



LGBTQIA+ VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR WE'RE STILL HERE! BLACKPOOL

‘We’re Still Here!’ Blackpool

Be part of creating Blackpool’s first-ever LGBTQIA+ digital archive

We’re Still Here! is delivered by Abingdon Studios in partnership with:

- Showtown
- Grundy Art Gallery
- Blackpool Council
- You

This is History in the Making

Blackpool has one of the largest and infamous LGBTQIA+ communities in the North — but our stories, images, costumes, nightlife, activism, art, and everyday lives have never been properly archived.

Until now.

We’re Still Here Blackpool! is creating the town’s **first dedicated LGBTQIA+ digital archive**, collecting photographs, oral histories, memorabilia and community stories from the 1950’s to today.

We are recruiting **6 volunteers** to help us uncover, document and celebrate this hidden history, taking part in research, gathering stories from the community and attending our fabulous programme of events.

This is a chance to help discover, preserve and protect stories that have never been recorded before. To celebrate the archive we develop, we will create two major exhibitions that connect Blackpool’s LGBTQIA+ heritage with national archives and collections. These will go on display Feb - Jul 2027 in Showtown and Grundy Art Gallery.



What is the Role?

The project's volunteers are essential to the project's development, and is also an opportunity for you to develop skills in culture, heritage and community engagement.

You'll be:

- A community connector
- A story-seeker
- A heritage advocate
- A hoarder of engaging material!.

You'll work alongside our project team including our Community Archivist and Community Heritage Champions, to uncover, preserve and present stories, images and other materials that deserve to be protected for generations to come.

What You'll Be Doing

Most of the project's activities will take place in Blackpool City Centre. We want this role to be tailored to your interests, so you can mostly choose your own activity based on your own passions and goals.

Some examples of what you could be doing are:

1. Uncovering Community Stories

- Spreading the word about the project within the community and encouraging people to get involved
- Encouraging people to share stories, photographs, fandom, costumes, flyers, posters and memories at events
- Facilitate the collecting of oral histories from members of the community
- Taking part in 5 community "History Club" sessions, supporting our team with welcoming attendees

This is about storytelling as much as preservation.

2. Creating Archive Content

- Contributing to shaping how the archive feels, looks and speaks to visitors
- Researching Blackpool's queer past; identifying LGBTQIA+ material in local news archives and similar treasure troves of heritage materials
- Helping to catalogue and digitise archival materials in the new digital archive

You'll help ensure the archive reflects lived experience - in community language, not institutional language.



3. Supporting Events & Exhibitions

- Taking part in the Exhibition Advisory Panel, contributing to how we frame the interpretation of the exhibition through an LGBTQIA+ lens
- Supporting 8 public heritage events, our 2 major exhibitions, and our archive launch by:
 - Providing a friendly face to attendees, giving a great first impression and making every visitor feel welcome
 - Answering visitors' questions and providing information about the activity
 - Checking tickets where applicable
 - Keeping note of how many visitors attend the events
 - Getting feedback from visitors at the events

You'll help bring history into public view - proudly, visibly, and with care.

Training & Opportunities

This role aims to develop meaningful, practical experience in heritage and cultural practice.

We want all our volunteers to feel welcome and to have a positive experience when volunteering with We're Still Here! volunteers will therefore:

- Be provided with the necessary induction, training, equipment and reasonable adjustments to do this role well and safely
- Be offered expenses to cover agreed travel costs between home and place of volunteering.

You'll gain CV applicable experience in:

- Public facing work in the creative heritage sector
- Oral history gathering and presentation
- Research skills
- Developing exhibitions with galleries and museums
- Heritage sector work
- Training in digitisation, cataloguing and public speaking and more to suit your interests



You can expect:

- Us to write you a personalised reference letter to help with future opportunities
- To attend exclusive previews of shows
- To have the chance to lead your own tour of the exhibitions
- Dedicated time to explore Blackpool's queer past
- Training in gallery interpretation, digitisation, cataloguing and public speaking skills

You'll also have opportunities to:

- Visit other queer heritage projects across the country
- Build new peer and professional networks
- Discover more about your community's past and present
- Make a difference to our community

Commitment

This is a **volunteer opportunity** not a salaried job.

