

LGBT FOUNDATION'S BIG GIVE CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE 2025

Case study: How we hit our target for the first time



BACKGROUND AND AIMS

LGBT FOUNDATION: OUR BACKGROUND

LGBT Foundation is a charity with a mission to empower LGBTQ+ people to realise their full potential, every day. We have worked tirelessly since 1975 to empower, encourage, and celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer+ (LGBTQ+) people through a variety of community-led health & wellbeing services.

Historically the majority of our funding has come from grants and contracts, however - in recent years - we have looked to diversify our income. We have a strong corporate fundraising programme and are in the process of developing our individual supporter base.

Ahead of the 2025 Big Give Christmas Challenge we had yet to hit a Big Give appeal goal. Despite this, we applied with our most ambitious target to date (£24,000 total) following work on audience development, major donor stewardship and on our appeals strategy.





ABOUT OUR CAMPAIGN

Many LGBTQ+ people face estrangement from their biological families, leaving them alone and isolated over Christmas. This is especially difficult for older LGBTQ+ people, and people coming out later in life who can find it more difficult to connect with others within their community.

During the holiday period our helpline service is an essential resource to support LGBTQ+ people experiencing isolation, help them when navigating challenging family dynamics and, for many, is a friendly voice in times of need. We also host a yearly 'Festive Feast' for service users and volunteers to connect in a safe, warm space and receive a hot meal.

Our 2025 Big Give Christmas Challenge appeal, titled 'Ho-ho-hope and Joy for the LGBTQ+ Community' centred around these problems and services available. Ahead of the campaign we understood that telling authentic stories around the need for our work would be essential.

We successfully applied for a total campaign budget of £24,000, consisting of £6,000 in pledges, £6,000 in champion funds, plus a £12,000 public fundraising target.

AIMS OF THE CAMPAIGN

- Plan effectively, securing £6,000 in pledges over summer and informing audiences about the campaign ahead of the launch date.
- Attract and steward new supporter audiences in the lead up to the appeal through audience development campaigns.
- Work with influencers and patrons throughout the campaign to boost reach and attract new supporters.
- Mobilise and engage supporters by developing a compelling campaign narrative, video and associated influencer content, spotlighting the experiences of the LGBTQ+ community.
- Attract new and mobilise existing mid-level and major donors.
- Signpost to key services supporting the community and produce an educational resource around the holiday period.
- Continue testing and developing fundraising approaches across digital channels, including direct mail, social media and advertising.
- Reach £24,000 appeal target to support delivery of life-saving services with LGBTQ+ people over winter.



KEY ACTIONS FOR SUCCESS



PLANNING AND TEAM MOBILISATION

With a relatively small fundraising and marketing team at LGBT Foundation, the success of our campaign hinged on a strong campaign plan, cohesive team effort and engagement from our wider staff team/volunteers. To ensure that this happened we:

- Started our campaign planning early with a 'creative jam', asking colleagues with different expertise to feed in at an early stage. By deciding on a campaign narrative early, we were able to begin content production and engage pledgers.
- Following the development of a campaign plan, we developed an interactive project tracking resource and hosted a project kick-off meeting, ensuring that all responsibilities were clear and content was produced and scheduled with a good buffer to the launch date.
- Included the wider staff team in developing content (featuring in videos and creating resources), informed them about the campaign ahead of time and updated them around progress. Being included from the start saw good staff and volunteer engagement in featuring in and promoting the campaign. It also made campaign content feel more authentic and reflective of LGBT Foundation.

PLEDGE COLLECTION

As our corporate fundraising programme is more established than our individual giving programme at LGBT Foundation, we leant into this strength when achieving pledges for the campaign. By deciding on a campaign narrative/focus early, we were able to speak to supporters about making pledges well in advance of the deadline.

With £12,000 to raise in one week (an ambitious target for us) we also wanted to rely on corporate support for pledges in order to avoid exhausting our individual supporters ahead of the campaign.

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---------|-------------|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | The James (M1 Living) Limited | Company | 6 Aug 2025 | £500.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | LTC Healthcare | Company | 6 Aug 2025 | £1,000.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hill Dickinson | Company | 15 Aug 2025 | £4,500.00 |





WARMING-UP EXISTING SUPPORTERS

Thanks to our early planning and content creation, we were able to inform our digital audiences about the campaign well ahead of the launch date.

This included emails and newsletters where supporters were able to add a reminder to their personal calendars when the campaign launched, used by around 300 existing supporters.

