



The Wales LGBTQ+ Timeline Collection

Blaenau Gwent Edition

Introduction



In 2021 the Welsh Government commissioned training in LGBTQ+ Language and History for local museums, libraries and archives to encourage the celebration of local stories of sexual orientation and gender identity.

This is part of the work being done on raising awareness and understanding of the diverse population of Wales and compliments the Welsh Government Action Plan which aims to:

- tackle inequalities experienced by LGBTQ+ communities;
- challenge discrimination;
- create a society where LGBTQ+ people are safe to live and love authentically, openly and freely as themselves.

The training provided effective learning points and practical tools to enable staff and volunteers to move forward with a fully inclusive programme resulting in an expansion beyond the organisation to the general public, such as family historians, local historians and community groups. Allowing the promotion of historic material in ways not realised before and enhancing work with partner organisations in not only in making LGBTQ+ material accessible to the public, but also in collecting and preserving this heritage.

An outcome of the LGBTQ+ Language and History training is the construction of timelines

for each of the 22 counties of Wales. This provides a means by which local people, allies and events can be celebrated instead of replicating mainstream narratives and celebrities.

A baseline of highlighted moments from history was constructed by Norena Shopland from her Welsh historic material collection on sexual orientations and gender identities, and from that contributed to the Hanes LHDT+ Cymru / LGBTQ+ Research Group Wales established to encourage and promote research into Welsh LGBTQ+ history. Their website, LGBTQ Cymru is funded by Swansea University to record as much information as possible on this history.

<https://lgbtqcymru.swansea.ac.uk/>

People are encouraged to add to and keep expanding the timelines to make them as comprehensive as possible.

19th CENTURY >

1861

The death penalty for buggery was abolished when the Offences Against the Person Act 1828 was replaced with the Offences Against the Person Act 1861.

A total of 8921 men had been prosecuted since 1806 for sodomy with 404 sentenced to death and 56 executed. Homosexuality remained illegal until partially decriminalised in 1967 in England and Wales, and 1980 in Scotland.

1885

The British Parliament enacted Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885, section 11 of which, known as the Labouchere Amendment, prohibited gross indecency between males.

It thus became possible to prosecute homosexuals for engaging in sexual acts where buggery or attempted buggery could not be proven.

The Labouchere Amendment became known as the Blackmailers Charter because it was so easy to accuse men, regardless if it was true or not, of being homosexual.



> 1895

1893

Evan Morgan, 2nd Viscount Tredegar (1893–1949) is born. The eccentric millionaire and open homosexual, led a hedonistic lifestyle at Grade I listed Tredegar House in Newport, where he held legendary gatherings in the basement that mixed occult rituals with wild partying. Despite being married twice, Morgan's most significant relationship was with writer Ronald Firbank, who he first met at London's Eiffel

Tower restaurant. Morgan was also an artist and writer himself, publishing several collections of poetry during the 1920s.

Source: Cadw, 'The Gay Aristocracy of Victorian Wales,' 2023



Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons

1895

Oscar Wilde, tried for gross indecency over a relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas, was sentenced to two years in prison with hard labour.



20th CENTURY >

1914

The First World War broke out in August 1914. Army historian A.D. Harvey writes that “at least 230 soldiers were court-martialled, convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment for homosexual offences” during World War I.

1921

The Criminal Law Amendment Act was revised in the House of Commons to include a section making sexual “acts of gross indecency” between women illegal. While the Act was passed by the Commons, it was defeated by the House of Lords.

1928

Stanley Smart, 23, collier from Abertillery was arrested on the offence of attempting to commit buggery with Samuel Newman, 50, labourer. They were charged with ‘Gross indecency with male person,’ found guilty and Stanley was sentenced to four months imprisonment with hard labour, while Samuel received six months imprisonment with hard labour.

