



Sorrel Atkinson, Chair of the Trustees of FFLAG

Welcome to the second edition of our new newsletter. We received some great reactions to the first one, so we know people found it interesting. If you have any news or stories you would like to include in future newsletters please send them in - we are keen to have as much input, and as many articles, as possible.

If you read the last newsletter, you will have seen all about our 25th Anniversary conference "Reaching for the Rainbow" and just what a great success that was. The day after the Conference we met with representatives from parents' groups all across the country and asked them "What can we do, as FFLAG, to help you be more effective?"

The first output from that is this newsletter - as almost every group requested we relaunch it. The second thing requested was that we provided output from the FFLAG trustees' meeting. As a result, in this edition you will find a summary of what we have been talking about and planning. The third thing was that we provided help for running telephone advice help lines. We have been looking at how best to do that and right now we are investigating how the latest telephony and internet systems are improving the way helplines are managed. In particular, we want to see if we can offer a greatly expanded service, using more volunteers, and yet avoiding people having to sit on the end of the phone on the off chance someone calls. More about that in future newsletters.

As we head into the summertime, all around the country LGBT+ groups are getting together to organise Pride events in many towns and cities. As FFLAG we want to have a presence in many of those and so in the newsletter you will find dates for those we plan to attend. Anyone who wants to join us, and march with us in the parade, or help staff our stall, is more than welcome and we give details on how you can get involved.

So, albeit somewhat in advance, "Happy Pride" and hope to see you soon.

The 2019 Ireland & UK LGBT+ Youth Workers' Conference

FFLAG was invited to attend the Youth Workers' Conference organised by the Proud Trust in Manchester at the beginning of February. Bruce Kent, one of our trustees, went along and here is his report.

It was a privilege for me to attend this inspirational and challenging conference on behalf of FFLAG. Over 170 youth workers from as far apart as Carlow to Cork and from Bradford to Bristol met in the city's university to support each other and celebrate the successes won so far, as well as to envision ourselves of the future we want to see for our young people.

The keynote lecture from Professor Liz McDermott gave us insights she has gained through her research at Lancaster University into why there are inequalities in young people's mental health, focussing on LGBT+ young people and the problems they face. She spoke about the

new challenges young people are facing in today's "contrary" and "precarious" times of a divided society, homelessness, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, vicious anti-trans lobbying in the media and shockingly high suicide rates among LGBT+ young people. She has conducted studies investigating suicide, self-harm and emotional distress and she stressed in her talk the importance of family acceptance of LGBT+ young people for their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

The day's programme was packed with exciting smaller groups that we could choose to attend. Long gone are the days when a seminar meant 45 minutes of listening to one speaker drone endlessly on, or to experience death by PowerPoint. These sessions were facilitated by and for people who know how to connect with young minds and who value two-way communication and the sharing of ideas and wisdom. They understand how to engage, entertain and stimulate (even after a full lunch) and no one is allowed to melt into the background.



We all participated actively by such things as sharing in small groups or reporting back to the full group, sticking up our ideas on Post-It notes, waving our hands about, voting for options and emotion-centred interactive activities.

It was clear, as the day progressed, that it was about learning from one another and genuinely wanting to adopt practices that work. I was humbled by the passion and commitment of these people to serve and protect their young charges. They care deeply for them and whether in a paid or voluntary position, they are going above and beyond in giving of themselves. So it was good that, more than once, wise words were spoken by those who have learned themselves that they are in it for the long haul and must protect their own health and wellbeing to avoid burnout themselves.

Professor McDermott had shared earlier in the day that her research showed that young LGBT+ people themselves had rated support from their youth groups as far and away more helpful than any other source (over 76%). We heard of young trans people who had gone with trepidation to their GP for help and had been told, "You just need to get regular exercise", or even, "What you need is a better, more healthy diet". These are the people that they see as the gatekeepers to their getting the help they need to be free to be the people they really are. So, it can be devastating for them and it's the youth workers who are picking up the pieces, getting them support for their mental wellbeing while assuring them that it's society that is out of kilter, not them.

