



FFLAG

Supporting families and our
LGBT+ loved ones with pride

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2023



Sarah Furley, the chair of the FFLAG Board of Trustees

I hope you've all been able to make the most of our stop/start summer. We can see in this issue that we've all made the most of Prides around the country. From great visibility at Pride in London to more personal conversations at local Prides, it is wonderful to see that we have made the most of opportunities to connect with others and promote our message of acceptance, love and celebration.

Continuing the theme of celebration, 2023 marks 30 years since the inauguration of FFLAG as a charity. This marked the coming together of parents' groups from across the country who believed that our voices were stronger together and took place officially at the Stonewall offices in 1993.



To mark the occasion, we are looking forward to gathering in Birmingham in November for a reconnecting conference. We'll be bringing our local groups together and introducing our new volunteers to affiliated group members. As well as thanking and celebrating with our founders we want to get feedback and plan our next steps together.

We still believe that our voices are stronger together. FFLAG is pleased to have joined the Ban Conversion Therapy coalition to continue to lobby for this long overdue legislation. There is an article about consultation on the new interim NHS Service Specification for Youth Gender Services in this issue. Let's speak out together whenever we can, to bring our message of family love to the fore.



In July FFLAG Bristol said farewell to Sue and Bob Allen as they were moving up north to be nearer to their daughter and her wife. Janet Kent (she/her) told us all about it.

It was 26 years ago that Bristol Families and Friends (later renamed FFLAG Bristol) came into being. Sue and Bob Allen's daughter, Lisa, was the inspiration behind the group because of her involvement in Freedom Youth which met in the heart of Bristol.



Sue began to hear of parents who were not accepting of their children due to their sexuality and knew something needed to be done to help educate parents. Berkeley Wilde (now CEO of the Diversity Trust), was involved in Freedom Youth and together they decided to take some action and set up a support group. The Aled Richards Trust, a Bristol-based charity which merged with the national Terrence Higgins Trust in 2000, allowed the group to meet every month in their building and so Bristol Families and Friends was launched.



At the very first meeting, Berkeley invited Jenny Broughton (then Chair and later, President of FFLAG) to come and chat to everyone and talk about FFLAG. After several phone calls between Sue and Jenny, Sue was invited to be the Bristol rep on the FFLAG committee and Janet Scull joined as second rep not long after.

We've been to various Prides and events over the years and had a few laughs together, lugging booklets, pull-up banners etc. through rain, wind or shine and sometimes saying "we'll never do that again" and then we do, because people's lives seem to have been impacted by us just keeping on. Probably our craziest and most humbling event that we shared together was going to London to receive awards at the wonderful Trans in the City event, organised by the CEO, Bobbi Pickard!



There were a few hiccups along the way with Sue and Bob's move which meant we were able to have two farewells! And in the first one, it was great to welcome one of the founding members, Janet Scull and her son Chris to share some bubbly and cake with us all. It's farewell, but definitely not goodbye as we will be seeing Sue and Bob on the Zoom calls from their new home and we look forward to seeing them at the conference in November and knowing them, they'll probably say "we'll never do that again" but we all know how that will end!!





UK Black Pride celebrated its 18th year in 2023. So their annual Pride event was bigger than ever. FFLAG was there and Hugh Fell sent us a report.



UK Black Pride was held in London in mid-August. The organisers offered FFLAG a stall in their Chill-out/Family zone this year and we grabbed the opportunity with both hands, or rather with 8, being those of Emma, Elaine, Winsome and me.

For the first time, the event was held at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in East London – a huge area entirely appropriate for Europe’s largest celebration of LGBT+ people of African, Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American and Caribbean heritage.



It was a bright and sunny day when we arrived, and a brisk wind was disrupting many stallholders’ plans as their publications blew away and banners blew over. The FFLAG stall was soon set up, secured against the semi-gale with the aid of gaffer tape and string, and once the public were admitted we were initially surprised that it wasn’t just children who wanted our temporary tattoos, Love Hearts sweets and Pride stickers!