Source: *UK Calendar of Prisoners, 1868-1929*, via Ancestry



1942

1929

Welsh actor and author Vittorio Giorgio Andre “Victor” Spinetti (1929–2012) was born in Cwm, Blaenau Gwent. Spinetti lived with his partner of forty-four years, Graham Curnow.

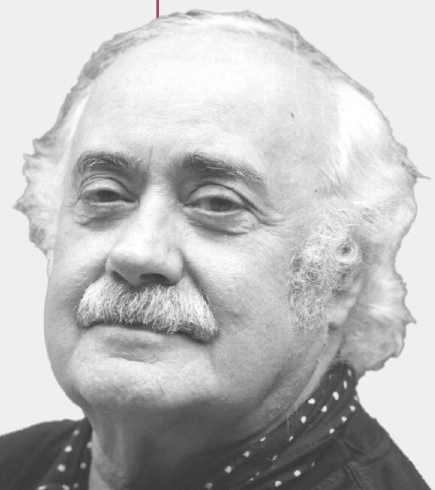


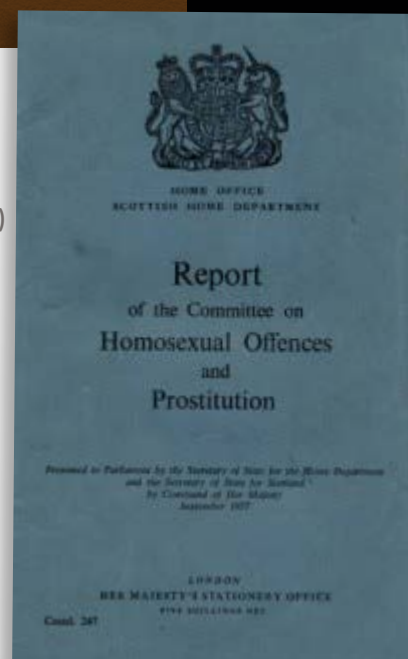
Photo credit:
Wikimedia Commons,
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By Matty06P - Own
work

1942

The Rev. Llywelyn Williams (1911–1965) was a Welsh Labour Party politician born in Llanelli, he later became a Congregational minister and served at Abertillery. During the debate in the year following the publication of the Wolfenden Report which recommended a partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality, William said in the House of Commons:

Some words are very highly charged in their emotional content, and the word “homosexuality” is one of these. We should, therefore, be as free from emotionalism as possible in our analysis of these problems and difficulties. I admit that it is not easy for the so-called normal person, such as myself, whose physical and sexual life

1942 continued over...



1942 continued...

is happily integrated in a satisfactory marital relationship, to be unemotional or objective in these matters. I confess that it is only on the basis of knowledge acquired by extensive reading on the subject plus a deliberate act of a sympathetic imagination that enables me to understand or even to try to understand the problems and difficulties of a homosexual. But the effort must be made, otherwise there can be no progress in dealing with this admittedly difficult problem.

His much longer speech can be downloaded from *Hansard*.

Source: 'Homosexual Offences and Prostitution (Report),' *Hansard*, 26 November 1958 vol 596 cc365-508

1945

World War II ends. Following the war, moral attitudes to homosexuality changed.

1946

Michael Dillon has one of the first sex reassignment surgeries from female to male.

1951

Roberta Cowell, a former World War II Spitfire pilot, becomes the first transgender woman to undergo male-to-female confirmation surgery.



1957

1954

Alan Turing, an English mathematician, logician, cryptanalyst and computer scientist, influential in the development of computer science, committed suicide.

He had been given a course of female hormones (chemical castration) by doctors as an alternative to prison after being prosecuted by the police because of his homosexuality.



Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons
File:Alan-Turing-Rephotography.jpg

1957

The Wolfenden Committee is formed. When it concludes in 1957 it recommends a partial decriminalisation for male homosexuality. When these recommendations are not followed by the government the Homosexual Law Reform Society is formed to campaign for the recommendations to be enacted.

