

# My first LGBT+ History Month as an openly pansexual MP

Earlier this year, I came out as pansexual, becoming the first openly pan MP. This February is of particular significance for me. **It is the first LGBT History Month I have openly celebrated as part of the community.**

I did not come out to be heralded as a trailblazer. But upon coming out, I realised that **my public visibility meant a lot to a lot of people**. Many people in the LGBT+ community, especially those who fall under the 'B', 'T' or '+', don't feel visible to or accepted by the rest of society. These identities are often treated with suspicion or cynicism because people simply don't know what they are.

We need to actively engage people in this conversation now. This is why LGBT+ education is so important.

This is where visibility comes in. When I came out, I found myself having to define pansexuality and I believe that the more we speak on the topic, the greater the understanding and acceptance of people who identify as LGBT+. Additionally, **by having more elected officials who identify as LGBT+, we shine a light on a community and individuals who often feel hidden.**

**Increasing sexual diversity in politics and the media has the power to help those people who are afraid of being misunderstood to feel accepted by society.** But there is more that needs to be done to teach the world about different identities and sexualities. We need to actively engage people in this conversation now. This is why LGBT+ education is so important.

By teaching children about different kinds of relationships, we remove the gap in knowledge and challenge stereotypes. We stop an LGBT+ teenager feeling there is something wrong with them. We stop them being bullied for who they are attracted to or who they love. **We can help to build a world where people are comfortable to be themselves.**

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No, LGBT+ education in schools is not a one size fits all solution. It will take time for the education to disperse through society, but **by educating children, we can actively improve attitudes.**

**Homophobia and hate often come from a place of miseducation and lack of interaction.** People who don't meet or learn about the LGBT+ community, are more likely to believe misguided stereotypes about the community and the individuals.

While it is important to look at LGBT history, we must also look to the future. Look to improving visibility, and education for the LGBT+ community. I am excited to celebrate my first LGBT History Month as part of the community and reflect on the achievements we have made. **But I keep at the forefront of my mind that there is a lot that we need to do to keep making a difference.**

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## [We have a duty to support young people with their mental health](#)

Week in, week out, either at my constituency surgery or in my inbox or just through conversations with friends and acquaintances, **I hear yet another tragic story of a child or young person struggling with their mental health, having to battle to get any sort of help.**

Inadequate funding under the Conservatives has left Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) close to breaking point

**Stories include teenagers self-harming and attempting suicide**, being excluded from or staying away from school because their school or they themselves simply cannot cope. Stories include a ten-year-old – yes, a ten-year-old – with a severe mental health disorder who has already been waiting four months for her initial assessment and will have to wait months more for treatment.

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## [Celebrating LGBT History Month](#)

LGBT History Month is a welcome opportunity to celebrate the activism, strength and the spirit of the entire LGBT+ community. This is the time to look back at the key moments in the struggle for equal rights and to reflect on how we can build a more just world for everyone.

**This month we celebrate iconic LGBT+ pioneers and strengthen our efforts to give meaningful attention to LGBT history.**

Introducing the amendment that led to the repeal of Section 28 remains one of my proudest moments in parliament

In the UK, LGBT History Month falls in February to coincide the repealing of Section 28 in England and Wales. Introducing the amendment that led to the repeal of that abhorrent act remains one of my proudest moments in parliament.

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## [What we've done together](#)

For the last four years, the Liberal Democrats have proudly fought to stop Brexit.



I am immensely proud of everything we did. We stood up for our values. We campaigned so hard. But I also accept that at 11pm tonight, we will no longer be members of the European Union.

**Our European story is not over.** Tomorrow our fight continues, to make sure Britain has the closest possible relationship with our allies in Europe.

Today, I want to take stock of everything we did achieve in our fight to stop Brexit.

When the results of the European referendum were announced on that sad day in

June 2016, **we knew that something must be done.** Our leader at the time, Tim Farron, did not wait to say that we deserved a vote on the final Brexit deal.



We were a lone voice at first. But more and more people joined our cause, to call for a People's Vote on the final deal.

**Our membership surged to the highest numbers in our party's history.**

We backed the cross-party People's Vote campaign. Its rallies attracted hundreds of thousands of people, making them the biggest marches since the protests against the Iraq war.



Our MPs worked across parties in the Commons and the Lords to inflict more than 30 defeats on the Conservative government's Brexit bills.

**We stopped a catastrophic no deal and we stopped the government charging EU citizens to apply to stay in the UK.**

Last year, we went into the European elections with an unapologetic message on Brexit.



I'm so proud of that campaign. **We fought unashamedly for our liberal, progressive values**, and we made a strong case for why the UK should continue to be members of the EU.

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## [Could you be a Lib Dem candidate?](#)

**Being a Liberal Democrat candidate is a rewarding way to make a difference anywhere from your local town council to nationally in Westminster.** Our new candidates process makes it far easier to get the ball rolling on your application. If you're thinking of standing, we have just made it easier for you to apply! There is a link to a short form below that you can use to express interest.

Our candidates process is designed to be inclusive and transparent. **You won't be judged based on who you know or what qualifications you have.** We're more interested in your skills and capabilities, which can come from your political, work, voluntary or social life!



### **Expressing interest in becoming a councillor**

You can use the form below to express interest in being a council candidate – your local party will receive a notification that you're interested and will be in touch with further details. With your permission, your information will also be shared with the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors (ALDC),

who can offer guidance and advice on how to become a Lib Dem councillor.

## **Expressing interest in becoming a Parliamentary or Assembly candidate**

Becoming a parliamentary or assembly candidate is a three-stage process. Firstly, you should register your interest using the same form below. **with various Lib Dem groups** like the Parliamentary Candidates Association and the Campaign for Gender Balance where relevant, who can provide support with your application.

You will then receive an email about the candidate application process, which will also contain an application form for you to tell us about yourself. After completing this form, you will be invited to a Candidate Assessment Day, where **you'll take part in a mix of written and spoken exercises, and a panel of impartial assessors will let you know how you did within two weeks.**

We welcome applications from people from all walks of life: there is no such thing as a typical Lib Dem candidate

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