This was such a joyous day! The park was full of energy, colour, music and the enticing smells of Caribbean cuisine. Many worthwhile conversations took place with parents and children who visited our stall and lots of our booklets and information leaflets were taken. We made some really good contacts with other organisations too. FFLAG hopes to be back at UK Black Pride next year – we have already asked for a stall!



FFLAG made sure that they were at Bristol Pride on 8th July and Caroline Hayward (she/her) sent us a report.

The drizzly morning did not deter the crowds as thousands gathered in Castle Park for the annual Bristol Pride March. The skies cleared as an incredible 25,000 people processed through the city centre to Millennium Square. The event showcases how important visibility and voice are for the LGBT+ community as well as shining a light on important campaigns. It also provides a chance for people to celebrate and show their allyship to the LGBT+ community.

As in previous years, the day continued on the Downs. Bristol Pride is becoming one of the largest Pride events in the UK, and the occasional very heavy downpour didn't dampen anyone's spirits.



'Community' is what Pride is all about, and our FFLAG Bristol stand was very well positioned at the front of the Community tent. We had a large number of people visiting our stand, taking our booklets and stickers, or having a chat. It is very encouraging to get feedback from people who come to tell us how helpful FFLAG has been to them or their loved ones.



There continues to be a real need for FFLAG, and it was heartening to receive offers from eleven people who would like to volunteer for FFLAG in the future.



The entertainment continued across five stages as we headed home, with the satisfaction that we have supported and encouraged parents/carers/friends on the coming-out journey of their loved one to **"Be Kind, Be Proud, Be You"**.





The first ever Chippenham Pride was held on 17th June and of course FFLAG were well represented. Janet Kent (she/her) sent us a report.

The first Chippenham Pride was amazingly successful. People from across Wiltshire, and much further, gathered to enjoy this beautiful, family-oriented event. It was a day to inspire, educate, commemorate and celebrate the diverse community within Chippenham and the surrounding areas. It was a day to let people know they are not alone.

Chippenham's first openly gay mayor, Declan Baseley said it was "incredibly important to acknowledge how views had become more progressive over the years. I'm so proud of my hometown for celebrating its first ever Pride event. Chippenham really is a tolerant and welcoming community where expression of the self is encouraged, and where we aren't judged for being who we are. The walkthrough town was attended by over 500 people and Island Park has been packed all afternoon. We've attracted visitors from across the region to our town, I spoke to a couple that had come all the way from Liverpool."



It was the first time the town hosted a full Pride event. The event's organisers had expected just a few hundred people to attend but were thrilled that over 4,000 came. At the huge turnout. Marc MacDivitt, secretary of Chippenham Pride, said: "It was amazing, we were completely overwhelmed by the support and the amount of people who showed up. Our core focus is for it to be a community event where everyone is welcome."

Trans in the City sponsored the Speakers Stage at this ground-breaking celebration, inspired by its CEO and founder Bobbi Pickard, FFLAG's newest Patron. The list of speakers was impressive including two more FFLAG Patrons, Michael Cashman and Peter Tatchell. Hugh Fell, one of our FFLAG trustees, was invited to be part of a panel along with Bobbi and Ian H Watkins. He is well-known for being a member of the pop group Steps and he spoke about being a proud gay man.



Several of us from FFLAG - Sarah, Niki, Des, Anne, Bruce and Janet went along to show support, to take part in the parade and to run a stall there. The atmosphere as we set off on the Parade from the Market Place was joyful and exhilarating. It was particularly encouraging to see so many young people taking part and of course to see our patron Bobbi Pickard who has worked so tirelessly to help make this happen.



The stall was extremely busy and we were able to have some meaningful conversations with people and to feel that what we were doing was making a difference. Being the 30th anniversary year of FFLAG, it was hugely encouraging that one man came to the stall to say FFLAG had been a help to him 30 years ago, when he came out to his parents and he wanted to say thank you!

Michael Cashman came to the FFLAG stall after his talk and he wanted us to know how important parents are as allies because our voices can be very powerful on behalf of all those who are LGBTQ+.





