

PE1573/L

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE01573: Statutory teaching of LGBTI+ issues

Dear Convener,

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to respond to the letters that have been submitted regarding our petition. We are grateful to the Public Petitions Committee for taking the issues that we have raised seriously, and asking such a wide range of organisations and institutions for their input into what is a very pressing issue.

Introduction

As we highlighted when we gave evidence to the committee hearing of 27 October 2015: we believe that not enough is being done, across board, in regards to the support and inclusion of LGBTI+ young people in Scottish schools. Whilst there are a minority of schools that are doing good work in this area - with very clear positive results - more needs to be done en masse, and we need clear leadership and strategy from the Scottish Government.

We want to reiterate that whilst our petition does call for the statutory inclusion of LGBTI+ issues and topics within school curricula, we are aware that there is not necessarily a statutory inclusion for certain topics in Scotland under the Curriculum for Excellence (with the exception of Religious Education, and Gaelic in certain schools) and therefore, as discussed during the hearing, we have various alternatives that we know will be effective in tackling the issues that were raised in the initial petition.

Response to the Scottish Government Letter: PE1573/J

We are aware that Scotland is considered one of the most progressive countries in terms of LGBTI+ equality within Europe, and this is something that we should be proud of. However, whilst this is the case at a legislative level, we know that this is not reflected within schools - with 26% of LGBTI+ youth attempting suicide as a result of homophobic bullying and 54% regularly self harming for the same reasons: there is, clearly, a serious issue within our schools that does not necessarily reflect our country's accolade in this regard.

We are glad to hear that the Scottish Government agrees with us that they should continue to tackle discrimination, prejudice and promote equality - and that this must begin early within schools. We would recommend that schools be encouraged to be LGBTI+ inclusive throughout all education establishments - from early years through to further and higher education institutions.

With regards to the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) - whilst we do agree that the curriculum is flexible enough to allow for the teaching of LGBTI+ issues, we would like to highlight that it does not necessarily encourage teachers to do so and more is needed in this regard to signpost teachers towards where issues of equality should be taught. There is no clear direction within the experiences and outcomes as to where LGBTI+ issues are relevant and can be addressed: for example, HWB 0-02a / HWB 1-02a / HWB 2-02a / HWB 3-02a / HWB 4-02a: *"I understand that there are people I can talk to and that there are a number of ways in which I can gain access to practical and emotional support to help me and others in a range of circumstances."* This, like most of the experiences and outcomes that are relevant, is extremely vague and does not outline to teachers that they

can - for example - discuss particular organisations, individuals or support groups related to LGBTI+ here - such as ourselves, LGBT Youth Scotland or Stonewall Scotland.

We believe that it is pivotal that teachers receive specific training in this area, in order to give them the confidence to discuss these issues with their pupils. Throughout our campaign, we have corresponded heavily with teachers - most of whom are keen to address LGBTI-phobia within their own schools and discuss issues relating to their LGBTI+ pupils, but they are not sure how to do so.

We note that the Scottish Government have highlighted that they are willing to explore, in a future SAGRABIS meeting, whether the toolkit on *Dealing with Homophobia and Homophobic Bullying in Scottish Schools* should be updated to provide teachers with the confidence to tackle homophobic bullying, and that this will be considered next year. Whilst we agree that this is a positive step - again, with all due respect, it is not enough to give a teacher a toolkit and not follow up by effectively training them on how to use it. We believe that updating the toolkit would be effective, as long as it was partnered with sufficient teacher training - whether that be provided by, or contributed to, by LGBT Youth Scotland, Stonewall Scotland, respectme etc should be discussed further. We would like to request that we be kept updated on the outcome of the aforementioned SAGRABIS meeting, if that is possible.

In relation to the FIT DVD by Stonewall, we would stress first that this DVD is now 6 years out of date and was created prior to the Equality Act 2010. Also, it is unlikely that every school has actually used this DVD, thus, the message within it will not have reached as many pupils as it should have. We would be interested to know if the Scottish Government has any way of knowing which schools have actually used the DVD, and if they know whether or not the provision of this DVD to every secondary school has had any mass impact or made any clear difference. It is important that things like this be monitored in order to know whether or not they are actually effective.