With the campaign narrative developed, we were also able to inform an existing major supporter about the campaign, securing an early donation commitment.

This donor used the Big Give donor funds payment option and released their donation funds gradually at key points during the campaign to help motivate other supporters. This proved to be an effective strategy to boost campaign engagement.

BUILDING A SUPPORTER BASE, READY FOR OUR ASK

Ahead of our Christmas challenge we had a planned campaign around LGBTQ+ men's mental health, 'Man Enough', which was utilising in-kind out of house promotion on billboards and digital advertisements to reach large audiences.

We identified the audience of this campaign as key prospective supporters for our Big Give appeal and - thus - mobilised a hand-raiser model through the campaign to retain these audiences.

By asking those who engaged with the campaign to make a non-monetary pledge and join our mailing list, we were able to later send our Big Give appeal communications to these individuals via email. Utilising this campaign was an efficient way to bring in new supporters ahead of the Christmas Challenge whilst not doubling work.



TAKE THE MAN ENOUGH PLEDGE

"I pledge to celebrate and support men of all backgrounds and promote a positive, inclusive vision of masculinity.

I will challenge outdated stereotypes, stand up for those who feel unseen or unheard and help break down stigma around men's health and wellbeing by encouraging open conversations."

With your name behind our campaign, we can redefine what it means to be Man Enough.