Hilary Beynon (she/her) sent us an update from FFLAG South Wales where they have been attending lots of events – with even more planned

We have had a very busy summer 2023 and been to several Pride events. We were present at Abergavenny, Cardiff, Usk and Newport. At Cardiff we were proud to be part of their biggest parade ever! Unfortunately, we were unable to accept invitations to Merthyr, Barry, Cowbridge among others. One of our goals for next year is to organise ourselves to enable a FFLAG presence at as many Pride Events as possible across South Wales.



LONDON

We were represented at London Pride this year. As always it was a fantastic event; a chance to realise how we are a part of a much bigger movement and a great opportunity to catch up with friends from all across the UK. We look forward to meeting up with Bristol Flaggers again this autumn at South West Trans Pride in November. We are also expecting to be invited to take part in Cardiff Trans Pride.

At our regular support group meetings we have welcomed several new parents, mainly of trans young people. We have agreed to support Transvision Cymru and regularly have a representative on the Welsh LGBTQ+ Forum, run by Stonewall Cymru and Pride Cymru to bring together groups and charities in the sector throughout Wales.

Seven Welsh FFLAG friends will travel to Birmingham in November to celebrate 30 years of parent support for our LGBTQ+ loved ones.

We have been particularly fortunate that four volunteers/parents have joined us recently with firm intentions of becoming active members of FFLAG. The South Wales group is now more than ever a familiar part of the LGBTQ+ support community.



Pride across South Wales



CARDIFF



CARDIFF



ABERGAVENTNY



NEWPORT



CARDIFF



ABERGAVENTNY



Southampton Pride took place in June, and of course FFLAG was there to take part. Janice Fakes (she/her) sent us a report on what went on. We also asked Philippa Swayne (she/her) to give us her perspective on the day.

On Saturday 3rd June the sun shone for Southampton Pride Party in the Park - perfect for FFLAG's participation in the event.



Hugh Fell, Philippa and Janice represented FFLAG, assisted at various times by family members. The usual backdrop at Pride events was the stage with happy uplifting music being performed by ever changing colourful acts.

We were amongst other charities and once we were set up it was a great opportunity to network with the other organisations - swapping leaflets and cards. The FFLAG stall had a steady stream of visitors - the lanyards, pens and stickers were very popular, and there was interest in our various leaflets.

It feels such a privilege listening to the people that came to talk to us - people from all of the LGBT+ community. A recurring theme was how people were dealing with coming out to those closest to them - something Janice hadn't heard before was a couple of young people expressed the difficulty telling grandparents - some expecting they probably wouldn't ever tell them.

It was a wonderful day. Many were celebrating being able to be themselves when they attended Pride events - we can hope that the day will come when it won't be necessary to attend special events for everyone to be able to be their true authentic selves.



Philippa sent us her perspective

This summer, I joined Hugh Fell and Janice Fakes to run a stall at the Pride in the Park event in Southampton. My daughter Francesca who is also a hugely supportive ally to her gay brother Oliver, travelled down from London to join us. Hugh was extraordinary in his attention to detail and gave much of his time before, during and after the event. Janice was wonderful with the families who came to our stall and spoke with such wisdom and warmth. My daughter just made me feel very proud of my little family. My children's generation seem to be getting a lot of things right and I am glad my son was born in the 90s and not the 50s like me.

I was nervous to say the least. I joined FFLAG a few years ago and have very much enjoyed participating in marches at Pride events in London, Brighton, Salisbury and Bristol. To march in London alongside my son and his partner James has been one of the

highlights of my life and a truly proud day. However, to be expected to talk to people opened up all sorts of anxieties about what to say, how could I advise, and so on. How daft of me! I was very quickly reassured by the wonderfully warm welcoming atmosphere whereby people of all shapes, sizes, colours and creed were just celebrating humanity and each other. Of course I was worried that nobody would come to our stall. However after a while lots of gazes came our way and people came to find out what we were about.

