



FFLAG

Supporting families and our
LGBT+ loved ones with pride

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2023



Sarah Furley (she/her) was recently elected as the new Chair of the FFLAG Board of Trustees. We asked her to write the first article in our Spring newsletter

Hello everyone!

This is the first time I'm able to write to you all as Chair of FFLAG and it's an honour to do so. For those of you who don't know me, I live in Cornwall with my husband David, and we have three grown up children between us. My child came out as trans aged nineteen, seven years ago and that's when I first found FFLAG as a support seeker. I received such wonderful support and reassurance and met such lovely people, that I was soon drawn to volunteer for FFLAG. In 2018 I became a trustee – and now here we are! I'm very proud of what the FFLAG family does and am personally committed to ensuring that our support to families is sustained and our campaigning voice is heard.

I feel very lucky to be following in the footsteps of an excellent chair – Hugh Fell. Without Hugh's very hard work over the last four years, adapting to keep us going online through the Covid years and shaping the charity to make sure we remain fit for purpose, I would not have had the confidence to take on this role. Fortunately, Hugh has agreed to stay on as trustee and continues to contribute his skills to the Board. So, thank you Hugh – because of your strong leadership, I know that FFLAG can look ahead to an exciting and productive year.

As well as Hugh stepping down as Chair, we have recently accepted the resignation of two trustees, Anne Harper and Hilary Beynon. I want to thank them for their hard work and commitment to FFLAG. Hilary remains a leader of FFLAG South Wales and continues to be very active as a FFLAG Ambassador.

Our immediate focus this year is reconnecting with our friends, local groups and volunteers so that we can sustain FFLAG and grow in response to your feedback. In the summer we want to do this by meeting you in your local area, through Pride events. Please have a look at the list in the Prides 2023 article and make plans to come and join us – and let us know of other events you're going to locally so we can come to you. And if you want to join us at Pride in London, please register as soon as possible – details are in the Prides article.

To complement our networking out and about at Prides, later in the autumn we'll be holding our 30th Anniversary reconnecting conference – details to follow.

And finally, in the face of what seems to be a hostile world, let's remember to celebrate our families and be visible in our love and pride. The headlines may be negative, but they don't represent us. Let's get our positive stories out there, supporting families and our LGBT+ loved ones with pride.



FFLAG is planning to be at lots of Pride events – come and join us!

Prides are an important part of FFLAG’s campaigning work. At Pride events we can demonstrate our love for, and pride in, our children. As well as sending the powerful message that “parents love their LGBT+ children” to anyone in the crowd. We can also use our visibility to protest – for example for an inclusive Conversion Therapy Ban. And where we have a stall, we can make connections with other LGBT+ support organisations and with the local community, offering support where needed.



This year we want to make the most of UK Prides, to achieve all these things – and to meet up with our FFLAG friends around the UK. At Chippenham Pride (17th June) our own Hugh Fell will be speaking on the main stage, so that’s definitely a FFLAG Pride highlight for 2023.



Below is a list of the Prides where we know already that FFLAG will have a presence. Please come and say hi to us. At some of these events we’ll have a FFLAG stall; at others we are sharing with another organisation or simply attending and marching, so do get in touch with the named contact if you want to check and agree a meeting point.

	Where	When	Who	Contact
May	Cheltenham	13 May	FFLAG Cheltenham/LG BT+ Partnership	Jules Tayler fflagcheltenham@gmail.com
June	Southampton Party in the Park	3 June	FFLAG	Hugh Fell hugh@fflag.org.uk
	Pride in Cardiff	17 June	FFLAG South Wales	Hilary Beynon fflagsouthwales@gmail.com
	Chippenham Pride	17 June	FFLAG	Sarah Furley sarah@fflag.org.uk
	Abergavenny Pride	24 June	FFLAG South Wales	Hilary Beynon fflagsouthwales@gmail.com
July	London	1 July	See below	Emma Hague admin@fflag.org.uk
	Bristol	8 July	FFLAG Bristol	Janet Kent janet@fflag.org.uk
	Northern Pride - Newcastle	22 July	FFLAG	Janis Proudfoot Janis@fflag.org.uk
August	Plymouth	5 August	FFLAG/ Intercom Trust	Sarah Furley sarah@fflag.org.uk
	Truro	26 August	FFLAG/ Intercom Trust	Sarah Furley sarah@fflag.org.uk
Sept.	Newport	2 Sept	FFLAG South Wales	Hilary Beynon fflagsouthwales@gmail.com
	Gloucester	9 Sept	FFLAG Cheltenham/ LGBT+ Partnership	Jules Tayler fflagcheltenham@gmail.com

We know local groups will be participating in other Prides. Please let us know via admin@fflag.org.uk so we can come and see you too! And please use that email address to ask us if you need FFLAG leaflets and booklets for your stands.