I was able to have a table where we could display our booklets, now including our current range that is specifically for trans youngsters and their families. These can all be downloaded free from the FFLAG website. <https://www.fflag.org.uk>. It was personally gratifying to meet up with old friends as well as being able to make new ones. Of particular mention was meeting up with Henry Pountney of Off The Record, Bristol. Henry leads a youth group called Freedom Youth in Bristol and we have recently been in collaboration with them to meet up with parents

as they drop their youngsters in for their own meeting. This appears to be very successful with new people coming along every time.

This picture is of Paul Roberts OBE (on the left) with me (Bruce Kent) before all our booklets ran out. (I was so pleased that so many of the youth workers recognised how helpful they could be to them.) Paul is Chief Executive for LGBT Consortium and is a great friend of FFLAG, giving us wonderful support over many years.

Altogether a memorable day and one which I believe gave enormous encouragement to the dedicated youth workers who were able to make it.



FFLAG volunteer recognised in the New Year's Honours list

Over the years a number of FFLAG volunteers have been officially recognised by inclusion in the Honours lists. The 2019 New Year's Honours List continued the trend when Joan Small, who among other things runs the FFLAG helpline service, was awarded the British Empire Medal. She had been nominated by her son Richard. We asked Richard to tell us why he thought his mum was so deserving – and how it felt to see the nomination accepted.



Richard and Joan Small BEM

It was a proud Son moment when my Mum, Joan Small, was awarded the British Empire Medal in the New Year Honours, having been recognised for her tireless work in supporting the LGBT+ community in the North East and nationally for over 25 years.

Throughout this period Mum has run the Parents Enquiry North East (PENE) helpline from home, hosted a parents' support group and offered one-to-one sessions, raising much needed funds through her Pride tombola stall to help keep the phone line open. She's been a regular voice at the end of FFLAG calls too, sharing her experiences and friendly ear. Over the years she's helped so many parents come to terms with their child's sexuality, helping them understand that actually it's no big deal.

She will soon be presented with her medal, and we're both excited to be attending the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace later in the year (I am lucky enough to be her plus one!), and outfits are in the planning stage as we speak.

Congratulations! And thank you Mum, or should I say "Joan Small, BEM" – a truly well-deserved accolade.

LGBT+ History Event at the Welsh Assembly

FFLAG has long been at the forefront of campaigning for the rights of our LGBT+ loved ones. So when we were invited to the Welsh Assembly we were delighted to accept the invitation and Jenny Broughton, our President, and Hilary Beynon, one of our trustees, attended.

We had our wonderful “Reaching for the Rainbow” conference in Manchester, celebrating 25 years of FFLAG, in November 2018. It seemed very appropriate that Pride Cymru should invite FFLAG to speak about our history just after we had that celebration.



Jenny Broughton and Hilary Beynon travelled to the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff and delivered a short presentation during the morning session. They looked at the early activities of support for parents of LGB children in the South Wales area, largely through the eyes of Gloria Jenkins who was a pioneer in the field.

Jenny had witnessed first-hand the start of FFLAG when, in the late 80s, she became involved with parents who wanted to support their LGB children. Jenny was until recently a Trustee of FFLAG and is still our president. As a result, she was able to talk with great knowledge about all that the organisation has done.



Jenny and Hilary outlined the current work of FFLAG in Wales. This was followed by a Q & A session, which enabled us to outline what we are trying to achieve in Cardiff. Once we had talked about the challenges LGBT+ people still face, it was agreed that there is still a need for FFLAG!

This event was an excellent opportunity to showcase FFLAG and the work that we do at such a prestigious venue.

The picture on the left shows Jenny (l) and Hilary (r) with the recently elected leader of Plaid Cymru, Adam Price.

Leyhill Prison inmates generously support FFLAG

Two FFLAG Trustees, Janet and Bruce Kent were invited to join the inmates of Leyhill Open Prison in celebrating their Pride event during the May Day bank holiday last year. They have a strong LGBT+ group which is championed by Officer David Oakley and fully endorsed by the prison authorities. Once again, the kitchens did them proud. We enjoyed coffee, and rainbow cake while chatting with the men and learning how they support one another and ensure that the prison’s zero bullying policy is enforced.

