

Why should Conservatives take part in Pride?



At the 2015 election LGBT+ voters began to shift their traditional left-wing allegiances and started to vote Conservative in large numbers. A poll before the General Election saw support for the Conservatives among LGBT+ voters draw level with Labour for the first time. Gay marriage, although controversial at the time, had a large role to play in this shift. All Conservatives should be campaigning on this record of equality, whether they supported gay marriage or not. Theresa May has long been a champion of gay marriage and there is now an opportunity unlike any before to persuade the LGBT+ community to vote Conservative.

WHAT IS PRIDE?

Pride is a parade or festival where the LGBT+ community and their allies come together to promote equal rights as well as self-affirmation. The celebration originated in New York City to mark the "Stonewall Riot", a demonstration following a police raid on a gay bar. In countries where LGBT+ rights are less advanced than the UK, Pride parades remain political, but in this country, Pride is usually an excuse for a party, bringing together a large cross-section of society, both gay and straight. The nearly 70 Prides which take place across the UK each year are increasingly more akin to outdoor family-friendly summer festivals.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED?

Getting involved in your local Pride is easy. Except for the larger Prides such as London, Manchester and Brighton, most parades don't charge to allow groups to march although registration is often required. Prides which have festivals may charge to have a stall or stand, but such presence at a Pride offers an excellent occasion to meet with local residents both gay and straight. Conservative MPs and Associations should look on Pride in the same light as they do a village fête or local carnival: as a community event which provides an opportunity to connect with constituents.

Promoted by Matthew Green on behalf of LGBT+ Conservatives, both at 4 Matthew Parker Street, London, SW1H 9HQ. Printed by: Solopress, 9 Stock Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS2 5QF.

CHLOE SMITH MP: WHY I TAKE PART IN NORWICH PRIDE



Norwich

"I'm a straight and proud supporter of LGBT+ Conservatives. Many towns and cities will hold Pride events which celebrate these values. LGBT+ Conservatives members enjoy these events – and so do I! I'm straight but I help lead Norwich Pride as an ally of all my constituents who want to know that I share their values."

As a fellow Conservative, I urge you to get involved for three reasons.

- People in your area will appreciate you showing your support. Just as you would go to any other local event which conveys people's views, needs, lifestyles and interests, it's simply part of what we do when we aspire to represent the whole community.
- The rest of your community enjoys Pride events too. Often held in the summer, they are celebrations for everyone in your town or your city, gay or straight. As Conservatives, we believe in community and Pride events are a great way to have fun and show your civic spirit.
- The Labour Party and the left are good at exploiting these events politically, and we should never let them win. MPs, councillors, candidates and campaigners in marginal seats know that voters can be pleasantly surprised when they meet their first Conservative – so let's get out there and show that our Party is for everyone!

How can LGBT+ Conservatives support you?

LGBT+ Conservatives can help you identify your local Pride. We can provide contacts and details of how to register. We can also provide LGBT+ Conservatives branded t-shirts and loan out LGBT+ Conservatives banners, flags and stickers for groups which wish to march in their local Pride parade.

Contact: prides@lgbtconservatives.org.uk



London

Stuart Andrew MP at Leeds Pride

Reading East Conservatives on why they take part in their local Pride

Cllr Alison Swaddle, President of Reading East Conservatives writes:



Alok Sharma MP
at Reading Pride

Reading East has supported the Reading Pride for over ten years. We were the first local political party to join the march through the town centre. It's a really friendly occasion offering a different way to engage with voters and challenge perceptions about Conservatives. Being part of Pride is very straightforward. We book and pay for our stall at commercial rate as we are not given charity rate and this contributes to the festival giving free entry to the thousands of visitors from across our region. The Association sends emails to members and supporters reminding of the date and encouraging involvement and we invite all associations in our Area to join us.

We consider that having a Conservative presence in the parade and a stall at the festival demonstrates that we are the party for all. The Conservative stall in a garden gazebo has a covered table, posters, bunting and leaflets in exactly the same way we attend other local carnivals. One year we gave visitors free cupcakes iced with a Tory tree, another we handed out balloons to children as it's well attended by families.