I was impressed with how many youngsters still living at home shared their difficulties concerning telling their parents, their siblings, their grandparents. As I have often felt in FFLAG Zoom meetings, it was apparent to me that the people facing the biggest challenges were Trans people. My heart went out to so many who still felt less worthy and that they might be rejected by their families. Not surprisingly, considering most were young people, they weren't really interested in taking away our leaflets to read, being far keener to scan our QR code. That was a huge success.

We did speak to several parents. A lovely gay couple, two gorgeous Spanish ladies with two small children talked openly that there weren't many diverse families in the New Forest! It reminded me that it can be tough for LGBTQ people living in rural communities as opposed to a more cosmopolitan city.

I was really impressed with Southampton Football Club (Saints) who had a stall; their charity is striving to make the sport of football more inclusive and a safer welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ fans and players. Good for them! I remember my son telling me he kept away from football at school because he knew he would be bullied.

Of course, being a Pride event, there had to be good music and dancing. Some fantastic drag queens singing "What have you done today to make you feel proud?" A highlight. Everyone at the Pride event did so much to make us all feel proud. The words that come to mind are: Love, respect, acceptance, kindness, encouragement, inspiration, support, celebration. All superlatives.

Why had I been so worried? Nobody expects you to be an expert or have the answers, but a bit of empathy goes a long way. I'll happily volunteer again and would consider it a privilege.





Bruce Kent (he/him), one of our FFLAG Ambassadors, has been reflecting on Pride.

It has been a hectic time for Janet and me again this year as we have enthusiastically immersed ourselves in the celebrations of Pride Month. Everywhere we went, we saw numbers growing and a greater determination than ever to stand for full inclusion, equality and celebration of our LGBTQ+ loved ones and to educate about LGBTQ+ history and the horrific damage of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

We had the privilege of joining the Pride celebrations at Cheltenham, Chippenham, London and finally Bristol this year and are fired up now with a renewed vision for the importance of Pride Month and celebrating/demonstrating together publicly in this way.



If I look back a few years, there was a brief time when I wondered if maybe we had achieved most of what we had been working for and that perhaps it might be time to hang up our placards and flags. For families with lesbian and gay members, legislation had changed and society had begun to be much more accepting, if not yet fully celebratory.

For families with trans members, it's a different story. Remember, the reason that Pride is celebrated in the month of June is because that was the month when the Stonewall riots took place. They were important protests way back in 1969 in the US, that changed gay rights for a lot of people in America and eventually around the world. Certainly, Prides are now a chance for people to come together in love and friendship, to celebrate how far LGBTQ+ rights have come. But, increasingly, once again now, they need to be a show of unity, determination and righteous anger specifically at the forces being ushered against our trans members.

2023 has already been a difficult year for trans and non-binary people, with transphobic harassment increasing and anti-trans legislation introduced worldwide. In the US, so far this year, 17 states have enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming care for minors. In fact, the Human Rights Campaign, (HRC), which is the USA's preeminent LGBTQ+ rights organization, recently issued a state of emergency for LGBTQ+ Americans. Citing *"an unprecedented and dangerous spike in anti-LGBTQ+ legislative assaults sweeping state*

houses this year” – a record 75 anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been signed into law in 2023 – the HRC warns bluntly that ‘our community is in danger’.”

Here at home, just during this year, the UK Government has blocked Scotland’s Gender Recognition Reform Bill and appears to be at loggerheads with one another over new



guidance for schools compelling them to inform parents if their child is questioning their gender. The Daily Telegraph reported that “A major row has broken out within the Government over plans to let children change their gender in schools. Gillian Keegan, the Education Secretary, is facing a backlash from Conservative MPs and figures in Downing Street and the Equalities Office over plans to allow pupils to choose their own pronouns if their parents give consent”. (June 25th 2023). A Whitehall source said: “Department for Education officials have attended too many Stonewall meetings and think social transition is acceptable. It isn’t”.

But it is!

