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SWITCHBOARD, THE LGBT+ HELPLINE, GOES REMOTE AND CLOSSES ITS PHONE ROOM FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 46 YEARS

As calls to the helpline increase with the UK lockdown in place, Switchboard volunteers worked through the night to ensure that they could continue to keep providing those calm words when needed most, taking their first ever remote phone call on Tuesday 24th March.

Covid-19 has led more people to contact the helpline, from young people feeling the pressures of the closure of schools, to trans people self-isolating within transphobic families, to the elderly - an already isolated group - who may not see a friendly face for a very long time.

Natasha Walker, Co-Chair of Switchboard, said: "This is an incredibly difficult time for everyone, with increasing levels of anxiety, isolation and loneliness. We knew that we had to find a way to keep the phone line open for our callers and I'm proud to say that we have made history in doing so. Almost every single call we are taking at the moment features increased anxiety and isolation because of covid-19. It's magnifying any existing situation those people may be in already - from domestic violence, to transphobia, biphobia and homophobia, and of course loneliness, something we have been battling heavily against within the LGBTQ+ communities for a while now. We also operate an instant message and email service, something which is especially important right now, as it may be harder to find a private space to speak on the phone. It's so important that we can get the message out to everyone that we exist, that we are still open and that you can still reach us. We have been here for the LGBTQ+ communities since 1974 and we have no plans to stop now."

Last year alone, Switchboard saw an 11% increase in conversations around isolation, loneliness and discrimination. Switchboard's callers are young and old, from big cities, remote villages and everywhere in between. We know there are many more out there who aren't reaching out to anyone for support.

It's so critical that we talk about mental health more, tackling stigmas and working to reduce levels of loneliness across the LGBTQ+ communities now more than ever. These are some of the many reasons that Switchboard exists, and has done for the last 46 years.

Editor's Notes:

About Switchboard

Switchboard - the LGBTQ+ Helpline is a confidential helpline open to the LGBTQ+ communities and beyond, for anyone who wants to talk about gender identity, sexuality, sexual health and emotional wellbeing. We operate a telephone line, instant messaging and email service from 10am to 10pm, 365 days a year.

If you want to get in touch with Switchboard to talk with one of their volunteers you can do so via phone on 0300 330 0630, email at chris@switchboard.lgbt, or via instant messaging at www.switchboard.lgbt.

The charity was founded in 1974 and was formerly known as London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard. More information is available at www.switchboard.lgbt

For further enquiries, please contact: media@switchboard.lgbt