



From the editor



As we put this issue together, lockdown had largely lifted, shops reopened and pubs welcomed us back with open arms. Things were, apparently, "getting back to normal" But what does "normal" even mean?

If normality is what is "standard, usual, typical or expected" I found myself looking around, questioning whether I was the only one who could see that life is still far from that. I wondered, if my anxieties and frustrations still exist, does that make me abnormal? And who decides what "normal" is?

Normal can be such a damaging word. It suggests there's a status quo we're meant to fall in line with. It can mean that toxic behaviours such as bigotry and misogyny are to be expected, rather than acted against and challenged. It can make us feel like we are not acceptable if our body shape, skin type or hair texture isn't the same as everyone else's. It can stop us from looking after our mental health, being comfortable in our individuality and questioning the world around us. Normal is overrated.

Take our cover shoot with Clara Amfo, our first done IRL in months. Face masks, social distancing and a minimal crew made it far from "normal" but the results? Beautiful. Clara herself proved the power of breaking routine during her landmark radio show in June, which saw her pause "business as usual" to lead a powerful discussion about racism. "It's important for all of us to take

accountability for how we move through the world," she says on page 68.

But sometimes doing the unexpected, breaking the mould and making change, seems impossible. Can one person really redefine what "normal" is? The activists on page 74 prove the answer is most definitely "yes" From clapping at 8pm every Thursday to calling out discrimination and making Pride more accessible, these game-changers should inspire us all.

So if the pressure to return to "normal" in very abnormal times can feel overwhelming and confusing, you're not alone. Only you can define what your new normal looks like and maybe, just maybe, you can shape it to be even better than what came before.

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