

Pride Guide

SUMMER 2025 EDITION



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Welcome to Congleton Pride 2025!

As Chair of Congleton Pride, I'm proud to welcome you to our sixth annual celebration - a joyful, vibrant, and defiant display of love, inclusion, and unity.

This year, our celebration carries an especially important message. While Pride is always about all of us, this year we stand especially with our Trans and Intersex community members - who are facing growing hostility, misrepresentation, and injustice here in the UK. Let me be clear: you belong here. You are valued. You are seen. And we will not let you stand alone.



At Congleton Pride, we believe that inclusivity is not a slogan - it's a practice. We work every day to ensure this is a space where everyone feels safe, respected, and celebrated - regardless of who they are or how they identify. So whether you're LGBTQIA+, a friend, an ally, or just here to learn, we welcome you with open arms. Let today be a celebration of who we are and a commitment to the fairer, kinder future we must keep building together.

With love, hope, and Pride,

Malcolm Pope, Chair, Congleton Pride

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Trans rights

- and why Pride is so important

Over the past few years, the conversation around LGBTQIA+ rights in Britain and beyond has become more charged, with a particular focus on trans* people as a wedge issue. What's often called a 'culture war' has led to real legal and social changes which are having a negative impact on all the trans* community. Thus, it is vital we understand what's happening and what it could mean for our whole community.

In April 2025, the Supreme Court ruled that the terms 'man' and 'woman' in the Equality Act must be defined, not by gender identity but by biological sex - without stating what biological sex means. The impact was immediate. The few sporting bodies who were inclusive up to that point began excluding trans women from female categories. Some NHS trusts, starting with County Durham and Darlington, moved to restrict access to women-only spaces for trans women. Nurses in the region are already challenging this policy, calling it discriminatory.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission followed up with guidance that took the ruling further and reinforced the exclusion and segregation of trans* people. It's not just about toilets, but also the right to association. It led to uncertainty across various sectors: events have been postponed, policies paused, single-sex organisations who want to be inclusive are unsure how they can be due to unclear guidance from the EHRC.

What's clear is this: trans* people are being singled out in law and in public debate. And when one part of our community is targeted, we are all affected.

This hurts trans* people by increasing stress, stigma, and puts barriers to daily life by removing access to suitable facilities, which means being outed would be a daily occurrence. We have been seeing the depriving of healthcare and other forms of support that they need from public services. It also sets a precedent: if legal protections can be weakened for one group, they can be weakened for other groups. That's why the broader LGBTQIA+ community must pay attention and stand up. What starts with trans* rights can quickly spread to wider issues of healthcare access, education, and workplace protections for all.

But there are things we can all do...

The first is to challenge transphobia in all its forms as it will help move the Overton window back towards inclusivity. Small things add up quickly. Read trusted sources, ask questions, and learn how local and national policies are shifting. Whether it's writing to your MP, signing petitions, or simply having conversations with family, showing visible support matters. This is especially important in smaller towns and communities, where silence can feel like agreement.

Pride events, community groups, support networks - these spaces offer both visibility and solidarity. They remind us that we are not alone, and that together, we are stronger. The next year will likely bring more legal battles, more pressure, and more public argument. But it can also bring more unity, awareness, and more courage.

If we centre the needs of the most marginalised in our community, we build a foundation that protects us all. Pride is protest, but it's also care. And this year, more than ever, care is what we need. Nobody should be prevented from living their true selves, as should have proper recognition of their lived lives. Trans women are women, trans men are men, and nonbinary people are nonbinary. It is important that in all aspects of life and law that this is recognised.

