

# **Cross-Party Group on LGBTI+ issues**

Minute of meeting on Wednesday 5 September 2018 AGM

Venue: Scottish Parliament, Committee Room 4

## **1. Welcome and apologies**

### **Present:**

Kezia Dugdale MSP (chairing)  
Jamie Greene MSP (Co-Convener)  
Patrick Harvie MSP (Co-Convenor)  
Jenny Gilruth MSP

Hannah Pearson Equality Network  
Stuart Duffy Pink Saltire  
Colin MacFarlane Stonewall Scotland  
Susan Hart Scottish Borders LGBT Equality  
Janice Stevenson LGBT Youth Scotland  
Kaelin Farnish LGBT Youth Scotland  
Cara Spence LGBT Youth Scotland  
Aoife Deery Shelter Scotland

Michael Richardson Individual

### **Apologies:**

Rona Mackay MSP  
TIE Campaign  
LEAP Sports  
Police Scotland  
Dumfries and Galloway LGBT Plus  
James Banner- Rall, LGBT Officer for Greenock & Inverclyde CLP

## **2. Introductions and new members**

It was agreed to accept the requests of (i) Scouts Scotland and (ii) Michael Richardson (individual), to join the group. The group secretary will add them to the mailing list and notify the Standards Committee team.

## **3. AGM business – appointment of office bearers; note of financial benefits**

It was agreed that the current co-convenors – Jamie Greene MSP, Kezia Dugdale MSP, Patrick Harvie MSP – would be reappointed. Ben Macpherson MSP has

stepped down as he has a new Ministerial role. The group thanked Ben for his contribution to the group. The group secretariat will seek a new SNP co-convenor.

It was agreed that the current group secretariat – Equality Network – would be reappointed.

Financial benefits: The Equality Network reported that the estimated total cost to them of the secretarial support for the Group for the past 12 months was £750.

#### **4. Minute of last meeting (2<sup>nd</sup> May)**

The group approved the minute.

#### **5. Matters arising from the last meeting**

No matters arising

#### **6. LGBTI homelessness**

LGBT Youth Scotland's Commission on Housing and Homelessness - represented by one staff member and one young person - presented their research findings to the group.

The commission was formed in 2016 and is comprised of young people aged 16-25 from across Scotland. The purpose of the youth commission is:

- To research the experiences of LGBT+ homeless youth in order to better understand the relationship between homelessness and abuse (both domestic and familial)
- To work with services within the domestic abuse, housing and young people sectors to raise awareness and support them to be more accessible to LGBT young people and better able to respond to their needs
- To promote the need for a National Homelessness Strategy for Scotland that recognises the role discrimination plays in increasing the risk of LGBT people becoming homeless.

The commission conducted a review of the existing research (by Albert Kennedy Trust and LGBT Youth Scotland), and successfully engaged over 100 young people in the consultation, which was delivered in 8 groups across 7 Local Authorities, as well as a paper based consultation at the LGBT National Youth Summit. They also directly engaged with professionals from across the housing and homelessness sector through a consultation workshop, meetings and staff interactions.

The key findings from the consultation with professionals included:

- Services are not consistently recording sexual orientation/ trans identity, and therefore are unaware of how many LGBT young people they support
- Inconsistent levels of LGBT awareness training – lack of understanding of LGBT issues
- LGBT domestic abuse awareness is low

- Majority of professionals we consulted rated their confidence to support LGBT homeless young people as low.

The key findings from the consultation with young people included:

- Reluctance to present as homeless to the local council – “It’s too scary”
- Very little awareness about intentional homelessness vs legitimate homelessness, or available supports
- Fear of accessing support from religious organisations
- Trans and non-binary young people face additional barriers to accessing shelters/ group accommodation
- Fearful of disclosing their LGBT identity / ‘coming out’
- Mediation, which is used to enable young people to return to the family home, is dangerous where young people have been rejected/ abused due to LGBT identity.

