

Cross-Party Group on LGBTI Issues

28 September 2023, 18:00-19:30

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Jamie Greene MSP, Maggie Chapman MSP

Invited guests

none

Non-MSP Group Members

Tim Hopkins, Rebecca Crowther, Erin Lux, Florence Oulds – Equality Network and Scottish Trans; Paul Daly – LGBT Youth Scotland; Mark Levin, Rebecca Hoffman – LGBT Health And Wellbeing; Micah Daigeaun – Four Pillars; Heidi Vistisen – LEAP Sports; Tristan Gray – ECT Scotland; Denisha Killoh – Stonewall Scotland; Roz Hamilton, Iain Campbell, Ruth Ann McCalla, Russ Wolf, Julia Shacklock – Individual Members

Apologies

Paul O’Kane MSP; Tess White MSP; Liam Stevenson, Jordan Daly – Time for Inclusive Education; Fiona Grounds, Kaylee Nichol, Ciorstaidh Reichle, Kim Stokes, Pippa Laughton – Individual Members

AGM Business

Elections were held for office bearers and convenors. Maggie Chapman MSP and Jamie Greene MSP were re-elected as Co-Convenors unopposed. Equality Network were re-elected as Secretariat unopposed. There were then quick introductions from all members.

Conversion Practices Update – Presented by Rebecca Crowther (Equality Network)

The consultation on Conversion Practices is due at the end of the year. The Scottish Government has recognized that there have been delays which have impacted the community, especially survivors and those who are close to survivors.

The consultation should take the form of a detailed proposal, not a vague policy position. The team responsible have faced head-on the challenges that will come and have done the groundwork to ensure that they have as much evidence as possible to back the moves they want to take.

The consultation will be published in mid-to-late December and will likely be a 12 week consultation period, although the team responsible are requesting it to be 14 weeks. Equality Network will be engaging with stakeholders, but the Scottish Government will also be doing engagement work. The consultation will close in April, and it normally takes three months to analyse, which will take us into summer.

Equality Network has been assured that all the work has been done to ensure that they get to the end of the consultation process in a strong position so that there will be no second consultation and to make sure they have the numbers on-side to get it passed. The delays have been difficult for survivors, the community, and those working on the legislation. Some survivors who have been involved in the Expert Advisory Group or engaged in other ways have received an apology from the Scottish Government.

Jamie Greene MSP has entered written questions about both the timescale and what the legislation might entail/what might be included or not included, and whether the Scottish Government would grant sufficient timescale for consultation and if they think there's enough time in the legislative calendar.

Maggie Chapman MSP noted that the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee went through an investigative process that sought evidence from people on all side of the argument. There is agreement those who have already given their evidence should not be re-traumatised. She noted that those of us working on this should do our preparatory work before the consultation goes live, and that any work done once the consultation is live must be sensitive to people who have already told their story a number of times.

Mark Kelvin (LGBT Health and Wellbeing) said that they are mindful of the delay with the timing and, while there's no point in rehashing the disappointment with the delays, wished to make clear that the consultation is falling at a difficult time because it is the holiday period where people are going home to families who may be engaging in conversion practices or having conversations about it. This is worth flagging. LGBT Health and Wellbeing are aware and trying to bring forward a plan to provide support.

Human Rights Incorporation Bill – Presented by Erin Lux (Equality Network)

Equality Network conducted a survey that received 700 responses and translated those responses to align with the rights being incorporated that either are or are not being realised. The first draft of the consultation has been completed.

Paul Daly said that LGBT Youth Scotland have done engagement work with young people using the Scottish Government guides to engaging with young people. Youth

workers did a session to engage young people about what they thought of the plans and proposals.

Hate Crime Strategy – Presented by Florence Oulds (Scottish Trans)

The publication of the Hate Crime Strategy is due for Hate Crime Awareness Week. Work has been ongoing with groups that represent people who have lived experience. Next month there will be a delivery plan document being published setting out the more concrete actions for implementation. There will be a large public awareness campaign with posters and adverts.

There will also be a launch event in November. It will be a day long conference on the 20th November at the Doubletree Hotel in Glasgow. There will be room for about 100 people in addition to hybrid functionality. The theme will be coming together to work on tackling hate crime in Scotland. There will be panels and workshops throughout the day but details are not fully confirmed.

Rebecca Crowther noted that during the Hate Crime Strategy work that some sticky issues emerged between the LGBTI community and police. These issues have always been there but have come to the surface through the work. As a result, the sector has sent a 25 page document documenting concerns with the police. After a month we received a long response from Police Scotland but we haven't had a chance to review it properly due to the Human Rights Consultation. The sector will go through it as we want to get back to them point-by-point after a careful look at the response. Things like the Hate Crime launch and conference and partnerships are becoming harder when we are not seeing accountability and change.

Maggie Chapman MSP noted she meets regularly with the police in her Justice Spokesperson role, and that she is happy to raise anything the sector passes on.