The Scottish Government outline that guidance was published last year on the conduct of RSHP, which specifically addresses issues relating to LGBTI+ youth. We would be grateful if the Committee could find out whether or not the provision of RSHP education within schools is being monitored or audited, and how the Scottish Government can be sure that **all** schools are indeed following their guidance in this area - particularly within faith schools.

The Scottish Government do make clear, in **Next Steps**, that they would encourage local authorities and individual schools to provide training around RSHP for their teachers - and that they "...encourage organisations who offer training on LGBT issue to contact schools and local authorities directly." We do not feel that this is a sufficient response for a variety of reasons. There is no requirement for local authorities to actually offer or make their schools aware of any of the LGBTI+ inclusive training programmes that are on offer. Further, a primary issue in this regard is that a lot of schools are making clear that they do not have the funds to send their teachers on training programmes that have a cost attached, such as Stonewall Scotland's highly effective *Train the Trainer* programme, or LGBT Youth Scotland's LGBT School Charter Mark accreditation, so it would not necessarily matter whether or not organisations got directly in touch if the school cannot afford the programmes, as a result of budget cuts or a lack of direction with regards to where money should be spent.

For this reason, we would suggest that a specific CPD budget be set aside for LGBTI+ training within **all** schools. This money could be used to adequately cover the costs of sending teachers on particular training programmes. We understand that further discussion is required in this area - with regards to which teachers should be targeted, although we would recommend that one key group are the staff who deliver PSHE, all Named Persons, or those with a specific pastoral care remit.

Overall, we are pleased to hear that the Scottish Government do agree with us that discrimination and prejudice should be tackled within schools, however - we do not believe that their current strategy in this area is working, and a rethink is required. Essentially, we are not satisfied that the key points of our petition have been adequately addressed nor are we convinced by the Scottish Government's strategy in this regard. We do not feel that there is enough of a commitment to ensure that **all** schools are creating a more LGBTI+ inclusive environment and tackling LGBTI-phobia. Again: we need clear, direct leadership in this area.

As a result, we would recommend that the Committee ask the Scottish Government:

- Whether they are willing to re-evaluate their strategy to tackle the issues that have been raised in our petition and if they are willing to co-operate with ourselves and other relevant organisations, e.g. LGBT Youth Scotland, Stonewall Scotland, respectme in doing so.
- If so, whether a working group (or other relevant body) can be established to address the issues that have been raised, and to redress the Government's strategy to tackle them.
- If they can **commit** to prioritising and tackling the issues that remain within Scottish schools in relation to the treatment and inclusion of LGBTI+ pupils.

There is, evidently, a real issue within many schools across the country. Whilst we do appreciate that steps are being taken, the Scottish Government's current strategy is not effective enough in solving the problems that persist. There are young LGBTI+ people within this country who feel voiceless, hopeless and miserable at school. Many are attempting (or committing) suicide, many are self harming. If the Scottish Government is truly focused on building a better, fairer Scotland that gets it right for every child - then, clearly, further action is required.

Response to COSLA Letter PE1573/K

We are glad to see that COSLA agree with us that the best place for teachers to receive training in relation to protected characteristics, including LGBTI+, is *"during initial teacher training"*. We believe that all trainee teachers should receive LGBTI+ training as part of their required qualification.

COSLA point out that all teachers should have knowledge of equality issues and that for existing teachers *"this is likely to be gained and kept updated through information provide by their schools and through career-long professional learning"*. We feel that this is overlooking the fact that most schools across the country are not actually providing their teachers with LGBTI+ resources or professional training opportunities: whether through principle or issues with funding. Further, to assume that *"career-long professional learning"* allows existing teachers to confidently teach LGBTI+ issues is optimistic at best. Again, teachers - whether trainee or existing - need to receive specific training in this area, especially with the sensitivity of many of the topics and issues that would be discussed.

As regards the SAGRABIS commissioned *Behaviour in Scottish Schools Report* that COSLA refer to, which they claim *"has indicated a trend towards better behaviour in all*

areas in schools since the first report in 2006.” As this contrasts heavily with reports from LGBT Youth Scotland, Stonewall Scotland, Ditch the Label and various other relevant organisations: we would recommend that the Committee perhaps enquire as to what was asked specifically in relation to LGBTI+ issues within this data, and whether COSLA feel that this can be used to effectively conclude that things have improved for LGBTI+ youth since 2006. If so, could this data be shared with us and the Committee?