The wheels turn slowly within the prison bureaucracy.

What we did not expect was recently to receive a cheque for £91.50 that the men had raised for us on that day. This is a huge amount for them to have made considering how little they earn inside and represents a genuine sacrifice on their behalf. We are very grateful to them for their support.

Launching FFLAG Cheltenham

When Jules Tayler moved to Cheltenham she decided to set up a FFLAG group in the town. Here is how it is going but you can find out more by emailing fflagcheltenham@gmail.com

Thursday the 7th February, was to be the first time that FFLAG Cheltenham would have a visible presence in the town. The germ of the idea, starting a Parents' group in Cheltenham, was thought of last year after my move to the town from Hertfordshire. I am the mother of four children, the youngest - a daughter, came out about 12 years ago. I am very proud of her and grateful, because without her I would never have known about FFLAG, I would not have met so many wonderful people and my life would certainly not be so enriched.



I had been involved with Families Together London for some years and was very aware that there was still a need for supportive groups for parents of LGBT+ children. Having attended the FFLAG Conference last November and knowing that I would have their full backing, I was determined to start the process of launching a new FFLAG parent group.

Knowing few people in Cheltenham apart from family, I firstly had to discover what was going on re the LGBT+ community in the area and hope that I would be able to make some useful contacts. Thankfully, I

came across the LGBT Partnership Cheltenham – a community organisation made up of several groups from in and around Cheltenham. It is a network of LGBT+ and allies that work to improve and raise awareness around LGBT+ matters in the local area. I was invited to join the LGBT Partnership last October. I told them that I was hoping to start a new FFLAG group for parents and the Partnership have been wonderfully supportive and encouraging. It was important to make those initial contacts locally, as for the time being, I am the 'lone' parent!

On the 7th February, The LGBT Partnership was offered a display vehicle by the CCG and set it up in Cheltenham town centre for the day; in terms of LGBT+ visibility, the location was perfect. This was the first time that FFLAG Cheltenham was letting everyone know that we existed. Quite a few people stopped to chat and ask questions. I particularly noticed that towards the end of the day quite a number of questioning and trans young people came to talk and pick up some FFLAG booklets. Janet Kent from FFLAG kindly travelled from Bristol to be with me and this was despite the cold weather! It was lovely that she came and was able to meet members of The LGBT Partnership and see how supportive they are of having a FFLAG parent support group in Cheltenham.

Emma from The LGBT Partnership is going to show me how to use Facebook and Twitter for FFLAG – I am not a user of either, but am going to be! Being a member of a local community organisation is invaluable, as it means that there is even more of an opportunity of networking and advertising FFLAG's local existence. I



I am writing this after our first "outing". The University of Gloucestershire have an LGBT History Month event on the 23rd February in the town centre and again I shall attend and be on one of the stalls with FFLAG information etc. Have to get our name out there! WE ARE OUT!

Increasing awareness of our work among NHS staff

As the national group for parents of LGBT+ children, we work very closely with akt. akt, previously known as the Albert Kennedy Trust, is the UK's LGBT+ youth homelessness charity. We often say that the more effective FFLAG is at working with parents the less likely akt will be called upon to help with an LGBT+ young person who has become homeless because their sexuality or gender identity was not accepted at home.

In February, we were invited by the East London NHS Foundation Trust to talk about the work of akt and FFLAG. The Foundation Trust is one of the top performing Trusts in the NHS. It is one of only two NHS Trusts in London rated outstanding and is a specialist mental health and community trust serving East London, Luton and Bedfordshire. The Trust has one of the most diverse workforces in the NHS and as part of its celebration of that held an LGBT+ awareness conference.

Over 130 doctors, nurses, psychologists and supporting staff heard about the work of akt and FFLAG. Hugh Fell, who is a trustee of FFLAG and the President of akt, joined with Ken Batty who volunteers at both organisations and is a Non-Executive Director of the NHS Trust, to talk about their personal experiences. They were joined by Gabriel Barnes, a young trans man who has been an akt service user and who was able to talk about the vital work that akt does. A key part of the presentation was asking the audience to get involved. The response was tremendous and we signed up a large number of people to receive information, to volunteer, or to ask their parents to get involved.