Name *

Your name

Email *

Your email

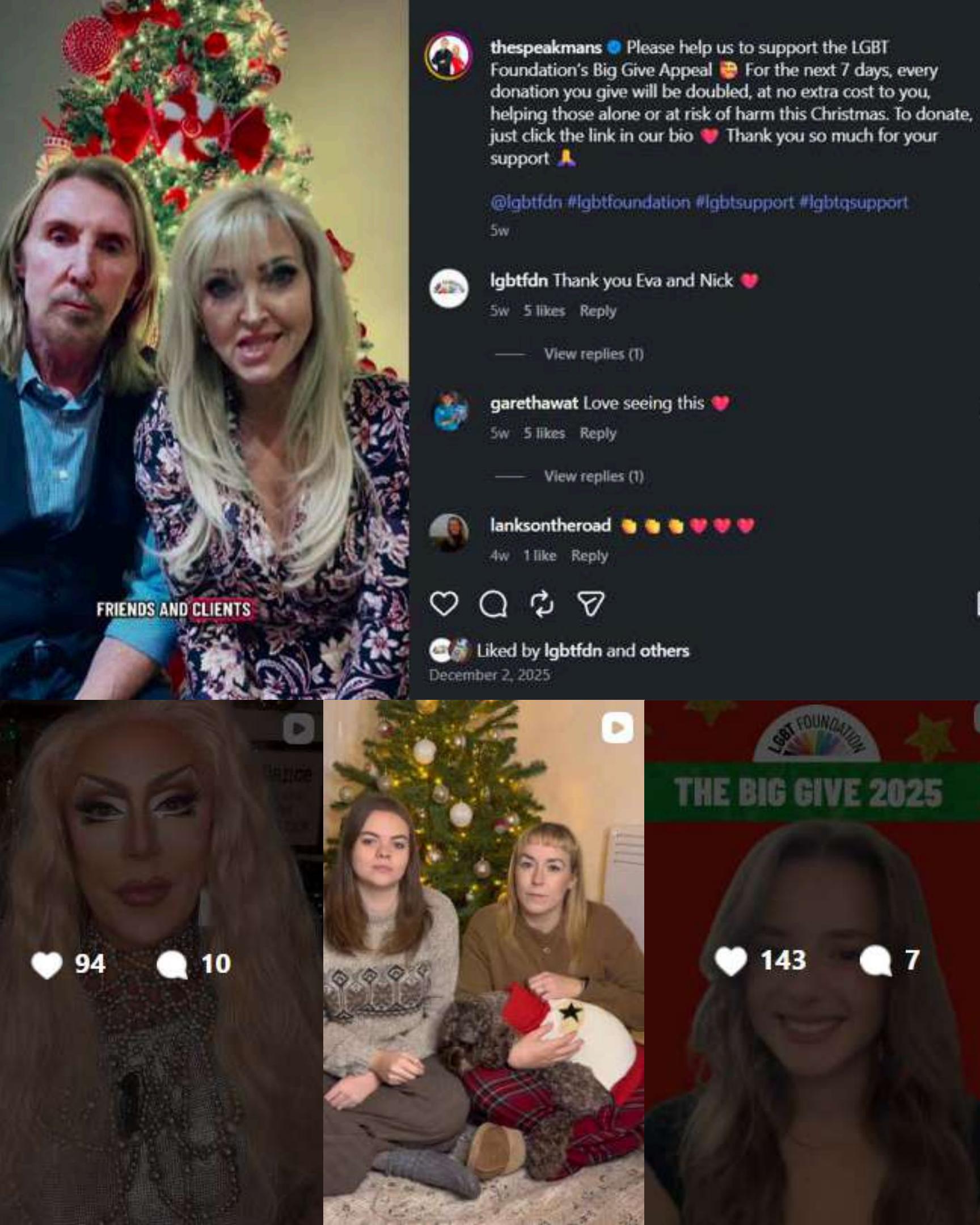
I consider myself to be

Select...

I agree to be emailed *

[Privacy policy](#)

Pledge Now



MOBILISING INFLUENCERS

On social media channels throughout the campaign we also looked to improve campaign reach through mobilising new and existing influencers and patrons. We provided individuals with a script and sharing resources and requested 'collaborator posts' to drive further engagement to our own channels.

Through the campaign we had 5 collaborator posts with influencers promoting the campaign, including one from Nick and Eva Speakman who have an Instagram following of 2 million+.

As a result, our Facebook interactions increased by 158%, follows increased by 12% and link clicks increased by 24%. It is worth noting, however, that this increased reach and engagement didn't bring in new supporters to the degree that we anticipated.

EDUCATING AUDIENCES

As a charitable cause, LGBTQ+ rights is not the most popular or immediately motivating for general audiences. Usually our supporters are part of the LGBTQ+ community themselves or family/friends of LGBTQ+ people.

As a result we saw the need, with this appeal, to clearly educate our audiences on the specific issues that face the LGBTQ+ community over the holiday period and why our work is needed.

Our campaign video is a great example of how we sought to achieve this, sharing personal and tangible experiences of isolation and loneliness which can connect with everyone and then the personal feelings of positivity created by our work.

We featured one of our patrons, Sir Ian McKellen, utilising his authority as a popular figure to appeal to more general audiences and educate about our cause.



Hi there,

I hope you have joyful celebrations planned with friends and family this festive season.

For many within our communities however, the holidays are a hard time. Family gatherings aren't always safe, and many people are left spending this time alone.

That's why LGBT Foundation's services are so vital; over the festive period their [helpline](#) will be open - offering a listening ear and a friendly voice. Their festive feast will provide a warm meal, a safe space and a chosen family for those in the community who would otherwise be on their own.

Hi there,

There's 48 hours left in our biggest ever fundraising appeal and we only need to raise £709 more to hit our target!

Will you help us?