If you're a registered FFLAG volunteer and you want to attend your local Pride to represent FFLAG, please contact Emma on volunteering@fflag.org.uk, who will set you up with your Pride starter pack and contact our network to see whether others can join you.

We hope to attend UK Black Pride and will be in touch with volunteers when details are released. FFLAG will also march and have a stall at Trans Pride South West in Bristol in November, which will be another opportunity for FFLAG South Wales and FFLAG Bristol to get together – along with anyone else who'd like to join us. Again, we'll send out information when details are released.



Register to join us at Pride in London

Pride in London is on 1 July 2023. It's our big push for visibility – and a fantastic uplifting experience.

Last year we had a bigger group than we've had for many years – and we want to make even more impact this year. We don't have our start time in the parade yet, but if things follow the usual pattern we'll move one section back in the parade line up – which means we'll have a later start time in mid-afternoon. If this happens as we expect, we will plan to meet first for lunch so that we can socialise and prepare before going to the route start point. We will have a limited number of wristbands, so please contact admin@fflag.org.uk to register your interest as soon as possible and you'll then be contacted when we have all the information and kept in touch with arrangements.

We look forward to seeing you and celebrating





An update from one of our trustees, Hugh Fell (he/him), about the “FFLAGparent2parent” project

Long ago (but not as long ago as it seems to those working on the project!), FFLAG set out to create a new service that would enable parents anywhere in the UK to choose a FFLAG parent to talk with about anything on their mind regarding a LGBT+ loved one. Currently they can contact us by email or by calling our Helpline, but we realised that the option of knowing in advance who you are going to speak to, choosing a parent with similar experiences to yours and booking a convenient time to hold that conversation would be a valuable addition to our services. It also means that our FFLAG volunteers can choose when they are available and have some idea of the topics likely to come up in the conversation.

We could not have contemplated this project without the support of JP Morgan, the international bank. They gave us pro bono technical expertise through a group of their IT staff, who selected and customised several pieces of software to work together to meet our specification. Like all IT projects, it encountered unexpected obstacles, but it has at last been delivered to FFLAG's parent volunteers for familiarisation. Furthermore, the service now has a name: *FFLAGparent2parent* or *p2p* for short.

Simplicity is a virtue in most things and *FFLAGparent2parent* works in the background to connect parents using an anonymous Zoom link. This is emailed to them by the system so that personal contact details are not disclosed to either parent. It was these fundamental privacy and safeguarding requirements that caused most of the delays to the project: overcoming them has been a great relief!

Initially there will be a “soft” launch. People who contact our email or Helpline who would like to speak with someone whose experience correlates more closely with their own will be given the link to the *p2p* webpage and the name of the FFLAG parent volunteer we recommend chatting with. The Zoom connection is completely anonymous and it is up to the participants to decide whether to switch on their cameras. Indeed, the conversation can be conducted silently if desired or if the caller cannot hear or speak well, by typing in the online chat facility.

The public launch of *FFLAGparent2parent* will need us to create a page on our website displaying anonymous mini-biographies of FFLAG's parent volunteers so that people seeking support can identify someone whose experience most closely matches their own circumstances. There will be more news of this in our next Newsletter.

<https://www.facebook.com/fflagparent2parent>

<https://www.instagram.com/fflagparent2parent/>



When she encountered homophobia in her village one of our trustees, Sorrel Atkinson (she/her), decided to do something about it

Little did I think that I would encounter homophobia in the village where I live. Conscious and unconscious homophobia literally right on my doorstep. My shock at encountering this homophobia turned in to a really burning anger. I realised I had to do something with this energy, turn it in to a force for good, And so the LGBT+ History Month event happened in the village. What a happy and inclusive event it was. A day full of love, laughter, live music, talks and Rainbow bunting festooned from the trees outside.

Initially I had no idea how the event would happen. Having got FFLAG Board approval, the village hall was booked. As far as I was concerned if it was just me wrapped in a Rainbow flag with the Pet Shop Boys blaring in the background, then I would have made my stand. As it was, every local LGBT+ organisation we approached wanted to be involved. We had amazing support from Cornwall Pride, Intercom Trust, Transparent Presence, Queer Kernow and Devon & Cornwall Police Diversity Team. Donations and support from businesses including One Big Circle, Gay Pride Shop and Tesco meant we had fab raffle prizes, masses of bunting and plenty of bacon baps for lunch!