The project runs March 2026 - July 2027, with flexible time commitment that increases around events and exhibitions.

Who We're Looking For

No formal heritage, gallery, or museum experience is required. Community knowledge is as valuable as formal training.

You should be:

- Connected to Blackpool's LGBTQIA+ communities, with an understanding of intersectionality of lived experience
- Keen to meet and welcome new people into the project's activities
- Curious about local history
- Interested in gaining experience in archive and research skills
- Interested in gaining experience working in heritage, galleries and museums
- Passionate about protecting queer culture

Skills and knowledge you will need:

- An understanding of LGBTQIA+ community sensitivities around collecting and presenting our stories
- Ability to work in a small team (with support and direction provided)
- Ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds
- Comfortable communicating with new people at in person events regularly
- To be reliable when committing your time to activities



We Particularly Welcome Applications from:

- Working class LGBTQIA+ people
- Disabled LGBTQIA+ people
- Older LGBTQIA+ people
- Younger LGBTQIA+ people
- QTPOC people

We recognise breaking into arts and heritage sectors can have systemic barriers for people from these communities and want to provide training and skills development opportunities to help more people get into the sector.

Why This Matters

Moments in LGBTQIA+ history are moving out of living memory.

Photographs are fading. Stories are at risk of being lost. Costumes, posters and flyers are tucked away in drawers.

This project is about uncovering them - together.

You won't just support a project. You will create a unique heritage archive that ensures future LGBTQIA+ generations can look back and see themselves reflected in art, community and society.

How to Apply

Please send:

- A short expression of interest telling us about you and why you're interested including:
 - Your connection to Blackpool's LGBTQIA+ community
 - What excites you about uncovering local queer heritage

Your expression of interest can be submitted in written, audio or video formats. For videos and audio these can be up to 5 minutes long, and for written formats up to 500 words.

Application deadline: 5th May

Email: wsh@abingdonstudios.co.uk

About us and our Partners



Abingdon Studios is a flagship contemporary visual arts studio and producing organisation based in the heart of Blackpool. Simply put, we believe in Artists Being Supported. Providing permanent artist studios and a public project space for testing and exhibiting new work, ABS develops and delivers ambitious independent and co-commissioned projects in partnership with galleries, museums, consortium networks and partners. We are proud to have supported 150+ artists to date.

Over 60% of our programme has prioritised LGBTQIA+ artists, creativity and development opportunities. Our projects include We're Still Here!; Work/Leisure, our artist residency and development programme; and tailored sector development support and bursaries. ABS champions high-quality, cross-artform contemporary practice, creating the conditions for artists to experiment, collaborate and reach new audiences in Blackpool and beyond.

Showtown is Blackpool's bold and brilliant, award-winning, interactive museum of fun and entertainment. Mere footsteps from the iconic tower, it shines a spotlight on the town's showbiz legacy through six lively galleries exploring everything from magic and circus to seaside holidays and dance.

The Grundy Art Gallery has been at the centre of artistic life in Blackpool for over 100 years and is now recognized as a leading contemporary visual arts venue in the northwest region with a growing national and international profile. It has been an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation for the past 8 years and holds Museums Accreditation status.

Grundy's current position has been achieved through ambitious and contextual programming, which makes the most of its beautiful exhibition spaces and the unique cultural environment and context which exists beyond the gallery walls. Grundy inspires audiences through an ambitious and varied year-round exhibitions programme that draws on the unique and invigorating context and heritage of Blackpool, for instance exploring the space between contemporary art, entertainment and popular culture.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund is the largest funder for the UK's heritage. Using money raised by National Lottery players we support projects that connect people and communities to heritage. Our vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. From historic buildings, our industrial legacy and the natural environment, to collections, traditions, stories and more. Heritage can be anything from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations. We believe in the power of heritage to ignite the imagination, offer joy and inspiration, and to build pride in place and connection to the past.