Congleton Pride - in the community all year round

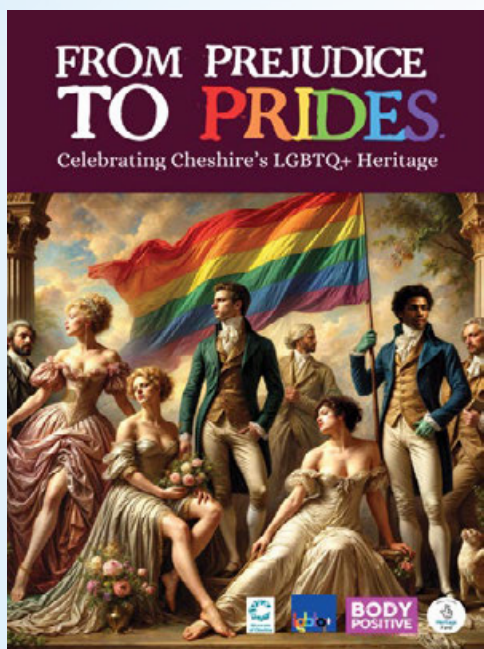
Congleton Pride isn't just about our annual event; it's an ongoing commitment throughout the year. Our committee organises regular activities to build connections and provide mutual support within our community.

An informal afternoon focused on community, conversation, coffee, tea, and delicious baked goods, **Caffeine Connections** meets on the last Wednesday of every month. Whether you're part of the LGBTQIA+ community or an ally, it's a safe and friendly space to be yourself, meet new people, and find support. Check our Facebook page and group for more information.

A new monthly series, **The Listening Project** is a forum dedicated to sharing lived experiences within the LGBTQIA+ community. A safe and respectful environment for attendees to listen and understand, free from debate and judgement. It began with Dr. Abby Smith, who shared her personal journey of coming out as a trans woman. On the second Friday evening of each month from August onwards, we'll feature talks on themes such as Equality and the Patriarchy, and the rich history of LGBTQIA+ life in our part of the country. Again, find and follow us on Facebook where we'll be posting all the details in the lead up to each event.

CHESHIRE'S QUEER PAST HIDDEN HISTORIES AND QUIET LANDMARKS

Cheshire has a long and surprising LGBTQIA+ history, though much of it stayed hidden for years. From secret weddings to drag nights in small-town pubs, queer lives have always been part of the story, even if they weren't always welcome in it.



One of the earliest records of same-sex commitment in Britain comes from St James' Church in Taxal. In 1707, the parish register notes the marriage of two women: Hannah Wright and Anne Gaskill. The details are sparse, but the record exists, a powerful reminder that queer love has deep roots here.

Another wedding took place in 1750 at St Michael and All Angels in Middlewich. Sarah Richardson, "commonly known as Peter", married Maria Sproston by banns. We don't know how the couple were treated, but this quiet defiance is part of Cheshire's past.

In the 1800s, Anne Lister, often called Britain's first modern lesbian, maintained a relationship with Mariana Percy, who married Charles Bourne Lawton of Lawton Hall, Church Lawton. Despite the marriage, Anne and Mariana continued to meet for several years. Lister's detailed diaries tell the story.

Cheshire is also linked to one of the most tragic figures in queer history. Alan Turing, who helped crack the Enigma code, was living in Wilmslow when he was arrested and tried at Knutsford Court

House in 1952. Convicted under laws criminalising homosexuality, Turing died by suicide two years later. His later royal pardon was small comfort for the injustice he suffered.

By the 1970s, more visible LGBTQIA+ spaces began to appear. Thursday nights at the Market Tavern in Sandbach became a safe place for gay men to meet. In Chester, pubs like the Dublin Packet and the Bear & Billet quietly welcomed gay customers during an era when few others did. The Liverpool Arms remains a long-standing gay-friendly pub.

Support networks grew too. In 2003, Body Positive opened its base in Crewe, originally offering help to people living with HIV. It now provides wider support services for LGBTQIA+ people across Cheshire.

Queer stories also found their way onto the stage. In 1999, the Lyceum Theatre in Crewe hosted Hushabye Mountain, a Jonathan Harvey play exploring a world learning to live with AIDS. It gave audiences a chance to see LGBTQIA+ lives reflected with honesty and care.

Other lives unfolded quietly. Esther Roper, born in Lindow in 1868, was one of the first women to study at a British university. She became a suffragist and spent her life with Irish poet Eva Gore-Booth. Together, they campaigned for working women and gender equality.

