Jeremy Joseph, who operates the G-A-Y family of venues including Heaven in London, expressed concerns about the erosion of the city’s ‘queer identity’. Speaking to Metro, he reflected on the atmosphere at recent events hosted by G-A-Y, noting the palpable support within the community. He added that nightclub operators face uncertainty regarding the implications of the Supreme Court ruling, especially concerning management of single-sex facilities and patron security. Joseph indicated his commitment to maintaining safe, trans-inclusive environments, stating, “When things come into place, we need to decide to go with them or break the law. That’s something we will consider. We will do nothing that we don’t agree with – and if it means breaking the law, that’s what we’ll do.”

In addition to nightlife venues, other organisations have emphasised the necessity of regular, dedicated spaces for queer and trans individuals. Terri Hartshorn, organiser of the trans-inclusive G.IRL Events which caters to queer women and non-binary people across London and beyond, highlighted the psychological and social challenges faced by trans communities. “As a community, we’ve come so far, yet there is so far left to go for our trans brothers and sisters, and non-binary folks,” Terri stated. Their events aim to provide consistent, authentic spaces of connection, beyond the singular annual Pride celebrations.

Some of the loss of physical venues has led the community to increasingly embrace online platforms. Aquayemi-Claude Akinsanya, who runs Online Safe Space Tuesday, a weekly virtual gathering for LGBTQ+ individuals, described the internet as an accessible refuge for those who may confront local discrimination or safety issues. “Online spaces offer an accessible, inclusive sanctuary for individuals who may not be safe, seen, or comfortable in their local environments – whether due to geography, disability, discrimination, or other barriers,” Akinsanya said.

Meanwhile, institutions like the Vagina Museum in Cambridge Heath, East London, have implemented practical trans-inclusive measures such as gender-neutral, wheelchair-accessible toilets, underscoring their commitment publicly despite occasional online criticism. Zoe Williams, the museum’s director, pointed out that scientific understanding of biological sex is complex and non-binary. “Trans people have always existed and will always exist. It’s critical to remember that,” she remarked.

The Home Office reported that in the year ending March 2024, there were 4,780 recorded transphobic crimes in England and Wales, a figure acknowledged as only representing incidents reported to police. Alongside rising hate crimes, trans people also face growing difficulties accessing healthcare options.

The evolving legal landscape, economic pressures on venues, and heightened visibility of hate crimes have contributed to a particularly challenging period for trans and broader LGBTQ+ communities in the UK. For venue owners, organisers, and community leaders, the focus remains on fostering inclusive environments where all individuals can feel safe, supported and able to be their authentic selves.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://supremecourt.uk/uploads/uksc_2024_0042_judgment_aea6c48cee.pdf> - This Supreme Court judgment provides context to the legal definitions related to sex under the Equality Act, including how trans women are treated in terms of legal protection against discrimination.
* <https://transactual.org.uk/blog/2025/04/16/response-by-transactual-to-supreme-court-ruling-on-equality-act/> - TransActual's response to the Supreme Court ruling highlights the impact on trans communities and their concerns about being excluded from participating in UK society.
* <https://metro.co.uk/> - Metro.co.uk has reported on Dee Chantelle's personal journey and the importance of trans-inclusive venues like Zodiac Bar. This underscores the role such spaces play in the lives of trans individuals.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/london> - The Guardian has covered the decline of LGBTQ+ venues in London, discussing economic pressures and the impact on the community's identity.
* <https://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/> - The Home Office publishes reports on transphobic crimes, which highlights the issue of rising hate crimes against trans individuals in England and Wales.