And, FFLAG now has a vitally important role in the nation to share the voices of those families whose love and support is vital to our young trans people. Otherwise, I fear we will see more tragic news headlines like those we read in February about the brutal stabbing to death of Brianna Ghey, a 16-year-old British transgender girl from Warrington. Two teenagers, a boy and a girl, both aged 15, were quickly charged with her murder - but Cheshire Police were quick to announce that there was no evidence Brianna's killing was hate related. Really? How can we doubt it was a hate crime when anyone can read on social media that her friends said she had faced years of transphobic harassment and bullying before she was killed, including at school, a part of which was being repeatedly ‘gang beaten’.

Our personal Pride Month celebrations culminated in Bristol, but even here, we saw signs of hatred growing towards our precious LGBTQ+ family. Susie and Fliss moved to their new home in the Bedminster area of Bristol recently, and put a rainbow doormat down in time for the Pride celebrations. But the mat was soon stolen, so they went out and bought a new one, but this time glued it down so it couldn’t be taken. Susie and her wife then found their new doormat had been covered with black spray paint.



Someone had actually sprayed the doormat with black paint.

She said the realisation that someone would go to such lengths was "sickening". "It felt really horrible and invasive," she said. "It felt like we were a bit unsafe in our own home. We'd only recently moved here, and it felt personal. We weren't sure if the theft was just random, but

clearly someone didn't like it and actually came back with a spray can." This particular story had a happy ending, however. Their neighbours rallied round and lots of them bought rainbow doormats for themselves. Now the road is full of them! But shortly after that, a huge Bristol Pride billboard was set on fire less than 24 hours after it was put up in what is now, at least, being treated as a hate crime by police. Bristol Pride said: *"It only gives evidence as to why we need Pride and to show up supporting each other."*

Then, just before Bristol Pride on the 2nd July, a teenage boy was arrested after gel pellets were fired at people attending a Trans Pride picnic in Bristol's Castle Park, the very place we marched from.

Are these isolated and rare incidents? Not at all. In 2019, **1,579** hate crimes were reported to Avon and Somerset Police, Wiltshire Police, Dorset Police, Gloucestershire Police and Devon and Cornwall Police. But in 2022, just three years later, **2,079** hate crimes were reported, **an increase of 32%**. However, **only 84** of these reports have resulted in a charge, (A 4% charge rate.)

Our courageous Patron, Bobbi Pickard, was recently interviewed by Marina Jenkins for ITV News West Country about the harsh reality of LGBTQ+ hate crime in the South West of England. She voiced her lack of confidence in the police to do anything when hate crimes against trans people are reported to them. Bobbi said: *"I've been spat at in the street. I've had drinks tipped over me. I've had bottles and stones thrown at me. That's just the physical abuse that's happened. Online the abuse is absolutely outrageous. I've had death threats, I've had rape threats, I've had torture threats. I've had people sending me videos of people being beheaded and telling me that I'm going to be next. It's just absolutely hideous."*



Bobbi Pickard

Bobbi reported that she, and many others in the LGBTQ+ community she knows, do not have faith in police forces to deal with hate crime properly. She said: *"Unless there was something where it fell into the boundary of physical assault or bodily harm where it was so cut and dried, then it would be absolutely pointless. I'd have no trust in any of the police forces not to be transphobic, not to treat me like a sub-class citizen in my own country. So there's absolutely no point going to any of our police forces to report any hate crime."*

But, nevertheless, Bobbi is still hopeful for the future. She said that if police forces across the South West invest in training and policing, crimes can be dealt with more effectively. *"We can change it around, of course we can change it around,"* Bobbi said. *"At the moment, the problem is that there is such a void of knowledge of what trans and non-binary actually is - that fuels people's fears. There's nothing scary or bad about the trans and non-binary community. We are just people trying to get on with our lives."*

This Pride season has stirred me like never before to stand up and be counted on behalf of all our LGBTQ+ families and friends, especially all those under severe attack during this deteriorating climate of ignorance and hostility. So that one day we can all **'just get on with our lives'** in peace and safety.