These stories, of love, resistance, friendship and loss, show that LGBTQIA+ people have always been part of Cheshire. You just had to know where to look.

To explore more, visit www.fptop.uk

Congleton Pride would like to thank **Body Positive** for providing the historical information that this article is based on.

ACCESSIBILITY

Congleton Pride is all about inclusion and we want everyone to have a fantastic day. Thank you for giving space and priority to visitors with access needs. Your kindness keeps Pride inclusive. We have taken steps to make this year's Pride as accessible and inclusive as possible. If you have any questions about access at Congleton Pride, please email access@congletonpride.co.uk for more information.

Event layout

Spreading the event across High St., Bridge St. and the market area creates more room, with step-free access throughout. There will be spaced-out stalls along just one side of Bridge St. Wide pathways with plenty of room for wheelchairs to pass. All dropped kerbs will be kept free. Stalls will be flush to low kerbs so wheelchairs can get all round. There will be a reserved space for wheelchair users at the front of the main stage.

Seating

There will be plenty of seating available and seating areas will be clearly marked on the event map.

Information

All signage will be at a suitable height for wheelchair users. Signage will be large print, on plain good-contrast background, with use of icons as well as words. The Pride Guide will be accessible, with clear, good contrast print and no busy backgrounds. Large print version of Pride Guide will be available for download from the Congleton Pride website, with printed copies available in the Town Hall. Accessibility Marshal for the event is **Kay Wesley** - phone or text: **07711 459740**.

People

Marshals will be trained to support disabled visitors. We encourage all Pride-goers to be considerate and kind, and prioritise those with access needs.

Toilets

There will be two accessible portable toilets near the bus station. There are two accessible toilets in the Town Hall. The nearest 'Changing Places' toilet is at Congleton Leisure Centre on Worrall St. (open to non-centre users).

Transport

Congleton Bus Services will be running with slightly changed routes for numbers 90 and 91 due to the closure of High St. All the Beartown Buses are accessible for wheelchairs. There are disabled parking spots available as follows:

Antrobus St. car park: 2

Back Park St. car park: 3

Fairground car park: 6

Princess St. car park (market): 2

Safe / Quiet Space

There is a quiet space upstairs in the Town Hall (in the Spencer Suite) with a lift and accessible toilets. Please drop in if you'd like to escape the crowds. Volunteers will be there to welcome you. There will also be an Art Display in The Space which will form a quieter place near the main stage.

Assistance dogs

There is a water bowl for dogs by the information tent.

Hidden disabilities - the Sunflower

Some people have disabilities that are not visible and wear a 'Sunflower' (badge or lanyard) to indicate this. Our Pride Marshals recognise this logo and will be ready to assist anyone who is wearing it.





PRIDE PARADE - NEW ROUTE

In 2025 we're running our Pride Parade right through the very centre of Congleton for the first time! Starting from West Street car park at 11:30, and marching all the way along Bridge Street to our Main Stage. If you'd like to be part of it, please arrive at the car park by about 11:15 so that our organisers and marshals can find the best way to fit everybody in.



ART FROM THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

We present more photography, art, fashion and poetry created by members of our community. Telling our own stories, discovering and being ourselves, or simply making some of the beauty we want to see in the world! The exhibition is generously hosted by **The Space** at 35-37 High Street, just opposite Congleton Pride's Main Stage.

CLASSIC CARS

In addition to some fabulous classic cars from our local area, we're honoured to welcome some of the Gay Classic Car Group (GCCG) members as our guests. Established in London in 1988, GCCG is the world's largest classic car club for the LGBTQIA+ community and we're thrilled to have them join our celebration of diversity and style.

SAFE / QUIET SPACE

Once more there's a safe / quiet space at Congleton Pride, on the first floor of the **Town Hall**, in the Spencer Suite. Somewhere to come and chill, take the weight off your feet and recharge before going back out. Everyone is welcome - no one will judge or tell you what you should do. We even have chocolates and nibbles! There will always be a volunteer available to talk to in confidence - and if you need to you can report a hate crime. We are here for you.