FFLAG Bristol's Exciting weekend at LUSH

Everyone at LUSH have been such wonderful supporters of FFLAG that when Sue asked our local shop at the Mall if they would do a Charity Pot party for us, we weren't surprised that they responded with an enthusiastic "Yes!". Charity Pots are different sized containers of hand and body lotions that are promoted by the team with all profits being donated by LUSH to the charity.

So, the weekend of the 9th and 10th of February saw Sue and Bob, Caroline and Stephen, Janet and Bruce all turning up to join them, not knowing what a rewarding weekend it would turn out to be.



Before we arrived, the team had prepared a place for us to set up our booklets, fliers, banner and flags right at the front of the shop. All the staff were fully briefed about FFLAG by our own Sue with Sara and Will, the Store Manager and Trainee Manager and all shown how to promote the pots and point people to us and what FFLAG is all about. By the time the shop opened they were all fired up and ready to go.

They had a most amazing system whereby whenever anyone bought a Charity Pot, they were invited to ring a bell. At the sound of the bell, we and all the staff would release a whooping yell of delight. It was hilarious and everyone had smiles on their faces. Even people walking past the front of the shop turned to see what was going on. Children got their parents to buy the small pots just so they could ring the bell. (We did not feel bad about it because it was a lovely cream made from the best natural ingredients – as all LUSH products are – and the small pots were only £1.)



The staff were all so enthusiastic and totally on board with all we stand for. We had some inspiring conversations with them and a number of shoppers too. For us, it wouldn't have been possible to be so up-front with customers who, after all, hadn't come into the shop to support FFLAG but rather to buy LUSH products. But the Lush team were magnificent, singing our praises and directing people to go and chat with us. We heard of family upsets over LGBT+ issues and instances of homophobia and transphobia in school which were upsetting as well as some very heart-warming stories as well.



The LUSH team also made their own videos and promoted FFLAG in different ways on social media. We have never felt so valued and supported! They have now asked their head office if we can make our Charity Pot weekend an annual event and are also keen on supporting us at Bristol Pride. Wow! Not only that, they raised an incredible £545.50 for us in just those two days.



Here's part of a message from Will, sent the following day. "...Thank you so much for joining us this weekend for our FFLAG Charity Pot Party, it was such an honour to have you and the rest of your team with us on our shop floor! - We look forward to making this an annual event, please also be sure to contact us near the time for support with Bristol Pride."

And this, from Sara, "We loved having you with us! It was honestly such a career highlight for me, thanks so much for all your incredible work. So many of the team came away with beautiful moments that customers shared with them and it really felt we got the message to so many people, I really think we made a difference!"

What an amazing company that actually rewards its staff for making money for someone else and what amazing people they have attracted. We are truly overwhelmed.

JOIN FFLAG AT PRIDE IN 2019

Please let us know if you can join us at one of this year's Pride events to experience a truly memorable day.

| Date | Location | Name | Contact |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 11 May | Exeter | Pride | sarah@fflag.org.uk |
| 12 May | Cheltenham | Picnic In The Park | fflagcheltenham@gmail.com |
| 6 July | Abergavenny | Pride | hilary@fflag.org.uk |
| | London | Pride In London | events@fflag.org.uk |
| 7 July | London | UK Black Pride | hugh@fflag.org.uk |
| 13 July | Bristol | Pride | bruce@fflag.org.uk |
| 27 July | Weston-super-Mare | Pride | bruce@fflag.org.uk |
| 24 August | Cardiff | Pride Cymru | hilary@fflag.org.uk |
| TBA | TBA | Trans Pride | sarah@fflag.org.uk |

PRIDE IN LONDON - 6th July 2019

For public safety reasons, there is a limit on the number of people allowed to take part in the Parade. If you are interested in walking with us in the Pride Parade this year, please drop a line to events@fflag.org.uk putting "London Pride 2019" in the subject line and we will send you details about the arrangements for meeting when the Pride organisers have briefed us and we know how many passes we have been allocated.