Your support will allow us to deliver our Festive Feast this year, providing a safe warm space, a hot meal and chosen family at a time when so many in our communities feel alone.

Please help us get there

An attendee of one of our community-building events told me:

"Moving to a new city was an isolating experience. I struggled to find gay spaces which didn't centre around alcohol. Finding the LGBT Foundation community café has given me a confidence. I've met such wonderful people who make the difficult days brighter. The staff and volunteers are so welcoming."

If we reach our campaign goal, we'll also be able to develop and share a free educational resource for LGBTQ+ people and their families this December, helping them to navigate difficult conversations when going home for the holidays and promoting inclusive togetherness. With you by our side, we can make a real difference.

Pledge your support

EMOTIVE APPEALS

Following immediately from educating our audience, we used emotive and urgent language within our appeal asks. This was something we had taken as a learning from previous campaigns where our audience responded best to very direct appeal language, with a stress on being time-bound/urgency.

As a result, all of our appeal asks featured this style of language; we shared the effect of match-funding, stressed how our services save lives and emphasised the time-bound nature of the appeal at key points (launch, 24 hours in, 48 hours to go), which saw spikes in donations at those times.

Our final appeal email (left) is a good example of this, utilising time-bound urgency, an achievable target of £709 and a positive story about our work. This email correlated with a spike in donations and hitting our target.

TRANSPARENCY

Communicating with supporters throughout the campaign was another key to success for us. Across social media, email updates and utilising the Big Give platform 'updates' feature we kept our audiences and supporters informed about the progress of the campaign.

We were able to further engage supporters by sending each of them a personalised thank you email following their donation, to which we got a number of positive replies.

One supporter commented that the email '**made me feel great to donate.**'

We hope that being able to share news of a successful campaign with supporters will make them more engaged with future appeals. We updated donors when we reached our target and included the [educational guide](#) around navigating difficult conversations over the holidays as a tangible product of the campaign.