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Pride Parade

11:30 - 11:45 am From West St. car park to Main Stage

Main Stage

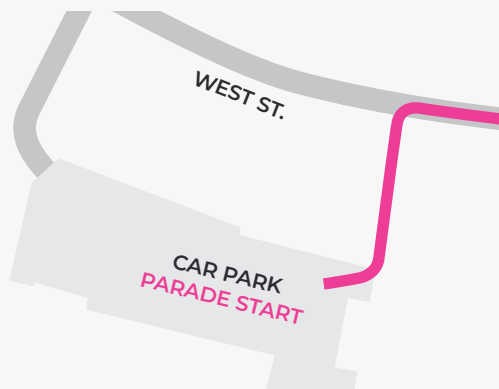
11:45 - 12:00 pm	Speeches and ribbon cutting
12:00 - 12:35	Congleton Musical Theatre
12:45 - 1:30	Jenna G
1:30 - 2:00	LB Dance
2:15 - 2:45	Jessica Stretton
3:00 - 3:45	The Trigger Hounds
4:00 - 4:45	Danielle as Shania Twain
4:45 - 5:00	Closing words and thanks

Community Stage

12:00 - 12:30 pm	Mossley School Choir
12:30 - 1:15	Karamba
1:15 - 1:45	The Beartown Singers
1:45 - 2:15	The Wesleys
2:15 - 3:00	Andy Hofton
3:00 - 3:30	Jasmine Allen Estate
3:30 - 4:00	Zumba with Em
4:00 - 4:45	The Leaping Frogs

After Party

8:00 pm - late
After Party
at Radley & Co.



CMQ

6:00 - 8:00pm Jenna G
8:00 - 11:00 Live DJ

Artisan Market

10:00am - 4:00pm
with live music and
children's entertainment

Art Exhibition in The Space

Classic Car Show in front of Town Hall

Safe / Quiet Space first floor, Town Hall



Race

Religion

Sexual
Orientation

Disability

Gender Identity

Being targeted
because of who
you are...

...is
**HATE
CRIME**

**CHESHIRE
POLICE WANT
TO KNOW
ABOUT IT.**



**Congleton
Pride**

**You can
talk to us...**

#REPORTHATECRIME

Call 999 in an emergency
Call 101 to speak to police in your area

Report what's happened online:
www.report-it.org.uk





IN SUPPORT OF
CONGLETON PRIDE



The After Party

featuring

Harriet Dagnall Duo

from 8pm

**15% off drinks for
anyone displaying
pride!** (*wearing colours,
badges, brochure from the day!*)

**Pride Raffle
Pride Cocktails
Pride Gin**

*All proceeds from Raffle,
Pride Cocktails & Gin
go to Congleton Pride.*

No ticket required!



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PROUDLY SUPPORTING PRIDE

At Priestly Fields Care Home, we're proud to be a fully inclusive home where everyone is welcomed and valued for who they are. We're equally proud to support Congleton Pride and celebrate diversity in our community.

Our warm and friendly home is led by a caring, highly trained team who provide personalised support in a safe and welcoming environment—ensuring every resident feels truly at home.

Priestly Fields Care Home, Congleton, CW12 4AQ

T: 01260 221731

E: info@sandstonecare.co.uk

W: sandstonecare.co.uk



PRIESTLY FIELDS
CARE HOME

We believe everybody deserves
the best quality of life

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CARE GROUP

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THE LISTENING PROJECT



A series of inspiring LGBTQIA+ talks
hosted in a safe space - for the pride
community and their allies

Every second Friday of the month
6.45pm welcome for 7pm start

See website for more details:
congletonpride.co.uk/TLP

OUR SPONSORS

We'd like to thank our sponsors one last time, for making it possible to do everything we do at Congleton Pride.

