

**Here are some experiences from members of the LGBT+ North Wales Social Group of living in the area:**

*“I have moved to North Wales just over three years ago having visited here for the past 20 years to see my parents who retired here. I now live in a little village outside Caernarfon. I’m out and proud.

I love North Wales - the place is beautiful. I have tried to learn some of the language and I am able to feel part of it. One of the things that we noted when we came to this area was that although there is an LGBT community in North Wales (Gwynedd), there was little acknowledgement of this (not one rainbow flag) and few safe spaces for adults to meet up and connect with each other. I also noticed that some services did not seem to acknowledge that there is an LGBT community here and when enquiring what support was available specifically for LGBT people, I would get the blanket answer ‘’we treat everyone the same’’.

Accepting there are differences is the first step to breaking down barriers that this community face. To help overcome this, I have now set up an LGBT social group so that we can meet and connect with each other face to face rather than just online. We meet up and go for coffee or sometimes do an activity like paddle-boarding, Zipworld or cinema, but the main thing is we can support each other and not feel isolated in what is a potentially rural isolating area.*

*One of the great things is that some places that I have contacted in Gwynedd are willing to learn and be open to what they can do to support the LGBT community.  Places such as Pontio, Galeri and the local libraries have helped to raise awareness of Welsh LGBT history that everyone should be proud of.*

*I think that sometimes society may feel that being out should not matter anymore and as LGBT people can get married - we now have equality, so why do we need to ‘shout about it’. The answer is that homophobia is on the increase and there are still only four areas in the whole of the UK in 2020 that LGBT people report that they would feel safe enough to hold their partner’s hand without the fear of homophobia. When was the last time you thought about something as simple as holding a hand of someone you love, without fear that you would abused physically or verbally?”*

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*“Being authentic has changed my life completely – living my life as Jack has enabled me to not only love myself but also be loved by others. By being authentic at work, I have a deeper connection with and better understanding of myself. It’s had a really positive effect on my well-being, both mentally and physically. And it’s enabled me to feel a much stronger and deeper sense of self- worth and confidence.
I moved to North Wales 3 years ago and came out as transgender during an interview. Someone on the interview panel was wearing a rainbow lanyard, which gave me the confidence to be authentic. So my partner Trudy & I made the decision to move from England to Wales and for me to live as Jack and spend the rest of my life being my true self. I have known about my identity since being around the age of 6 but never felt safe or accepted enough to come out until 7 years ago when I told my partner at the age of 46! (having been together for 14 years prior to this without her knowing).
I have worked in Mental Health for over 25 years and throughout my life have struggled with my own mental health—usually anxiety and distress associated with having to hide my gender identity for so many years.
I felt very privileged when Stonewall UK & Cymru made me their “Trans Role Model of the Year 2018” and Last year be nominated for Pink News role model 2019. I have been able to use this as a platform to raise awareness around Gender Identity both within my workplace and outside in the community.
Trudy and I recently set up a support group for parents and carers of young people who are either questioning their gender identity or identify as transgender.
Trudy has established herself as an independent trainer and consultant for LGBT and Trans Awareness education and training here in North Wales.”*

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*