1967

Ten years after the Wolfenden Report, Cardiffian MP Leo Abse introduced the Sexual Offences Bill 1967 supported by Labour MP Roy Jenkins, then the Labour Home Secretary.



Leo Abse

Photo credit: © National Portrait Gallery, London

1970

Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was established.



1974

Labour MP Maureen Colquhoun comes out as the first lesbian MP.



1984

1982

Welshman Terry Higgins dies of AIDS in St Thomas' Hospital London. His partner Rupert Whitaker and friend Martyn Butler set up the Terry Higgins Trust (which became the Terrence Higgins Trust), the first UK AIDS charity.



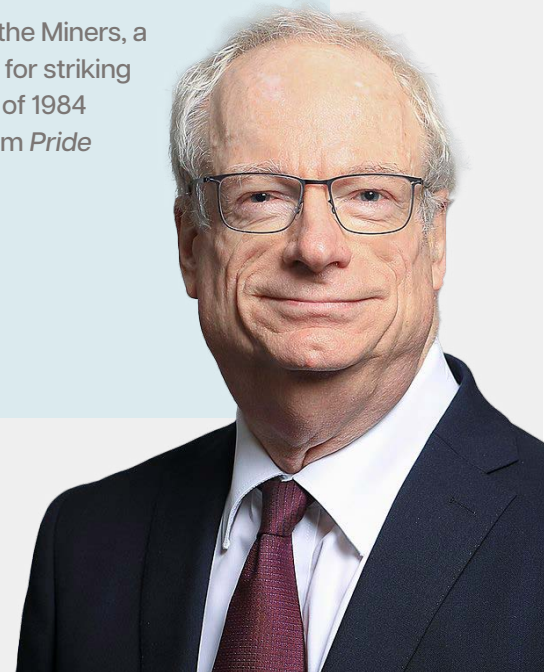
1984

MP Chris Smith is elected making him the first openly out homosexual politician in the UK parliament.

Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, a campaign of LGBT+ support for striking workers in the miners' strike of 1984 and 1985, is launched. The film *Pride* covers their story.



Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons
© Roger Harris



1985

Howard Ashton of Ashvale in Tredegar wrote to the *Western Mail* objecting to a “Lesbians in Wales’ get-together organised by the Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff. “I understand,” he wrote, “that the Christian Union has been accused of lacking Christian charity. If anyone is to accuse Christians of their lack of charity in this matter, then that person had better accuse God himself of it, since he declared himself solidly against homosexuality.” Howard, like many, insists on enforcing into the Bible a word that did not exist before the late 19th century, nowhere in the Bible is the word ‘homosexuality’ mentioned.

Source: Howard Ashton, ‘Letters,’ *Western Mail*, 4 April 4 1985; Norena Shopland, *Forbidden Lives: LGBT stories from Wales* (Seren Books, 2017)



2000

21st CENTURY >

2000

The UK Labour government stops banning homosexuals from the armed forces after the European Court of Human Rights rules it unlawful.

The government also introduces legislation to repeal Section 28 in England and Wales – Conservative MPs oppose the move. The bill is defeated by bishops and Conservatives in the House of Lords.

Scotland abolished Clause 2a (Section 28) of the Local Government Act in October though it remains in place in England and Wales.

Unknown Date

Foster Wales Blaenau Gwent spoke to their successful same sex foster carers ‘Matt and Arron’, who wanted to share their story with others who are of the LGBTQ+ community and are thinking of fostering with their local authority. “My husband and I talked about fostering for a while before we applied. Not only were we nervous with being a same-sex couple, but also being men and would we be accepted in the fostering community, as the stigma on a child needing a female touch with a more nurturing, maternal aspect deemed a better choice. Little did I know that this would not be the case.”

Source: *Foster Wales Blaenau Gwent*, ‘LGBTQ + Fostering: Arron and Matt’s story’, unknown date.

2003

Section 28, which banned councils and schools from intentionally promoting homosexuality, is repealed in England and Wales and Northern Ireland. Employment Equality Regulations made it illegal to discriminate against lesbians, gays or bisexuals at work.