Lead Sponsor: **Millie's Vets**

Main stage sponsors: **EDIT Development, Millie's Vets, Pear Hospitality, Congleton Market Quarter, Congleton Chronicle, Congleton Town Council**

Community stage sponsors: **Chris Hamriding, Crown Bank Dental, Plus Dane Housing, TMC**

Media partners: **EDIT Development, Congleton Chronicle**

Parade sponsors: **Kanga Health, Margaret Williamson Memorial Fund**

4 star supporters: **Wildsville, Trinity Amateur Operatic Society**

Star supporter: **Stephenson Browne**

We'd especially like to thank Congleton Mayor (2024-25) **Kay Wesley** for nominating us as one of her charity donations.

rainbow

layer cake recipe



As the legend goes, in a glittery caravan parked under a Cheshire sky, a weary drag queen dreamed of something magical. After mixing tears, sass, and plenty of sugar - whispering a secret spell passed down from Judy Garland herself - the first rainbow cake burst from the oven in a cloud of edible glitter.

"Fabulous!" she sighed, slicing it to reveal perfect rainbow stripes. Today, baking this cake continues the magic, filling Pride month with colour, laughter, and enough joy to sparkle brighter than a disco ball. Bake it proudly - and let them taste the rainbow.

It's a big cake - no holding back!

Recipe by justbeenbaked.com

Ingredients

Cake

750g unsalted butter, softened
750g caster sugar
9 large eggs, at room temperature
750g self-raising flour, sifted
9tbsp whole milk
1½tsp vanilla extract
Gel food colouring (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple... or the colours from any other pride flag!)

Buttercream

400g unsalted butter, softened
900g icing sugar, sifted
5-6tbsp milk

Equipment

Large mixing bowl (ideally with a scale)
Electric whisk
Six medium bowls
Two to six 8-inch (20cm) cake tins
Cake leveller or long serrated knife
Gel colour pastes
Turntable
Circle guide, slightly under 8in (20cm)
Palette knife
Cake scraper

1. Prepare the sponge batter. Preheat oven to 180°C (fan). Grease and flour tins. In your large bowl, cream butter and sugar until pale and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, mixing well. Stir in vanilla. Fold in flour alternately with milk until smooth.

2. Divide and colour. Weigh bowl with batter. Subtract bowl weight and divide remaining weight by six to give equal portions for each layer. Spoon equal amounts into six bowls. Add gel food colouring - adjust until deep, vibrant colours appear.

3. Bake. Pour batter into prepared tins. Bake for about 15-20 minutes, until a skewer comes out clean. Cool completely on wire racks.

4. Level and cool. Use a leveller or serrated knife to create flat, even layers. Ensure sponges are fully cooled before assembling.

5. Make buttercream. Beat butter until creamy. Gradually add icing sugar. Blend in milk to reach spreading consistency. Stir in vanilla extract.

6. Assemble. Spread a layer of buttercream between each sponge layer. Do a crumb coat (a thin layer of cream over whole cake), chill 30-60 minutes. Final coat: smooth icing using turntable and scraper for neat finish.

7. Decorate. Optional: place trimmed cake scraps in a bowl to make rainbow cake pops.

Tips for Best Results: Bring all ingredients to room temperature - especially the butter. Use gel colouring for vibrant hues and no added liquid. Refrigerate between icing layers to prevent crumbs and ensure smooth finish.

BIG NIGHT OUT

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Last Wednesday of the month



2 till 5 pm

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CONGLETON MARKET QUARTER, PRINCESS STREET

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USEFUL INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

To contact Congleton Pride, email hello@congletonpride.co.uk, visit www.congletonpride.co.uk or search for us on Facebook.

Body Positive (www.bpcnw.co.uk, health@bpcnw.co.uk, 01270 653150)
Offering help, advice, friendship and support to anyone who needs assistance or information around sexuality, sexual identity or gender identity, wherever they are on that journey.

Congleton Area Transgender Support (CATS) (Facebook group, congletoncats@gmail.com)
A support group for people under the trans* umbrella and people who are questioning.

FFLAG (www.fflag.org.uk, 0300 688 0368)
A national voluntary organisation and registered charity. Dedicated to supporting parents and families and their LGBTQIA+ members.