Jules Tayler (she/her) sent us an update from FFLAG Cheltenham. Summer seems to have been full of events

Things have certainly been busier in the Cotswolds over the last few months

In April FFLAG Cheltenham was invited along with other LGBT+ Partnership (LGBTChelt) members to have tea with the mayor of Gloucester. He wanted to show his gratitude for the contribution that had been made to and by the LGBT+ community and allies in Gloucestershire. A lovely afternoon and an opportunity to see all the wonderful historic mayoral and city items dating back to the 15th century!

In May, along with a volunteer from LGBTChelt, we gave a talk to a group of LGBTQ adults at the Community Autism Support and Advice Centre (the Independence Trust). There were certainly some very direct questions at the end of the session!

Cheltenham Pride in the Park also took place in May and a great day was had by all. We could hear the samba band leading the march for quite some distance! It was the first time that Cheltenham's Pride took place in the town centre, which meant that people who would not have necessarily come, stumbled upon it! Was a lovely surprise that Janet and Bruce came to support- might need to brush up on their samba for next time! Lots of great conversations.

In June I was invited back to Kohler Mira (a large employer in our area, who make an array of products for plumbing) to give talk to their associates. This year I took a dear colleague from LGBTChelt and our session was about FFLAG and what LGBTChelt offers within Gloucestershire. It went really well. Not only did they make generous donations to both charities, but as a result of my talk about FFLAG, a Kohler Mira associate got in touch and offered to be a volunteer!

We dropped in at Stroud Pride and had a great chat with one of the Pride committee who was very keen to have some of our booklets and information. I always carry some in my backpack at events so was able to supply them straight away.

September is when we have Gloucester Pride. It was held on probably the hottest day of the year. All credit to everyone who attended in the heat! Once again Bruce and Janet came from Bristol to support FFLAGChelt – we couldn't be more grateful to them and as always, it was a surprise. They are such stalwarts!

What was particularly lovely was that FFLAG had been asked to speak about what we do at "the speakers' corner". Fortuitously for us, Bobbi Pickard, one of FFLAG's patrons, was at Gloucester Pride speaking about Trans in the City earlier in the afternoon (Bruce and I went to the talk), and she very kindly joined me for the FFLAG session. Bobbi is such a wonderful advocate - we really are so very lucky to have her as one of our patrons.

Looking forward, FFLAGChelt has been invited into a school to deliver eight sessions over the coming months entitled 'Feeling OK with Who I Am and Ways to be Inclusive'. Let's hope it will make a difference. Everyone has the right to be themselves. We see this as a wonderful opportunity to get youngsters thinking about and understanding themselves and others.

Some great pictures from Cheltenham Pride





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 her regular update.

Well, I can't believe it is time for another up-date for the FFLAG Newsletter. How the time flies. I needed to go back to our News and Events page to remind myself of all the things that we have been involved in since the Spring and there has been lots.

I suppose the main thing we can shout about is our presence at Pride in London this year. We were allocated 80 wristbands and would you believe it, we had a waiting list. I hope you like the picture with a good proportion of us, with our new sails, at the end of the parade. I'll print out the blurb I wrote which I think goes well with the photo.



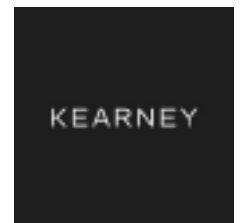
I think you'll agree that this is a mighty fine picture. This year we were allocated 80 wristbands and all of these were taken up. The weather on the 1st July was just perfect for a parade and we all gathered at a delightful cafe in Seymour Place. Each participant was given a little package which contained a wristband and a token to get a free drink and pastry. That went down a storm and the owner of the cafe was very happy too. It was our pleasure to treat our walkers. Everybody got a t-shirt and then it was time to bring the megaphone out. You try getting 80 people to listen to you without some sort of speaker system! We walked down to the start point and then began the long wait until we were really on the move. The cheers from the pavement and the feeling of unity as we wended our way down to Trafalgar Square and beyond was uplifting. It always is. Then it was time for the picture. I think you'll agree that we make a very colourful lot. I must mention Ramboll who so generously paid for our new t-shirts. They are our wonderful ally of FTL/T and we so appreciate their support. They walk under our logo and we are so proud to be associated with them.