It's about being there to meet local people, chat and listen and show we understand their issues and their aspirations. LGBT+ Conservatives provide flags, banners, literature and t-shirts and several members of the committee have travelled to join us in the day.

Petitions on our stall have attracted great support from visitors and enabled our minority group on Reading Council to win support for action to help the LGBT community, such as having the Stonewall Champions programme in Reading Schools and setting up an LGBT+ support centre in Reading.



Glasgow



Chester

CROYDON PRIDE GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

In 2016, Croydon held its first LGBT Pride festival; in the two short years it has been running, Pride fest has become central to the calendar of Croydon's community - a key annual event to be celebrated!

Each year the festival will become bigger and better, with more and more people attending as it becomes more established. Within the local Conservative party, we feel it is vital to continue to be represented at the Croydon Pride fest. It is an excellent way of celebrating diversity, but also an opportunity for the local Conservative party to try and shed any negative LGBT rhetoric - it's just not what we believe in.

As an association, we are very proud to be involved and support this fantastic event locally. With continued work, this will be an excellent stepping-stone to try and change the image the LGBT community have of the Conservative party nationally, showing that we are a party that listens and understands to diverse communities which make up our wonderful country.

We felt our best approach was to promote some of the key achievements the conservative party have made towards LGBT equality nationally, and to highlight some of the key LGBT figures within government. Using the pride flag in all of our literature, with each colour explaining the key achievements the conservative party have made over the years, we believe we made an impact. It was very effective on the day, with many people reading all of the signs, which were proudly placed around the stall for everyone to see:

- Modern and Inclusive – The Conservatives have more LGBT+ MPs than any other party.
- Marriage Equality – As Conservatives we believe in freedom and supporting people who make a commitment to each other.
- Harsher Penalties for Hate Crimes – We have ensured people who murder transgender people in hate crimes now face life sentences.
- Tackling Homophobia – We have invested £2 million in schools to help tackle homophobic bullying.
- Practical Action – The government has launched a pilot for 40,000 men to be vaccinated against HPV.
- Correcting Past Wrongs – We have made it possible for gay men with historic criminal records for consensual gay sex to have these records deleted.

The LGBT+Conservatives group provided us branded T-shirts, banner and stickers, all of which help helped decorate the stall and our fantastic helpers who had some interesting discussions with attendees on the day. There is still work to be done, but working together with the LGBT community, true equality can be achieved.

Croydon Pride had such a great atmosphere; it was great to see so many people celebrating the diversity of our vibrant and inclusive borough. Working together with the LGBT+ Conservatives group, at next year's Croydon Pride fest, we will continue to grow our impact within the festival. It is our mission to reach out further to the LGBT community, and ensure that its voice is at the heart of our work.

Cllr Tim Pollard, Leader of the Croydon Conservative Group



Croydon



Brighton



John Penrose MP
at Weston Pride



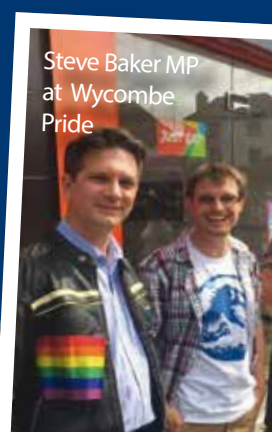
Belfast

ROBERT BUCKLAND MP WRITES:

I was happy to attend Pride in Swindon on 29th July. It was a really enjoyable occasion where all members of the community, regardless of their sexuality, were able to get together and celebrate our societal values.

The event in Swindon was well attended and a Conservative presence attracted attention, which allowed myself and other representatives to engage with members of the public. I believe that our stall sent the positive message that we are a party for all.

There was also a Labour and Green Party presence at Pride, so it was certainly important that I, as the local MP, was there to support the community. I would recommend that any Conservative representatives attend similar events in their local communities, not only to demonstrate that the Conservative Party is for everyone, but because it is a very friendly environment and an exceptional day out.



Steve Baker MP
at Wycombe
Pride