2004

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 is passed by the Labour Government, giving same-sex couples the same rights and responsibilities as married heterosexual couples in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 is passed by the Labour Government. The Act gives transsexual people legal recognition as members of the sex appropriate to their gender (male or female) allowing them to acquire a new birth certificate, affording them full recognition of their acquired sex in law for all purposes, including marriage.



2007

2004

Taye Lee Lopez was voted Wales' most eligible gay man - winning through to the final of the Mr Gay UK competition. But the 21-year-old, who grew up in Swffryd, says that as a teenager, he had no one to talk to about the fact he is gay. He felt so isolated that he tried to kill himself three times by taking overdoses. But now, after moving to Cardiff and coming out last year, he is pledging to put any sponsorship he gains if he wins the national title on setting up a project to help young men in the same position as he was growing up in the Valleys.

Source: *South Wales Argus*, 'If I win UK title I'll help Valleys gay people,' 2 July 2004

2004

The South East Wales LGB Forum, formed in 2004, was an organisation working to empower lesbian, gay and bisexual people in South East Wales by enabling them to voice their needs and concerns in relation to service provision. The Forum covered the ten local authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen and Vale of Glamorgan.

Source: *LGBT Archive*, www.lgbtarchive.uk

2007

Dai Davies MP, Blaenau Gwent abstained on an Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations vote and generally voted against equal gay rights.

Source: *The Work for You* website.

2008

Angela Eagle becomes the first female MP to enter into a civil partnership (with partner Maria Exall).



2009

Welsh rugby star Gareth Thomas becomes the first known top-level professional male athlete in a team sport to come out while still active in professional sport.

2010

The Equality Act 2010 makes discrimination against lesbians and gay men in the provision of goods and services illegal.



2012

2010

Let's put a stop to bullying

Young people from Blaenau Gwent came together to tackle the problems of bullying in the borough. More than 135 young people attended an anti-bullying awareness day at the Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre. The day of workshops, organised by Blaenau Gwent anti-bullying group Get Real About Bullying (GRAB), aimed to confront issues often taboo among young people such as sexuality and disability.

Source: *Gwent Gazette*, 11 November 2010

2011

Nathan Wyburn, from Ebbw Vale, gains fame on the television show 'Britain's Got Talent' with



his celebrity portraits using Marmite on toast. Wyburn is gay and is an ambassador and spokesperson for several anti-bullying charities and campaigns. "I feel proud enough," he said, "to create pieces of work that are supportive of the LGBT community."

Source: [Wikipedia](#)

2012

First UK openly bisexual chairman of council, Julian Meek (2012–2013), Plaid Cymru, Abertillery.

Source: [Wikipedia](#), List of the first openly LGBT holders of political offices in the United Kingdom.

2012

Sexual Orientation. Local authority level statistics on sexual orientation are not available with any level of accuracy. However, the integrated Household survey includes data on sexual identity in Wales for the period April 2010 to March 2011. This survey shows that 94.2% of people identified as heterosexual or straight, 1.2% as gay/lesbian or bisexual, and 0.3% as 'other'. 4.3% of people did not answer this question (1.4% simply didn't respond and 2.9% didn't know or refused to answer the question, compared to 0.9% and 2.3% respectively last year). The results are similar to those for the UK, though the non-response rate for Wales was higher than for the UK.

Wales as it stands – Sexual Orientation Inequality

A survey conducted in 2006, asked young people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual to complete a survey about their experiences at school. Some 1,145 responses from secondary school pupils were received.