December 3, 2025

Wow! We're over half way - thank you so much for your generosity, care and solidarity. It really is making us ho-ho-hopeful!

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS: SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ PEOPLE OVER THE FESTIVE SEASON

Published: 10 December 2025

Last updated: 22 December 2025



For many LGBTQ+ people, the holidays can be hard. Family gatherings aren't always safe, and many people are left spending the holidays alone.

Through our Big Give Appeal 2025, donations from our supporters helped us to create this guide for LGBTQ+ people who may be finding it difficult to navigate this time of year, and their relatives, friends and allies who can make a difference through small, meaningful actions. You too can give the gift of hope and joy for years to come, by [setting up a regular gift today](#) or using our [free will writing service](#).

ADVICE FOR RELATIVES,
FRIENDS & ALLIES

SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+
PEOPLE

↓ JUMP TO RESOURCES

THE RESULTS...

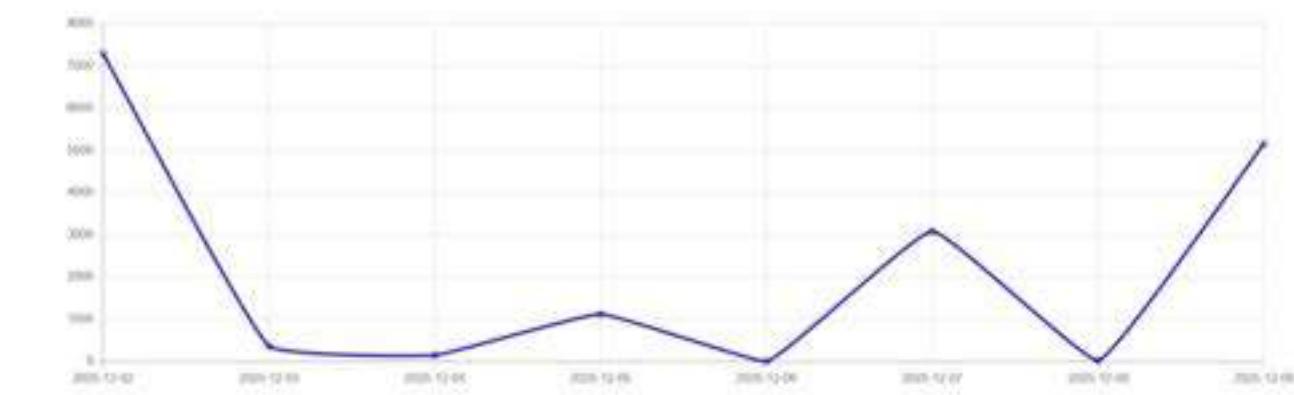
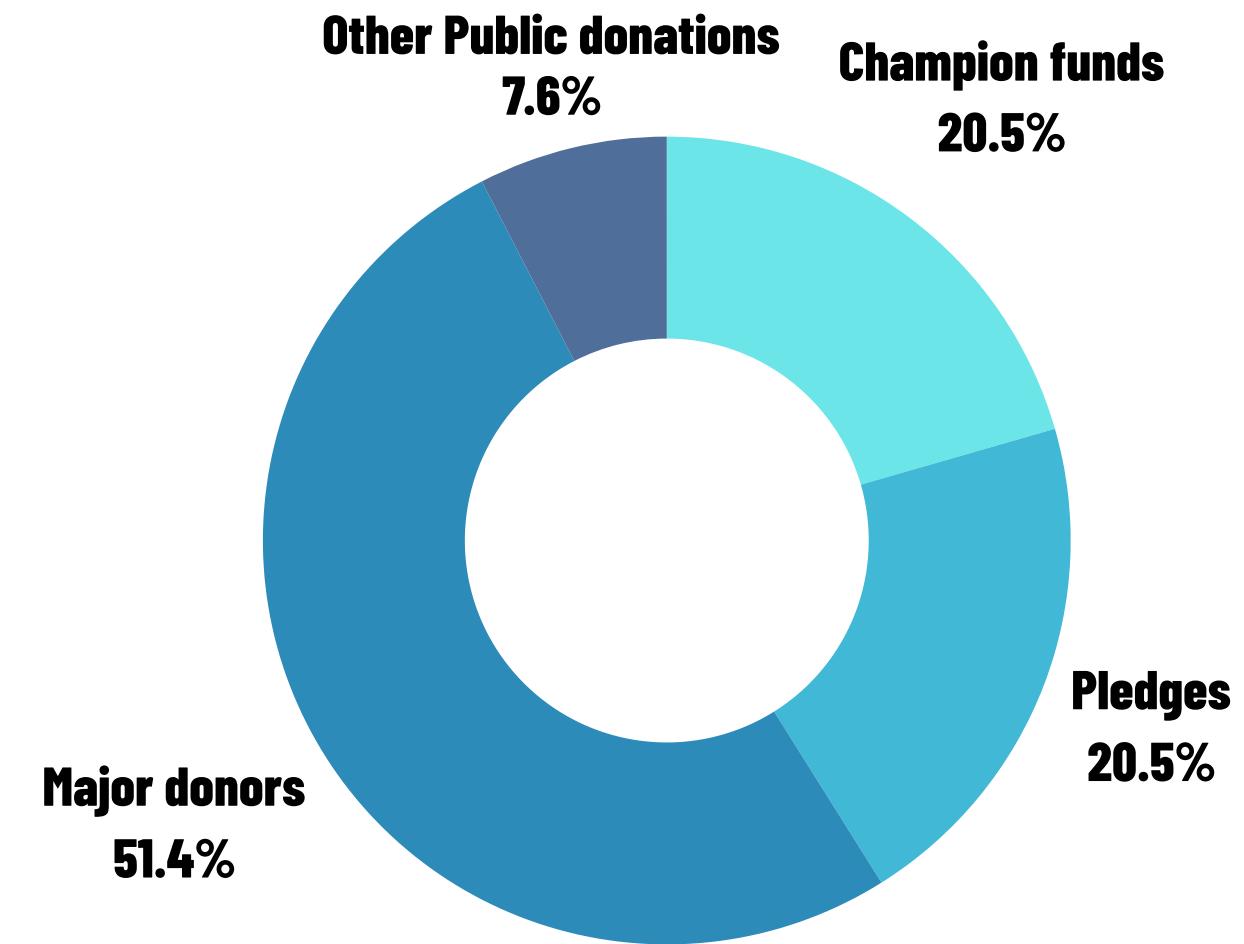
HITTING TARGETS