Update on Mental Health Strategies – Presented by Rebecca Hoffman (LGBT Health and Wellbeing)

LGBT Health and Wellbeing have been continually working on the Mental Health Strategy and working with the Mental Health Unit on the action plan. LGBT Health & Wellbeing and Equality Network fed in recently on the Equalities and Human Rights Forum. LGBT Health and Wellbeing are happy with how the strategy is going and that the plan should be shared soon, and are just waiting for a launch date.

LGBT Health and Wellbeing have also been in discussion with COSLA about suicide prevention strategy. A draft has been shared and COSLA are hoping to create an LGBT forum.

Equality Network and LGBT Health & Wellbeing responded to the consultation last year but did not have much success in having many conversations round it, so it has been good to be approached at this stage.

LGBT Health & Wellbeing have also been working with the Distress Brief Intervention Unit on the self-harm strategy. LGBT Health & Wellbeing are happy with the way the work is going and the approach the DBI unit have taken toward an overhaul of the typical thinking and are putting equalities and intersectionality at the forefront. There is a tangible commitment to LGBTI people in the guiding principles.

LGBTI+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers – Presented by Mark Kelvin (LGBT Health and Wellbeing)

The programme for refugees and asylum seekers that LGBT Health & Wellbeing runs does not receive any government funding. A question was submitted by Pam Duncan-Glancy to the Minister, but answers were in past tense and nothing about future work. LGBT Health and Wellbeing have been able to secure private funding to have a development worker in post until March 2025 so can offer pared-back support until then, but there is no programme funding. LGBT Health and Wellbeing will continue to look for funding.

Earlier this year LGBT Health & Wellbeing launched a report capturing LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers experience of housing Scotland. Scottish Government was quick to bat this back to Westminster despite having powers to improve the situation. LGBT Health & Wellbeing have had a positive meeting with Mears Housing working toward lockable cabinets in shared accommodation, LGBTI identity as a risk factor, information about LGBT Health & Wellbeing in their welcome kits, and better working relationships.

LGBT Health & Wellbeing are aware there is very limited money and are sensitive to that, but where they become uncomfortable is there is no sign of change in the New Scots strategy – no recognition of the unique experience of people of colour and Black people through the asylum and refugee system.

Jamie Greene MSP commented to encourage everyone to write strongly worded open letters to the Home Secretary around her recent remarks about LGBTQ+ asylum seekers.

Equally Safe Refresh – Presented by Rebecca Crowther (Equality Network)

This update is coming from conversations between Vic Valentine (Scottish Trans), Janice Stevenson (LGBT Youth Scotland) and the Scottish Government. LGBTI inclusion is going to become a bigger issue as the Scottish Government goes through this refresh of Equally Safe.

One of the issues with Equally Safe is that it is framed as men's violence against women, so it has historically not engaged with LGBTI people of all genders. We want to make it clear that we absolutely agree that the Equally Safe strategy and work on violence against women and girls should absolutely have women and girls as priority front and centre. However, LGBTI people who do not fit under women and girls should also be considered because there is significant risk of domestic abuse in these

communities. Alongside this, there has to be a better understanding of LGBTI people's experience of gender-based violence.

LGBT Youth Scotland and Janice Stevenson have long worked on this so we are working with her, but we would also be interested in connecting with anybody, services, people who support survivors or survivors interested in policy to help us build a robust evidence base to respond to this strategy.

There was an action for Jamie Greene from last meeting to catch up with someone doing work on domestic abuse & sexual violence against men and boys. Rebecca Crowther noted that Equality Network is in conversations with LGBT Youth Scotland around how we can all work to ensure GBT men and boys have support and is looking at opportunities in policy development to aid in this.

Paul Daly flagged that LGBT Youth Scotland is launching a report on 9 October from Voices Unheard on LGBT young people who have experienced domestic abuse. The event will take place in Edinburgh at Norton Park.

Request to Join this CPG

Rebecca Crowther noted that a community member named Mackenzie Da Assunção would like to be part of the policy sphere and join this group. There were no objections.

Updates on Other Matters/AOB

Mark Kelvin (LGBT Health and Wellbeing) noted that LGBT Health and Wellbeing launched a new report – [Fit For Purpose](#) – produced by a group of community members who are 50+. This report asks about experiences of care at home, the second part was to be launched the following day as part of International Day for Older People and is a thorough literature review.

Paul Daly (LGBT Youth Scotland) said that LGBT Youth Scotland will be launching their Life in Scotland Rural Report on the 10th of November at an event in Inverness. The minister should be attending. This report reflects on the experiences of LGBT youth people in rural Scotland.

Rebecca Crowther (Equality Network) said that Equality Network launched their [kinship, family and support networks report](#) a few weeks previously. This is a report on how LGBTI community isn't included in policymaking around many things because we do not have traditional family networks – we create kinship networks in different ways, which became painfully evident during the COVID pandemic.

Jamie Greene MSP asked if we have full details of the last census. Tim Hopkins (Equality Network) said that data on sexual orientation and trans status will only be released next year, and it will only be basic numbers, and that cross-tabulation will come later still.

Consideration of Main Items for Upcoming Meetings

Jamie Greene proposed that we should discuss census data. Tristran Gray proposed discussing the conversion practices. Maggie Chapman proposed trans health care.

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