- > 65 % reported experiencing homophobic bullying at school. For faith schools the figure was 75%
- > Of those who reported being bullied, 92% reported verbal abuse, 41% cyber bullying, 41% physical abuse, 30% vandalism and theft of property, and 17% death threats
- > Over half said they had heard homophobic remarks from teachers or other school staff
- > The school environment was described as a place where homophobic remarks were commonplace
- > Employees who are disabled, gay, lesbian or bisexual are more than twice as likely as others to report that they have experienced discrimination at work
- > There is some evidence that bisexual people are much less likely to disclose their sexual identity to work colleagues than gays or lesbians

- > Young lesbian and gay people are more likely to attempt suicide
- > Gay, lesbian and bisexual people may be more likely to move from socially conservative areas where they grew up (rural areas, housing estates, the Valleys) to live in towns and cities

Marriage and Civil Partnership

For every 40 marriages in the UK there is one civil partnership. In Wales, there were 268 civil partnerships during 2010. The highest levels in Wales were in 2006 – the year following the law changes, when there were 560 civil partnerships.

In Blaenau Gwent between 2011 and March 2012 there were 97 marriages and 2 civil partnerships.

Gender Reassignment

Statistics on gender reassignment at Blaenau Gwent level are not available. However, the Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) does suggest estimates for gender dysphoria, which is the medical term for the condition with which a person who has been assigned one gender (usually at birth on the basis of their sex), identifies as belonging to another gender, or does not conform with the gender role or their respective society prescribes to them.

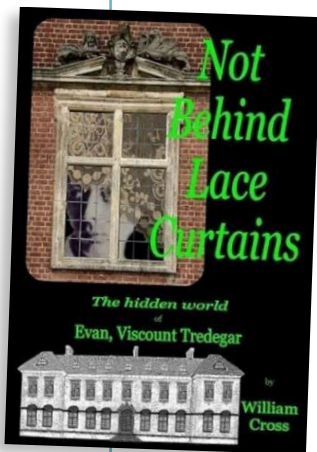
GIRES outlines that a low estimate for the UK would be 8 people per 100,000 and a high estimate would be 21 people per 100,000. Taking this into account Blaenau Gwent would expect to have between 5 to 14 people with Gender dysphoria.

Source: *Blaenau Gwent Strategic Needs Assessment, 2012*



2012

2013



Not behind lace curtains: The hidden world of Evan, Viscount Tredegar by Will Cross is published.

2014

Same-sex marriage becomes legal in England and Wales on 29 March under the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.

2016

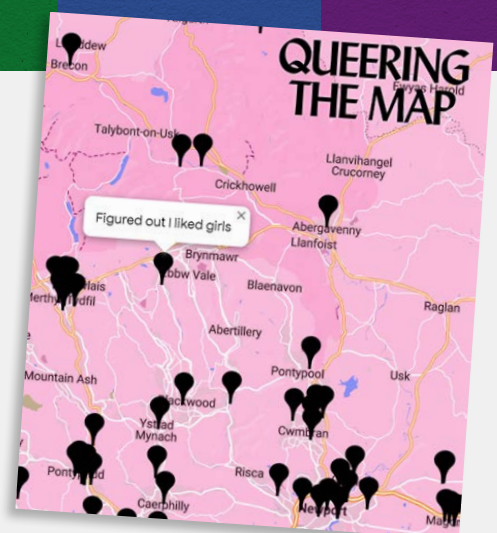
Hannah Blythyn, Jeremy Miles, and Adam Price became the first openly gay members of the Welsh Assembly.



2017

2017

Queering the Map is a Canadian initiative to create a community-based online collaborative and counter-mapping platform on which users submit their personal queer experiences to specific locations on a single collective map. Since its inception, users have contributed more than 500,000 posts in 23 languages to the platform. Several people have left pins in Blaenau Gwent.