2025 marked our most successful ever Big Give fundraising appeal. Here's some of our achievements:

- Planning effectively to secure £6,000 in pledges, create campaign content in advance, maximise team expertise and informing audiences about the campaign ahead of the launch date.
- Working with 5 influencers and our patron, Sir Ian McKellen, to boost reach and attract new supporters.
- Centering the authentic experience of service users, staff and volunteers in our campaign target.
- Spreading awareness around the support available for LGBTQ+ people over the holidays and producing an educational resource.
- Attract one new high-level donor and mobilising an existing major donor to support the appeal.
- Reaching, and ultimately exceeding our £24,000 campaign target, raising a total of £29,211 - our biggest ever appeal amount by far!
- Sending personalised thank you emails to each donor.

The successes of this campaign boosted our motivation in a particularly difficult year for the LGBTQ+ community.

WE RAISED £29,211!



KEY LEARNINGS



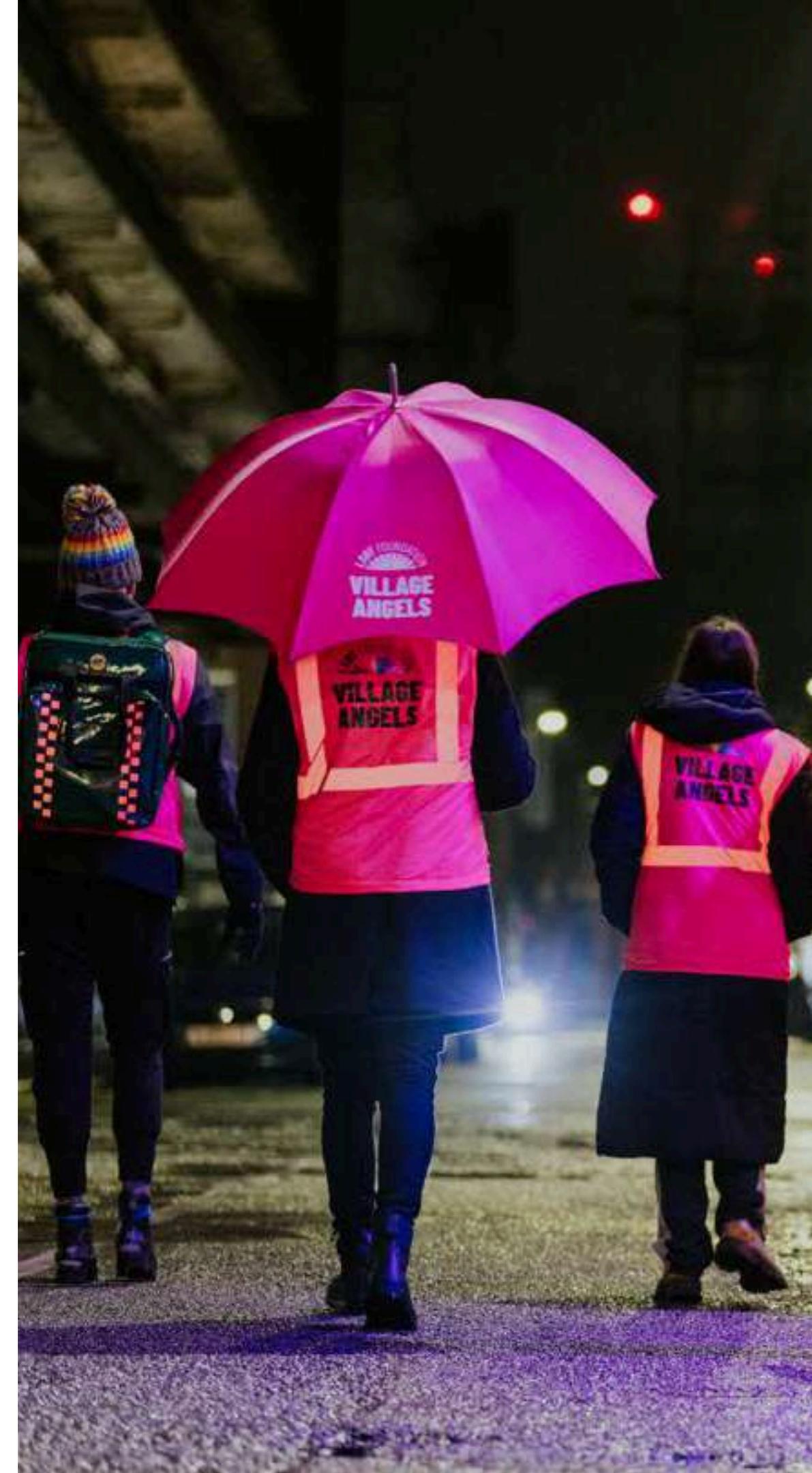
- **An email-first approach:** Email continues to be one of the most effective ways to motivate supporters; even influencers with a large following didn't see the conversion to donations that we expected of their audiences on social media platforms.
- **Planning = success:** Preparing the campaign narrative ahead of time and informing supporters with good notice is essential.
 - Larger donations were a key reason behind the success of our campaign. Planning support from major donors in advance allowed us to control the flow of the campaign, motivating our audience to give at key points.
- **Urgency is key:** The time-bound nature of the Big Give appeal and informing audiences of the importance of match-funding motivates giving. Our most successful messaging was the most urgent and time-bound, but still included an authentic service-user story.
- **Team work makes the dream work:** Making the appeal as collaborative as possible from the start drove internal support and sharing. We also viewed our donors as part of this team, keeping them informed about the campaign which helped to build support and trust.

OUR IMPACT (SO FAR)

Thanks to the generous support of our corporate pledgers, champion funder (The Julia Rausing Trust) and everyone who donated to our Big Give appeal, we've been able to continue supporting LGBTQ+ people over December and January.

So far, the funds raised through our Big Give appeal have helped us to:

- Host our annual Festive Feast for service users and volunteers. We welcomed 40 people on Friday 19th December for hot food, fun and community.
- Respond to over 200 helpline inquiries, supporting on issues such as asylum seeking, coming out, mental health and homelessness.
- Deliver life-saving care: every Friday and Saturday night, our community safety Village Angels volunteers were looking after LGBTQ+ people in Manchester's Gay Village. Over the holiday period one of the Angels delivered life-saving CPR to a member of the public.
- Produce an educational '[going home for the holidays guide](#)' to support LGBTQ+ people and their families in navigating difficult conversations. This was sent to all supporters and newsletter subscribers after we hit our campaign goal and, so far, has been accessed over 1300 times.





THANK YOU

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who supported our Big Give Christmas Challenge, including The Julia Rausing Trust, all of our donors and corporate supporters and The Big Give, who gave us the platform and tools to succeed.

Thanks to all of you, we'll be spreading hope and joy for so many LGBTQ+ people in 2026.



BigGive