UK BLACK PRIDE - 7th July 2019

Over 50% of homeless LGBT+ people under 25 years of age come from minority ethnic backgrounds. FFLAG has no trustees or volunteers from minority ethnic communities. We must change this. We intend to begin by raising awareness of our existence among minority ethnic LGBT people by having a stall at UK Black Pride in London this year. Through them we hope to reach parents who would be willing to help us support other minority ethnic parents. If you or somebody you know could help us staff our stall that day, please drop a line to hugh@fflag.org.uk.

Launch of LGBTQ+ youth club for those aged 9 – 13

We have several London-based groups who are part of the FFLAG family. One of them is the Free2B Alliance that supports LGBTQ+ young people and their parents. They recently announced a new youth club and sent us details

Free2B Alliance are delighted to announce the launch of our new junior LGBTQ+ youth club for 9-13 years olds: **Gapsters N2T** launches on Friday 1st March. The club will run every Friday from 4 - 5:30pm in the Clapham Junction area. As with our main club The Gap, we do not advertise the address to safeguard the group.



Due to the age range, parental consent is mandatory for young people to be able to join.

The youth club is being launched in direct response to a growing need from families and professionals to provide a safe space for this age range. We also undertook an extensive survey with our existing youth club members (aged 13-19) and 86% were in favour of our junior group proposal with 78% stating it would have directly benefited them to have had such a group.

“If I had this resource at that age, I would have felt a lot less alienated and ‘different’ in my day to day life and would have felt more comfortable being myself around others and being open about who I am without fear of persecution”

“I was questioning my sexuality around this age period and having a group like Gap would have helped a lot of my insecurities at the time.”

“I had nothing like Gap growing up and therefore felt alone and was not able to meet others and get the support I needed to come out as gay and trans...The younger people get support the more likely to prevent mental ill-health and increase their confidence and family/social life”.

Free2B Alliance continues to deliver our Proud Parents group on the first Monday of each month in the Clapham Junction area

5:30 - 6pm 1:1 drop-ins

6:00 - 8pm main group session

8 - 8:30pm flexible time... for socialising, extending group discussion etc

For further information contact Nicki Ryan on 07884425408 or at nicki@free2b-alliance.org.uk



Excerpt from Lord Cashman’s speech at “Reaching for the Rainbow: the FFLAG 25th anniversary conference”

Our Patron, Lord Cashman, gave the keynote speech at our national conference in Manchester last year. His theme was “The Importance of Family” and we have received a number of requests for a transcript of what he said. Space does not permit reproduction in full of his wide-ranging speech, but we are pleased to quote the following core excerpt.

“Who Am I?”, the most fundamental question we ever ask as we grow up, has occupied philosophers, psychologists, playwrights and poets for millennia because, without a sense of who we are, we cannot find meaning in our lives.

It is within our family that we first learn who we are. We inherit from our parents our skin colour, the language we think in and usually our nationality. And it’s within our family that we first learn their values and the manners and customs of society. Often we absorb religious beliefs too. The most important lesson of all is that we are worthy of love and respect, not just within our family but beyond. Self-belief and self-confidence are the gifts children are entitled to expect, and usually are given, by their family.



As children, we absorb expectations too. Our parents want us to be happy and they imagine our futures as we grow up – academic success, a good job, a comfortable home, a happy marriage, grandchildren. This is natural.

The realisation that you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans is a momentous one. It is an aspect of identity as fundamental as skin colour but, unlike most aspects of identity, you can choose whether to be

authentic and open, or false and closeted. Being true to yourself makes your identity complete whereas staying in the closet imposes a psychological burden that damages almost every relationship in your life. And as every LGBT person knows, disclosure to your parents may explode their expectations and hopes for the life ahead of you.

It has often been said about coming out that “the people who matter don’t mind and the people who mind don’t matter”. But your family, and especially your parents, do matter. The way parents and siblings respond to you after you come out is the most important factor determining your long-term mental health and overall happiness.

When a parent withdraws love from their own child, it’s not only the child who is hurt. Parents who never reconcile with their child also lose a part of themselves for ever. That is so unnecessary and sad.

It is understandable for parents to mourn the loss of the heterosexual or cis-gender child they thought they had. FFLAG helps families realise that they have gained a new child, one who in truth was always theirs, who is now at ease with themselves and who can now relate to them and the world authentically. I believe that child is worthy of their love.