I saw Love, Simon here with my mam. On the way home we had our first real conversation about sexuality and I realised she would accept me. I never got to come out to her though as she passed away last month. I'll always remember that conversation, I'll always know that she would have loved me and accepted me always. //

Although this place treats me like shit for who I am, I'm still proud of who I am and I'm not letting anyone take that away. Although I am the only gay that I know that's around here I hope I can inspire and in courage others to come out //

When I was 14, I wore my first dress, and I cried. I'd spent two years questioning my gender, but this was when it clicked for me. I am a woman, and there was nothing I could do to be "normal" (please forgive the young internal transphobia). I spent the next 6 years hiding dresses, sneaking to my friends house at midnight to was my clothes (boarding college didn't help), and trying to find how to be me without people knowing. I am now openly a 20 year old bisexual woman, lying on my partner's lap (they're non-binary and so beautiful!), and so happy!!! //

2018

Documentary photographer Roger Tiley opened a new exhibition from 3-31 March at The Kickplate Gallery in Abertillery. Mr Tiley said the idea for this piece of work came after he was invited to photograph the Lesbian & Gays Support the Miners reunion event at the Onllwyn Miners' Welfare Hall in the Dulais Valley in 2015. The photographer said the venue for the exhibition was fitting as "it clearly illustrates the change in the understanding and cultural diversity in an area that has faced many changes".

Source: *BBC News*, 'LGBTQ photography exhibition opens in Abertillery,' 3 March 2018

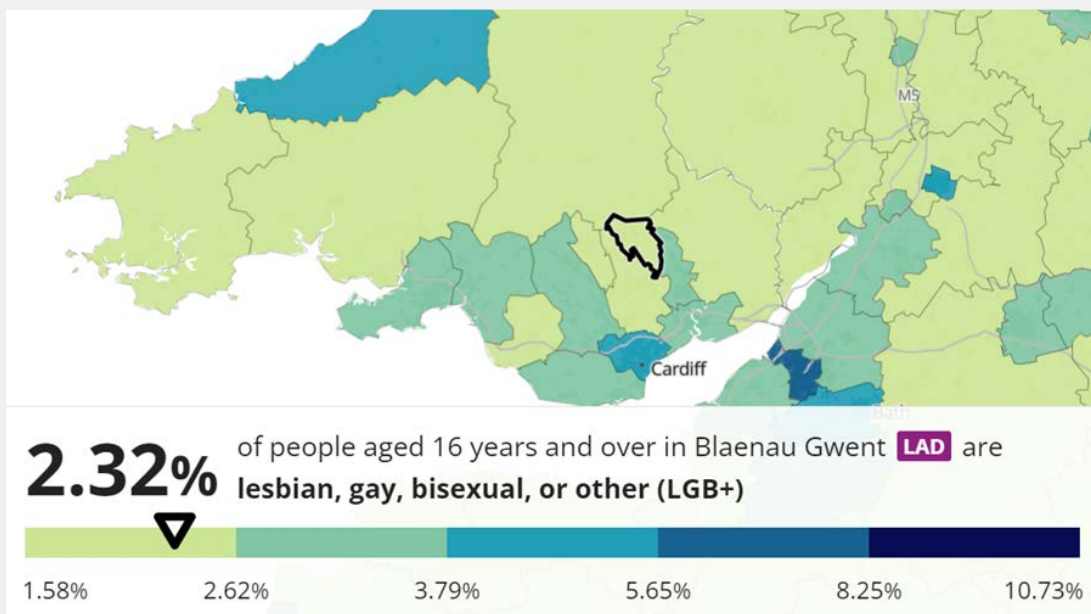
2021

Owen J Hurcum became the world's first non-binary mayor and Wales' youngest ever elected mayor of Bangor City Council in Gwynedd, Wales.