Gendered Intelligence (www.genderedintelligence.co.uk)
Established in 2008, they are a trans-led and trans-involving grassroots organisation with a wealth of lived experience, community connections of many kinds, and a depth and breadth of trans community knowledge that is second to none.

LGBT Foundation (lgbt.foundation, 03453 303030)
National charity delivering a wide range of services including: a national helpline, sexual health testing and support, free mental health and wellbeing services, support groups and advice for tackling hate crime and discrimination.

Mermaids (mermaidsuk.org.uk, 0808 801 0400)
One of Britain's leading trans-focused charities. Supporting trans, non-binary and gender-diverse children, young people and their families since 1995.

Mindline Trans+ (www.mindlinetrans.org.uk, 0300 330 5468)
An emotional and mental health support helpline for anyone who is transgender, non-binary or genderfluid. Also supports family, friends, colleagues and carers.

MindOut (www.mindout.org.uk, 0300 7729855)
A mental health service run by and for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer people. They work to improve the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ communities and to make mental health a community concern.

Rainbow Noir (www.rainbownoirmcr.com)
Creating spaces where LGBTQI people of colour can connect with community and affirm identity and experience. Raising the visibility of LGBTQI people of colour and our experiences in Manchester, Greater Manchester and beyond.

Silver Rainbows (www.bpcnw.co.uk/silver-rainbows, 01270 653150)
Supported by **Body Positive** (see above), Silver Rainbows is a social and support network for older LGBT+ people in Cheshire.

Sparkle

(www.sparkle.org.uk)

A 20 year old registered charity, its reach extends to transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people, their partners, families, friends, and wider society which they are part of. The annual Sparkle Weekend is a one-of-a-kind celebration of the magic of gender diversity and the joy of being trans!

Stonewall

(www.stonewall.org.uk)

Founded in 1989 by people involved in the struggle against Section 28 of the Local Government Act. Provides info and support for LGBTQIA+ communities and allies.

SupportLine

(www.supportline.org.uk, 01708 765200)

Offers confidential emotional support to children, young adults and adults by telephone, email, and post. It is particularly aimed at those who are socially isolated, vulnerable, at risk groups and survivors of any form of abuse.

Switchboard

(switchboard.lgbt, 0800 0119 100)

Information and links to services and guidance for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals. A safe space for anyone to discuss anything, including sexuality, gender identity, sexual health and emotional well-being.

Terrence Higgins Trust

(www.tht.org.uk, 0808 802 1221)

Britain's leading HIV and sexual health charity. Supports and amplifies the voices of people living with HIV. Helps people to achieve good sexual health.

TRANSCEND

(Facebook group)

A mutual support and discussion group based in Macclesfield for all transgender and gender variant people, their partners, families, allies and supporters.

TransUnite

(www.transunite.co.uk)

A comprehensive resource for people searching for support in the transgender community. There is an easy to use, mobile friendly directory which connects you to an established network of trans support groups near you.

Unique

(www.uniquetg.org.uk)

Unique Transgender Network is a voluntary group supporting trans, non-binary and gender diverse people in North Wales and West Cheshire.

We'd really like to hear of any new groups you know of or are involved in setting up, and we're also grateful to **Macc Pride** for providing so much of the information that this list is based on.

Pride Guide 2025, version 1.1

Text written / edited by & © the Congleton Pride team, except recipe on p.18

Photos taken by & © Jules Hill, Brendan McPhillips, Gordon Self, Garry Fuller and others

Millie's Vets

by James Ede

Millie's Vets is Congleton's only independent Veterinary practice and was established in January 2023 by local Vet James H. Ede, a proud member of the rainbow community.

Millie's Vets provides high quality Veterinary care to the pets of Congleton and surrounding areas.



Opening Times

Mon - Fri: 08:30 - 18:00

Sat: 09:00 - 16:00

Sun: Closed



01260 222999 | www.milliesvets.co.uk



Millie's Vets, 6 John Bradshaw Court, Alexandria Way, Congleton, CW12 1LB