Then all the individuals who supported us, baked cakes, ran stalls and worked tirelessly in the kitchen making refreshments.

I think the photos speak for themselves, showing what a joyous day it was. So many happy memories. There are some things that particularly went to my heart.



The mum from a neighbouring village who arrived very early with her non-binary young person, saying this was the first time they felt able to come out and join in an event where they would be welcome and included.

The grandmother who quietly asked if she could have one of our rainbow helium balloons to share with her adult granddaughter who she said would 'identify with what is going on here today'.

The man who travelled four hours each way by train to get to the event because FFLAG had helped him come out to his parents over 20 years ago.

The mum who arrived with her young son. He had told his friends that he wanted to marry a man when he grew up. His friends had laughed at him and told him that he couldn't. I offered to introduce her and her son to my son and his husband who were there. I confess I had a lump in my throat as I watched them talking with the mum and her son, sharing the love and showing them their wedding rings.

And quotes of the day!

"My heart sang when I saw the Rainbow bunting outside the village hall"

"It was a great day and brought a tear to my eye to see young people having somewhere to safely meet and just be themselves"

"I had the most wonderful day, I didn't want it to end!"



I agree! It was a wonderful day. A huge thank you to all who helped make it happen!



Can you help us bring our history to life?

During a recent stock take in FFLAG's store we discovered several VHS videotapes from the turn of the century. Some are labelled so we know they record televised interviews with FFLAG parents during our campaigns for the repeal of Clause 28 and the passing of the equalities legislation. We would like to review the tapes and extract the interviews into digital format but we do not have either the equipment or technical skills to do so.

CAN YOU HELP?

Please contact FFLAG on 07709 070248 or admin@fflag.org.uk if you can help.



Jules Tayler (she/her) sent us an update from FFLAG Cheltenham

Things have been a little quiet on the FFLAGChelt front in the last few months. However, there is much to look forward to. Not least our attendance at Cheltenham Pride on Saturday 13th May. If you want to come along contact me at fflagcheltenham@gmail.com We would love to have a big FFLAG presence on the day, and it is one of the first Pride events of the year so a chance to get in the mood early on!

Of course, there have been lots of things going on in the background. I am confident that the time spent on these initiatives will pay off.



We did attend Gloucester Pride. It was delayed because of the Queen's death and rescheduled for the 1st of October. Inevitably, with such short notice the organisers had a challenging job on their hands. All credit to the team who worked so hard to put it all together. With the change of date it was perhaps not quite so well attended as normal, but at least it did take place. As per usual, there were lots of interesting conversations and questions. It really is so important for FFLAG to attend these events.



Alison Walsh (she/her) from Parents of Jewish Gays and Lesbians sent us a message about the group.

Parents of Jewish Gays and Lesbians - supporting parents with gay, lesbian, bi, trans, queer and non-binary children - goes from strength to strength reaching out across the religious community and welcoming new and old parents to meetings in each other's homes.

Contact details: **Email:** parentsigl@gmail.com
<http://parentsofjewishgaysandlesbians.co.uk>



Families Together London is a support group for the parents, families and friends of LGBT+ people. Jackie Briggs (she/her), a member of the Steering Committee, provided us with an update

Families Together London (we call it FTL) is going strong. The good news is that there has been a marked increase in people attending our Battersea in-person meetings now that Covid is not preventing people from turning up.

The last few months have seen a marked growth in the number of parents contacting us who have children who are transgender. David and Gill run this strand of FTL (FTL-T) and as David says, "Our list of members continues to grow steadily, currently around 76, and most are linked into our WhatsApp group for ongoing mutual Q+A support. We have kept our monthly Zoom meetings as well as inviting members to join the in-person FTL meetings in Battersea".

"We enjoyed a most informative and helpful meeting in January when we had a speaker from Gendered Intelligence. They told us about GI and what this charitable organisation has to offer including support for transgender people from age 8 to 30 (one-to-one groups), camping trips for trans youth, a training course for trans adults who are interested in working on GI residentials, or in youth work generally, support groups for parents or carers and helpful info such as a directory full of accredited therapists and counsellors who have received additional training from GI on how to support trans clients. We still await, with bated breath, the passing in Parliament of the Ban Conversion Therapy bill but our main worries tend to relate to the long waiting lists on the NHS, especially for trans children, to be seen for any attention to psychological or medical needs, as was highlighted by Prof Hillary Cass in the Interim Report of her Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people last year."



We look forward very much, if our application is successful, to doing Pride in London this year with Ramboll walking with us as they did last year.