LGBT Youth Scotland’s Commission on Housing and Homelessness ‘Recommendations for Change’ are:

- A National Strategy on homelessness that specifically mentions the role that prejudice and discrimination play in increasing LGBT young people’s risk of homelessness
- Young people should be informed of their rights
- Housing and Homelessness services must record and monitor equalities data including sexual orientation and gender identity
- Services should endeavour to provide LGBT awareness training for key staff
- Increase the number of support services available for young people who experience abuse, including rural areas
- Services should endeavour to increase visibility of LGBT identities and make a clear declaration of inclusivity
- Consult LGBT young people when developing services
- Increased awareness of trans and non-binary identities within youth homelessness services
- Mediation and homelessness services should accurately record and monitor sexual orientation and gender identity of service users to avoid returning LGBT young people to abusive households.

The group secretariat will circulate a copy of LGBT Youth’s presentation.

After the presentation, the LGBT Youth staff member and young person took questions from the group.

SH asked if the research had found differences between city and rural settings. LGBT Youth answered that there are normally more barriers to accessing services in rural and close-knit communities. Young people are often worried about being known by someone working at the service, or someone will see them accessing that service.

JG asked what service providers can do if young people do not disclose their identity, i.e. their sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBT Youth answered that all services need to work to ensure their services are accessible and welcoming to LGBT people. This is often about visibility. Having a rainbow flag visible within the service is a very simple way of acknowledging the LGBT community and declaring their service LGBT inclusive. Another idea is to include LGBT people within the service literature.

SD asked if there was a mechanism, similar to that of third party reporting services, for homelessness applications. LGBT Youth answered that at present, there is not, although they can support young people in making a homelessness application, although they do not always have staff capacity to do this.

AD from Shelter Scotland commented on the importance of this research in informing Shelter Scotland's own advocacy work with young people.

KD suggested that MSPs could submit written parliamentary questions regarding some of the issues raised in the meeting, including: asking the Scottish Government whether it believes housing and homelessness services should be required to record, monitor and report on equality data with specific reference to a) sexual orientation and b) gender identity; and what plans it has to increase funding for LGBTI young people facing abuse in rural areas.

CM commented on the breach of duty by local authorities, but given Stonewall Scotland's own work with local authorities, we know local authorities are aware they are not getting it right. He also commented that there is a potential role for COSLA in this, as it was useful having them on the LGBTI inclusive education working group.

PH commented from his own previous experience as a youth worker in Glasgow. Working with young LGBT people, he saw the importance of friendships and informal networks amongst young LGBT people, and that this should not be underestimated. That is, young people looking out for each other rather than relying on services - sofa surfing at each other's accommodation, etc.

JG commented that little is recorded on informal/ hidden homelessness/'sofa surfing'.

AD from Shelter Scotland confirmed that there is little information available on this, but reinforced that LGBT homeless people have the same rights as everyone else and are entitled to access those rights through their local authority. We need to work to improve local authorities.

KD asked Stonewall Scotland about their work with local authorities.

CM said nine local authorities are members of Stonewall Scotland's Diversity Champions programme. They struggle to do work with all of them due to funding cuts and local authority capacity. Budgets are tight and there can be concerns around cost. This feeds into a wider issue around cuts.

SH commented that it is not just young people who are made homeless for LGBT related reasons. In the Borders for example, there have been cases of older trans people being thrown out of the family home because of their gender identity.

## **7. Updates on other matters/ AOB**

CS informed the group that the IGLYO (International LGBTQI Youth and Student Organisation) is holding its Annual Members' Conference in Edinburgh on 4 October, with support from LGBT Youth Scotland. CS asked if the parliament would be interested in hosting an event/visit to the parliament for the visiting young people.

HP informed the group that the Equality Network will be conducting research on LGBTI people's experiences of reproductive and fertility services within Scotland.

## **8. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> November, and agreement of main discussion items for the November and February meeting**

Next meeting: Wednesday 14th November 2018, Committee Room 2, 6-8pm.

It was agreed that the November meeting will focus on international LGBTI equality. The group secretariat will invite relevant groups to present.

It was proposed by LGBT Youth that the February meeting could focus on the findings from the Scottish Government's consultation on gender recognition, as well as older LGBTI issues.

## **AGREED ACTIONS**

- The group secretary to circulate LGBT Youth's presentation.
- Kezia Dugdale MSP to ask written parliamentary questions based on LGBT Youth's 'Recommendations for Change'.
- The group secretary to invite relevant organisations/ speakers for November's meeting.