Proposed GAVS and METRO Charity Merger FAQs

***Why is GAVS considering a merger?***

We know that with our current available resources and income that GAVS faces closure in 2018. A merger is the most effective way to improve the sustainability of GAVS’ services.

 ***How will the merger solve GAVS’ financial difficulties?***

Being part of a larger organisation provides more stability and ability to bid for, and hold, larger contracts. Together we would have more capacity to secure further income to sustain GAVS’ services. Stability allows us to be more innovative in our project proposals. A merger will also reduce a number of our overhead costs.

 ***How will GAVS’ ethos be perpetuated in the proposed merger?***

GAVS’ services will continue as a distinct part of the METRO family of services, addressing the needs, and channelling the voice, of the voluntary, community and faith sector in the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Our work will continue to be led by you – our Members. The merger will also allow GAVS to expand our services outside the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

***How will the independence of GAVS’ functions be secured in the proposed merged organisation?***

There is great synergy between GAVS and METRO, by bringing our expertise together we can provide even better services that are both more innovative and more attractive to potential funders.

However, we also recognise that some GAVS’ functions need to continue to be independent. For example discussions you might have with us around development areas for your organisation or funding bids you are preparing. This sensitive information would only be shared within the GAVS team, as required, to ensure you get the best support. In the same way that METRO’s frontline services across their sexual health, community, mental health, youth and HIV domains maintain appropriate confidentially with their service users.

GAVS will continue to address your needs and channel your voice. Our work will continue to be led by you – our Members. METRO’s frontline delivery voice will continue to be included in our work in the same way as it is now, without any special or preferential treatment.

GAVS will also maintain a separate Management Committee, which will represent the voluntary sector in Greenwich.

***How will GAVS’ identity be upheld in the merger?***

GAVS’ services will continue as a distinct part of the METRO family of services. METRO has merged successfully with other organisations already. Most recently, in 2016, they merged with Positive Parenting and Children (PPC). PPC have integrated seamlessly into the METRO family, whilst continuing to provide vital support to families and young people affected by HIV across London.

Additionally, GAVS within METRO will be known as METRO GAVS.

***How will any conflict of interest be dealt with?***

Our Chief Executive, Naomi Goldberg, and METRO’s CEO, Dr Greg Ussher, have spent a great deal of time looking at this issue and developing a comprehensive approach captured in policy and procedures to manage any potential conflicts of interest.

Any privileged information shared with GAVS will not be shared with the rest of the METRO team and only as appropriate with other members of the GAVS team beyond our Chief Executive. There will be firewalls in place to ensure information is kept separate, this will include segregating the merged IT infrastructure.

Sensitive information you share with us would only be shared within the GAVS team, as required, to ensure you get the best support. In the same way that METRO’s frontline services across their sexual health, community, mental health, youth and HIV domains maintain appropriate confidentially with their service users.

***What will change in terms of the services that GAVS provides?***

There will be no changes to the range of services that GAVS provides as a result of the merger. However, our services are of course still subject to continued funding.

***Why does METRO want to merge with GAVS?***

GAVS approached METRO because we identified a great deal of synergy in our work and because of their outstanding reputation in the borough and beyond. METRO agreed that the work of our two charities aligned, and that by bringing together our expertise we can provide even better services that are both more innovative and more attractive to potential funders.

***What is the point of the merger if there will not be any funding from the Royal Borough of Greenwich for CVS functions after April 2019?***

We do not know if the Council will fund CVS functions after April 2019. What we do know is that for our members GAVS needs to have a solid foundation if it is to be competitive whatever the funding environment in 2 years’ time.

Being part of a larger organisation provides more stability and ability to hold larger contracts. Together we would have more capacity to secure further income to sustain GAVS’ services. Stability allows us to be more innovative in our project proposals. A merger will also reduce a number of our overheads, making us more cost-efficient to run.

***Will GAVS Trustees get a place on the METRO Board?***

Yes. There will be two places on the METRO Board for Trustees from the current GAVS Board. The GAVS management committee will nominate these two people, who will then proceed through the usual recruitment process for METRO Trustees.

***How will GAVS functions be governed/managed within the proposed merged organisation?***

GAVS services will have a Management Committee initially consisting of the current elected GAVS Trustees. In future, the Management Committee will be elected from, and by, the METRO GAVS Membership at an annual meeting. GAVS Members will automatically become Associate Members of METRO GAVS keeping the same privileges as you currently enjoy. Your details will stay within the GAVS section of METRO and not made available to the wider organisation. An organisation may request not to transfer their membership.

There will be two places on the METRO Board reserved for Members of the GAVS Management Committee. The Board will have ultimate responsibility for the governance of the proposed merged organisation.

 ***How will the voice of the voluntary sector be heard in the proposed merged organisation?***

GAVS’ services will continue as a distinct part of the METRO family of services, addressing the needs and channelling the voice of the voluntary, community and faith sector in the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Our work will continue to be led by you – our Members.

In addition to the governance arrangements in the FAQ above we will hold an Annual Meeting of Associate Members; a flagship event similar to the current GAVS AGM alongside all of our existing ways of understanding your needs and channelling the voice of the sector.

***Where will GAVS be based?***

METRO is currently considering moving their Greenwich head office into the Equitable House building where GAVS is now based. Should this move go ahead GAVS would move down one floor in the same building. If this move does not go ahead GAVS will remain in their current office until METRO identifies another option for their head office move. In all situations GAVS will remain in the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

***Will the personal touch and relationships we have established with GAVS be maintained?***

Yes. The overwhelming majority of the GAVS team would have no change to their role as part of the proposed merger. They will continue to provide the same excellent support to our Members.

***Will GAVS expand as a result of the proposed merger?***

Possibly. By bringing our expertise together we can provide even better services that are both more innovative and more attractive to potential funders. We hope that this dynamic approach will be something that other boroughs in London might look to as a sustainable model for delivering infrastructure support.

***Will we still receive service if our values clash with those of the merged organisation?***

GAVS would become part of a family of METRO services. METRO is an equality and diversity charity and strongly believes in embracing difference with a focus on sexuality, gender, equality, diversity and identity. These values already align with how GAVS delivers its services.

As is currently the case, Members are all required to fulfil their legal duty around equality and diversity under the law.

***Who are METRO?***

METRO is a leading equality and diversity charity, providing health, community and youth services across London and the South East, with national and international projects. METRO works with anyone experiencing issues around sexuality, gender, equality, diversity and identity across their five domains: Sexual & Reproductive Health, Community, Mental Health & Wellbeing, Youth and HIV.

METRO was established in Greenwich in 1984 and has a long history with the royal borough. Greenwich is still very much their home, but they have continued to bring more of the METRO offer into their other key areas of operation, which as well as many other London boroughs also include Kent, Medway and Essex.

Their continuing commitment to community participation, involvement and engagement - harnessing the power of community organising, community voice and volunteering - has allowed for an expansion in the work they do supporting organisations and groups. This has included delivering infrastructure work with GAVS.

The METRO website is https://www.metrocentreonline.org/