We were invited to share an afternoon with the young people at Mosaic LGBT+ Young Persons' Trust. I went along with Coby, my whippet, who is a Pets As Therapy Dog. He is quite old now but knows how to behave and he was treated royally by the group. He even came home with a 'party bag' of doggy treats. Lukasz who runs the group is the most amazing man and I have known him for about 15 years. The young people look up to him and he has grown the group from a very small organisation to one with 3 full time staff helping over 300 young people every year.



The British Medical Journal asked whether we would join a Zoom panel to discuss various aspects of being the parents of an LGBT+ child. Well, I have plenty of experience of that as I have a gay son and a lesbian daughter, both of whom are happily married now. One question that came up was how to prepare young children to be aware that some of their peer group might come out as LGBT+. I suggested a fantastic bookshop in London called Gays the Word. I should add that Lukasz, from Mosaic was on the panel alongside me. His knowledge knows no bounds.

Our final bit of news was a talk that Gill and David who run the FTL-T section of FTL and myself gave at the offices of Kearney. We split the talk into two sessions so that the members of Kearney who wished to attend could make one of the sessions. We had people Zooming in too as well as the people present in the room. Lots of Q and A's followed the talk.



We go from strength to strength and have a number of events planned for later this year and will, all being well, be at Pride next year.



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.

It has been a busy few months at Free2B with some great projects and inspiring events.

Our Youth Council members have been busy as always - working with the Open University they have developed a basic introduction to pronouns and why they are so important. Check out their fantastic animation:

<https://youtu.be/k9CSWILezqs?si=WIOFJ1BI--Tq7TUF>

They also helped Wandsworth Council to run a Pride art competition across their mainstream youth groups and our youth council chose the winning entry!

<https://free2b.lgbt/art-competition-2023/>

The week after London saw the huge Pride parade there was a Trans Pride March. Some of our fabulous parents and their children joined us for a 'pre-pride picnic' at St James' Park before heading off to join the Trans Pride March where they had a great time.





Alison Walsh (she/her) from Parents of Jewish Gays and Lesbians sent us an update about their time at Pride.

Parents of Jewish Gays and Lesbians joined forces with Keshet UK to march for Pride in London on Saturday 1st July. (***Keshet UK*** is an education and training charity with a mission to ensure that Jewish LGBT+ people and their families are included throughout Jewish life in the UK. It is part of the global Keshet organisation).



That is me, Alison, in the middle. Behind me is the Keshet bus and you can see the parents group logo on the bus as well as the Keshet one. We were made to feel very welcome.

It felt so right to be marching as parents and supporting/coming together with our children's generation on the march.





FFLAG's view on the new interim NHS Service Specification for Youth Gender Services

In June the NHS published an interim service specification setting out how care will be provided to children and young people who express gender incongruence and who are likely to benefit from clinical support.

This interim service specification will be in place until the new regional hubs are set up – though it is unclear when that will happen.

FFLAG responded to the consultation on the interim service provision in autumn 2022. Although some changes have been made in response to concerns raised by families with trans children, FFLAG is disappointed that the specification still creates needless barriers to care. Of particular concern is the draft interim clinical commissioning policy, which says that the NHS will only commission puberty suppressing hormones as part of clinical research.

As parents of LGBT+ young people, we fear this will cause avoidable harm, great distress and otherwise unnecessary suffering for trans young people. The NHS has a duty of care to alleviate the suffering of all patients who come to them. To fail to do that for those seeking gender reassignment would be a very serious breach of the terms of the Equality Act 2010.

Public consultation on the draft interim clinical commissioning policy opened on August 3rd and will close on November 1st. FFLAG will respond and continue to represent the experiences and concerns of families. If you can, please do submit your own individual responses to ensure that the voices of families and real experiences are heard. <https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/consultation/puberty-suppressing-hormones/>

For further analysis you may wish to view the statement made by [Gendered Intelligence](#) or view the [Mermaids](#) blog on this topic.