We may have a Strawberry Tea in June too as we weren't able to do our fundraising lunch the way we wanted to do it in November due to the rail strike. But Ramboll donated some incredible gifts for the raffle and our members, whose winning tickets came out of the hat, enjoyed VIP tickets to see the pantomime at the Palladium (I went to see it myself and it was super-fantastic) and also another prize was high tea at a top-notch restaurant. Thank you Ramboll for seeking us out to be your chosen support group.

So, as they say, watch this space for more news.



The parents at FFLAG Bristol started a Zoom call during the pandemic and people joined from all over the country. So when they went back to meeting face to face they kept the Zoom calls going. Janet Kent (she/her) told us more

The FFLAG Zoom meeting has continued to run each month. It's particularly helpful for people who haven't been able to meet up with others because they're in a remote place or there aren't any groups meeting up in their area. There are always new people joining us from around the country, as well as a core of regulars who seem to be able to make newcomers feel they're part of the FFLAG family. It's a great opportunity for new volunteers to see how FFLAG parents support one another.

We so often hear people say they no longer feel alone or that they resonate with what someone else has shared. The majority of new parents joining us are those with trans/non-binary children.

Instead of our December meeting, Bobbi Pickard gave us a moving and informative Zoom presentation about many aspects of being trans followed by a Q+A session. You are never the same after hearing this!

If you are a parent or carer of an LGBT+ child/adult and want to join a group of supportive people in a similar situation, you are very welcome to join us every second Wednesday of the month - 7:30-9pm. Check out the FFLAG website for details of how to join.



It has been said that we are stronger together and this is how we feel at FFLAG Bristol. This year, we're continuing to realise the value of meeting together in person and it's encouraging to see a core group of people coming together to support one another. Numbers aren't huge but we have seen some new faces, particularly those with trans or non-binary young people, coming along.



It's so rewarding to see how new parents become the ones who support the newer ones. It clearly helps just having been along the path a little ahead of someone else.

Of course, it is always very helpful when Bobbi Pickard has come along too and has been able to give her invaluable insights to parents with trans/non binary young people.

We're hugely grateful to those who faithfully come along and help provide refreshments and make the whole experience a welcoming one for all involved. Below are comments from a couple of parents who have been attending:

I needed to talk to other parents of trans teens going through similar experiences and was recommended FFLAG by my son's school. It's my safe space to share my hopes and worries, surrounded by people on the same journey; keeps me grounded!

When my young person came out as Trans I felt lost. I had no experience or real knowledge to help me or help my child and knew no other parents in the same position. I did a lot of online research but really wanted to speak to others in the same situation, in person. I eventually got in touch with FFLAG Bristol. Although they did not have a parent of a Trans person at that time, they welcomed me to their monthly, in person, meetings.

The group has been amazing, they provide a safe space for parents to come and talk openly about their experiences and any challenges they are facing. They have allowed me to attend some informative online courses, information evenings with Bobbi Pickard and have even bought books that parents can borrow to help them with their understanding. I'm pleased to say we also now have more parents attending the in-person meetings.

I can't thank you all enough, you have been so welcoming and supportive and a great help in this journey.

This is what makes running a parents' group so worth it! If you're considering starting a group yourself, I hope our stories will inspire you and you can contact FFLAG to help you get started.



Hilary Beynon (she/her) sent us an update from FFLAG South Wales – they have been to the ice hockey again!

On Sunday 5th February this year, volunteers from FFLAG SOUTH WALES were invited to the Cardiff Ice Arena to watch Cardiff Devils ice hockey team play Nottingham Panthers.

Wow, what a game!

This was the fourth annual Devils Pride Night in partnership with Pride Cymru. The message from this event is that sport should be a safe place for everyone, whether as a participant or a spectator, regardless of race, background or religion, sexual orientation, age or ability.



This was another great night out for FFLAG South Wales!



“GO DEVILS”



Lucie Brooke (she/her) the Director & Co-founder of Free2B, a South London group for parents and young people, updated us on their latest activity with parents.

Here at Free2B we have been looking at ways to better connect our youth and our parent services. For this year we are planning to have a youth guest speaker once a month at our Proud Parent sessions.

We kicked off in January with the fabulous Archie sharing his story and then in February we've had Lu sharing her journey.

There has been a lot of interest from parents including requests to record the sessions for those who were keen to take part, but unable to make the specific date. Consequently, we have, with the young people's permission, recorded the zoom sessions. This allows our members to watch them back in their own time, which has worked really well.

We have also received a small grant for our new Rainbow Therapy Dog, Barbara, to provide wellbeing support at our groups. For history month Barbara attended a coffee morning at Balham Library that was open to Rainbow Families. It was extremely well received with over 15 families attending and we hope to be able to do more joint family project with the libraries going forward.

