

## Manchester Pride 2023

Manchester Pride is one of the UK's most popular pride events, which aims to create a world where LGBTQ+ people can live freely without prejudice. This year, the event took place from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of August (2023) and featured many amazing events like a gay village party, a candlelit vigil, and of course, the massive parade through the city on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August! This was the second parade after the COVID pandemic, and the theme was 'Queerly Beloved'.

Alongside plenty of other organisations, businesses, charities, and communities, Girlguiding North West England took part in this giant parade of sound, colour, and light. We all met up at our meeting place and dressed ourselves in t-shirts, tutus, stickers, badges, and mini-flags that the region provided. All of these were free and we were allowed to keep them afterwards. We even had our own Girlguiding Unicorn! After being kitted out with banners, placards, and temporary tattoos, we made our way to the start of the parade.



Whilst waiting, we were allowed to go and explore to see all the other floats. It truly was a sight to behold, walking down the streets

of Manchester that day. In every direction you looked, you saw balloons and bubbles and colours. There were drag queens high on stilts, and camera crews filming famous people. Small children would stop and get pictures with those dressed in mascot suits. The entire place felt welcoming and supportive, with everybody looking and feeling like they belonged.

When the parade set off at 12pm, it only became even more magical! There was music playing, and rainbows everywhere you looked! During the parade, some of us had the role of holding up placards, and others had the role of handing out stickers and badges. I, personally, had the role of holding up one side of our big banner and leading at the front. It was amazing seeing everybody who came out to witness the parade! The parade route took us from Liverpool Road, all the way through to Fairfield Street. Even though we were walking for over 60 minutes, it was hard to tell how long it was as we were having too much fun. Whilst we walked, our unicorn ran out in front and stole the show, high-fiving smaller children and gaining an uproar of cheers from the crowd as they sped past. At the end of the parade, we took a moment to relax before parting our separate ways. I helped a smaller group of us take some things and make our way back to the meeting place.



Personally, representing Girlguiding NWE at Manchester Pride 2023 is one of the best things I've ever done. Even though I was mostly with people I'd never met before, I felt so welcomed throughout the entire time and felt like I truly belonged. I'll never forget this experience, and I hope to re-live it all again next year. I highly encourage everybody to sign up, no matter your sexuality, gender, race, or physical ability!