Trustee Meetings

One of the requests from the local groups was that they were kept informed about what was discussed and decided at FFLAG Trustee meetings. This is a report of the two meetings that have been held since our last Newsletter was published.

The Trustees of FFLAG met in February for their annual Planning Day and then in March for a regular Trustees' meeting.

The Planning Day reviewed how we had done against our objectives for 2018. It was agreed that the 25 Year Anniversary Conference had been a great success. We had representatives from lots of local groups, and attendees who had never been involved with FFLAG or a local group and so were completely new. We were also very pleased that our desire to focus on parents with a trans child had been achieved.

Getting FFLAG more focused on families with a trans child has been a key theme for 2018. We launched our booklets "How Do I tell My Parents I'm Trans" and "A Guide for Family and Friends with a trans family member" and they have been very well received. This led to a discussion at our Trustees' meeting around how FFLAG was originally set up to support parents of lesbian and gay children. The addition of families with a trans member into our objectives means we have to ask the Charity Commission to approve a change of our name and the amendment of our Objects clause to include families with trans members. We will take the opportunity to add families with bisexual members too.

We felt we were less successful in our desire to set up local groups. While South Wales is launched, and you can read in this newsletter about the new Cheltenham group, it is clear that these groups only do well if there are local parents to drive them. We decided as we go forward to stop "pushing" to set up local groups. Rather we will provide support to parents who want to start a group. We already have an information pack on how to start, and we have trustees willing to offer support. What we are not going to do is select an area where there is no local group and try to set one up from scratch without parents who want to do that – it does not work.

Instead of trying to drive the setting up local groups we decided to look at how the latest technology can be used to offer phone and internet chat support more easily. This was a key focus in our Planning Day and something we think is very important to our future. So when the trustees held their March meeting "Developing a project plan to create a platform bringing together all forms of support (Helpline, email, webchat, text) that will enable load-sharing between volunteers and help meet safeguarding requirements" was added to our Action Plan for 2019/20.

The Trustees spent time in their meeting looking at the finances of FFLAG. We discussed organisational things like our reserves policy and whether we had the right bank. We also looked at how the money had been spent and saw that for 2018/19 we had a deficit of around £2,000 – we will have to cover that from our reserves. We also looked at the year ahead and have planned our activities so that we produce a small surplus in the coming year.

Finally, we looked at how we can better use people who volunteer for FFLAG. Right now we have a few volunteers who do specific things (the FFLAG treasurer and the Newsletter editor are both volunteers) but we don't have a systematic way of getting volunteers involved in supporting other parents. We are going to look at how we can do that better going forward.

The Newsletter

If you downloaded this newsletter from our website, or were given it by someone else you can register to receive a copy at events@fflag.org.uk

The next newsletter is due out at the end of August so please send any articles, news items etc with photos if possible to events@fflag.org.uk

Can you help FFLAG?

FFLAG is a tiny charity run entirely by volunteers.
If you can, please help to secure our future by supporting us financially.

| | |
|--|--|
| Standing orders & Gift Aid | Please download and complete the forms from the Downloads section of our website www.fflag.org.uk/booklets-posters-forms/ |
| Cheques | Please send cheques to PO Box 495, Little Stoke, Bristol BS34 9AP |
| Credit and debit cards & PayPal | Click the "Donate Today" button on any page of our website www.fflag.org.uk |
| AmazonSmile | If you shop at Amazon, please make FFLAG your nominated charity for us to receive 0.5% of the value of your eligible purchases. For more details see: https://smile.amazon.com/gp/chpf/about |
| Give as you Live | Shop at thousands of retailers including M&S, John Lewis and Tesco either online or in store and make FFLAG your nominated charity for us to receive 1.5% - 4% of the value of your purchases. For full details see: https://www.giveasyoulive.com |

"Supporting Families and our LGBT+ loved ones with Pride"

FFLAG, PO BOX 495, Little Stoke, Bristol, BS34 9AP

Website: www.fflag.org.uk

E-mail: info@fflag.org.uk

Registered in England & Wales. Charity no: 1079918