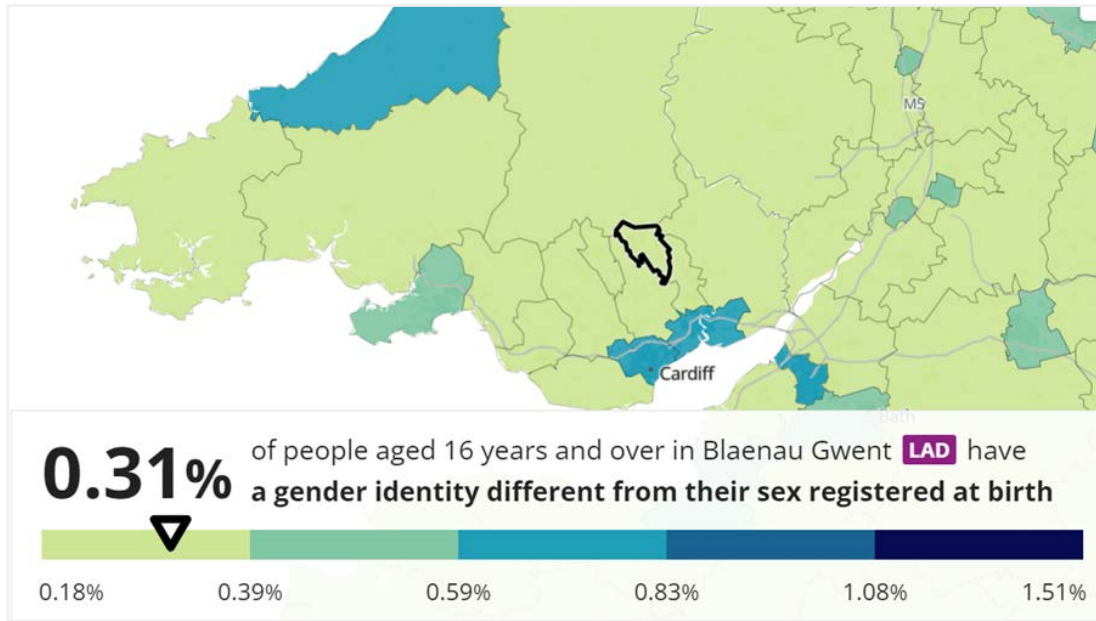
2021

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2023

2022

Proud Councils - a group of eight south Wales local authorities committed to improving support offered to LGBTQ+ staff within councils - was shortlisted for the public sector equality award in the PinkNews awards. The group - Newport, Caerphilly, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Cardiff, Bridgend and Swansea councils - also seek to ensure local government across Wales is a visible leader in the field of LGBTQ+ rights,

actively championing LGBTQ+ inclusion in communities.

Source: *South Wales Argus*, 'Councils applauded for supporting LGBTQ staff,' 13 June 2022



2023

'LGBTQ+ Support Groups - LGBTQ+ support groups for children and young people are still in operation across Blaenau Gwent. The support groups provide appropriate information and with the opportunity to speak about feelings and empower them to ensure their voice is heard within a safe space.'

Source: *Blaenau Gwent Council*, 'Blaenau Gwent Strategic Equality Plan: Annual Report 2022-2023

2023

Councils from across South and Mid-Wales came together on Saturday 17 2023 to participate in the annual Pride Cymru parade in Cardiff.

'Proud Councils' is a network of local authorities committed to ensuring that local government in Wales is a visible ally to LGBTQ+ people and playing our part in upholding the rights of LGBTQ+ people. As a member of the network, Blaenau Gwent Council is committed to actively championing LGBTQ+ inclusion in our workforces and communities.

Source: Blaenau Gwent Council website, 'Proud Councils at Pride Cymru Parade,' 20 June 2023

2024

'The chief Constable of Gwent Police has apologised for "past injustices" experienced by LGBTQ+ residents and acknowledged historical issues have

an "ongoing impact" on levels of trust. It makes Gwent Police the first force in Wales and tenth in the UK to formally apologise for its historic policing of LGBTQ+ communities as part of the human rights group's #ApologiseNow campaign.

Source: Sam Portillo, 'Gwent Police chief says 'sorry' for LGBTQ+ policing in past,' 7 February 2024



2024





Thank you

These have been just a few highlights from Blaenau Gwent's sexual orientation and gender identity history.

If you think we've missed anything that should be included, please do let us know by using the web link below.

We will update the timeline on a regular basis.

www.lgbtqcymru.swansea.ac.uk



Draig Enfys

 search **Draig Enfys**