

As we approach the festive season, this installation gives a doorstep welcome to our LGBTQIA+ community. With seasonal wreaths designed by METRO Charity, their service users and volunteers. Each wreath explores different facets of LGBTQIA+ experiences and identities, reflecting on some of the challenges that can be faced during the festive season, but also celebrating activism and queer joy! These 11 wreaths are linked to the colours of the Pride Progress flag. Each of the colours represent the following meanings:

Red Door

HIV/AIDS has had a huge impact on the LGBTQIA+ communities. Many lives were lost far too young, and medical responses to the virus, in the 1980s and 1990s, were initially slow and under-funded. This was largely because the virus was seen as a 'gay disease' and stigma about queer people meant there was not interest in treating it. This door pays tribute to the many activist campaigns and medical breakthroughs which mean that people living with HIV today can have long and healthy lives. People on active treatment for HIV can have a viral load so low that it is undetectable, and therefore: untransmissible. Undetectable = Untransmissible, or U=U, is a huge medical breakthrough. It means people with HIV can have unprotected sex without passing the virus on. It means HIV positive people can become parents of HIV negative children. There is also a medication called PrEP which can be taken preventatively, so that a person without HIV would not become HIV positive even if they were exposed to the virus. A lot of stigma still remains, and a lot of people don't know about U=U or PrEP. METRO Charity supports people living with HIV, from LGBTQIA+ peer support groups to family services.

Orange Door

The orange door reflects METRO's youth services, which the charity has been running for over 40 years. Young LGBTQIA+ people face difficulties which their straight peers do not - like increased bullying, and sometimes having to hide big parts of themselves at home. METRO's youth groups have always been a safe space where young queer people can be themselves, relax with peers, and have support for their health and wellbeing. The charity often runs arts and crafts

activities, including zine making, textile art, and much more. This wreath shows some of the activist spirit and resilience of the young people METRO supports.

Yellow door

The yellow door represents intersex pride. Intersex people are born with sexual characteristics which don't fit clearly into the either/or gender binary of male and female. About 1.7% of people are intersex.

The intersex pride flag is yellow, with a purple circle. The colours were chosen as gender-neutral, while the circle represents wholeness, as intersex people are complete and whole as they are.

Intersex people face unique challenges, sometimes from the moment they are born. In the United Kingdom, a baby's sex is registered at birth as either male or female. There is not an option to register a baby as intersex. As such: doctors and parents are forced to make their best guess, sometimes forcing people into unnecessary categories, and sometimes even having medically unnecessary 'gender affirming' operations when they are too young to decide for themselves.

Green Door

The green door represents the mental health services that METRO runs for LGBTQIA+ adults and young people. Christmas can be a difficult time for some LGBTQIA+ people, so this wreath is full of messages of support, and tips for allies to help support queer friends and family at Christmas - and the rest of the year. Allies can have a huge role in setting the tone and making people feel welcome, but sometimes it can be tricky to know how to get things right. Have a read through METRO's ally tips and see what you can do, you can find more here: metrocharity.org.uk/sparkle-ally.

Blue Door

The blue door is all about having a good time this festive season, and playing safe! METRO runs sexual health services in London, including free condoms and lube, STI testing, sexual health advice, and more! Everyone who is sexually active should make sure they test regularly to take control of their sexual health. It's important to know your status to stay healthy, and make sure you don't pass anything on. The festive season has a lot of parties: have fun, and stay safe!

Purple door

The purple door represents the Community services that METRO runs. Everyone is different, and Christmas looks different for everyone: some people celebrate religiously, some just enjoy getting together with family and friends, some people have created their own traditions, have different celebrations around this time of year, or don't celebrate anything at all. METRO's slogan is 'embrace difference'. It's by embracing people's differences that the charity can reach and support marginalised communities where they are, and provide tailored services.

Brown Door

The Progress Pride Flag includes black and brown stripes to explicitly include Black and Global Majority people in the LGBTQIA+ community. Black and Global Majority people who are also queer will experience marginalisation both because of racism and because of homophobia, biphobia or transphobia. Allyship is an important part of how we move forward together. White queer people have a lot of work to do in dismantling racism. This includes learning independently, listening to people of colour, boosting the voices of People of Colour within our communities, and taking action when something isn't right. This wreath incorporates a collection of pin badges with symbols of Black and queer solidarity.

Black Door

The black door here represents remembrance and the candle represents hope. Christmas can be a time when we remember people we have lost, or people who can't be with us now. LGBTQIA+ communities have lost a lot of people because of stigma, prejudice, and other hardships. Christmas is a time to reflect, and take stock of the year, and fondly remember those we are missing. Lighting a candle is one of the most universal ways to mark a person we have lost. It's also a way to create hope. "It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness."

White door

The white door represents the cold wintry weather, and being out in the cold. LGBTQIA+ young people are more likely to experience homelessness than their straight peers, because of rejection by their families. Far too many LGBTQIA+ people have strained relationships with their families because of homophobia, transphobia or biphobia. This wreath is less festive, because some LGBTQIA+ people find the festive season difficult.

Light Blue door

Light blue, white and pink are the colours of the Trans Pride flag. This door represents trans pride and trans inclusion. One way to help include trans and non-binary people is to tell people your pronouns when you introduce yourself, always ask what someone's pronouns are, and make sure to use them! Pronouns are words like 'he', 'she', or 'they'. By using the right pronouns for people, you let them know that you respect their gender identity, and you understand that identity is more complicated and personal than just what someone looks like.

It can sometimes take a little getting used to if someone uses different pronouns to what you're used to, but it's always worth putting in the effort. If you make a mistake just apologise quickly and move on - and make sure to use the right pronouns next time.

Pink Door

The pink triangle is a symbol of LGBTQIA+ activism, and celebrates the wins that the queer community has achieved over the past decades. Originally pink triangles were a symbol that gay and bisexual men had to wear in Nazi Germany, but the symbol was reclaimed by the activist LGBTQIA+ community, and has been part of the visual language of queer activism for decades. Many queer people alive today have experienced discrimination which was once legal and is not anymore. The 2010 Equality Act means that it is not legal to discriminate against a person because of their sexuality, and the 2013 Equal Marriage Act means LGBTQIA+ people's relationships can have equal legal status to straight people's. We owe these milestones to the decades of activism that it took to create these changes. The rainbow 50 love locks are borrowed from another piece from 2017, which celebrated the 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality. There is still more work to be done, and this door looks forward to the future too: for example equal rights in healthcare and education, especially for trans and non-binary people, young people, and trans and non-binary young people.

More about METRO Charity

METRO is an equality, diversity and inclusion charity that runs health, community and youth services across London and the south-east. The charity started in 1984 as the Greenwich Lesbian and Gay Centre. Today METRO runs health and wellbeing services, supporting people experiencing issues around sexuality, gender, equality, diversity or identity. METRO does this by working across five areas: [Youth](#), [Mental health & wellbeing](#), [Sexual health](#), [HIV](#), and [Community](#).

Please consider making a donation to support the work METRO does: metrocharity.org.uk/sparkle.