COSLA highlight that it is their view that education authorities and individual head teachers should decide which resources to use when discussing LGBTI+ issues. The problem here is that this is the way that things currently are: and we have a rack of issues. To contrast this, we believe - again - that we need **clear** governmental leadership in this area, or else nothing will improve.

Regarding the refreshment of *The National Approach to Anti-Bullying* guidance, which COSLA state will include an increased focus on LGBTI+ issues, we would recommend that the Committee consider finding out whether or not this will be monitored - in terms of finding out how many schools follow the reviewed guidance.

Response to Educational Institute of Scotland Letter PE1573/G

We are pleased that the EIS agree with us that homophobic bullying and attitudes should be challenged within schools, however our petition highlights that there are serious improvements needed in this area.

The EIS outline that *“Staff in schools are best placed to...deliver the curriculum in a way which is sensitive and responsive to the specific needs of learners.”* If we consider the needs of LGBTI+ youth in this regard, then it is not true that staff - *without specific training in this area* - are in a position to do this. Many LGBTI+ pupils may need ongoing support within school, and a teacher who has not been trained cannot offer this, and thus the specific needs of learners are not being met in the current status quo.

They highlight the *GTCS Standard for Full Registration* and the *GTCS Code of Professionalism and Conduct*. Whilst it is positive to have such standards in place: we know from conversations with teachers and young people that this is not being met across the board, and would expect that the EIS also do. It would be wrong to assume that this problem in schools is *only* the result of other pupils, and that - in some occasions - attitudes of individual staff are often a problem too. Our publication *Time for Inclusive Education* consists of personal stories from pupils about LGBTI-phobic attitudes from teaching staff and this can be provided if the Committee desires. Having a standard or code in place does not necessarily mean that it will be followed, especially if investigations and audits that cover or are specific towards LGBTI-phobia are not being carried out within schools.

We are pleased that the EIS agree that *“there should be high quality opportunities for staff to engage with further learning in Equalities issues”* and they highlight that the pressures on local authority CPD budgets is prohibiting this. This is why we need clear leadership and action from the Scottish Government in this area: if we are serious about tackling issues of prejudiced based discrimination towards LGBTI+ youth and other protected characteristics then there should be a specific fund within CPD budgets for this type of training to be available to all schools.

The EIS state their concerns around the sensitivities of discussing LGBTI+ issues due to the religious and moral beliefs of the parents of school pupils. From a position of principle:

we would wonder if such parents would be happy to put their religious and moral beliefs above the health and wellbeing (both physical and mental) of LGBTI+ students. Also - as both religion and sexual orientation are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, both should be treated with the same reverence. As Religious Education is a statutory aspect on the curriculum - all Scottish school pupils learn about (and are taught to respect) other religions. This, we feel, should apply to LGBTI+ issues and young people too. This is in line with many of the *Health and Wellbeing Experiences and Outcomes* within the CfE also, particularly within *Mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing*.

We are glad that the EIS recognise that there are many teachers who are keen to learn more on equality issues and get involved in training. With regards to the *EIS Equality Representatives* scheme, we would suggest that the Committee enquire into:

- How specific this scheme is in addressing issues related to LGBTI+ pupils, and whether the training that is offered to the *Equality Representatives* directly covers such issues.
- How many *EIS Equality Representatives* are placed in schools across the country.
- Whether *EIS Equality Representatives* consult and support staff within their schools on equality issues who are *not* EIS members themselves.

We believe that all schools should have teachers that are trained on this issue, and it should be remembered that not all teachers are a member of the EIS and, so, able to become *Equality Representatives* or have access to the training that the EIS offers in this regard.

The EIS highlight that they are not in favour of introducing LGBTI+ issues as a statutory measure within the curriculum; could we suggest that the Committee enquire as to whether the EIS would support a Governmental measure/strategy that prioritised teacher training in this area, and ensured that all schools had access to the various training programmes and resources that are on offer.

Response to University of Glasgow School of Education Letter: PE1573/H

We feel that there are still some unanswered questions in terms of whether or not **all** trainee teachers are receiving LGBTI+ specific training and/or teaching during their studies at Glasgow University.

We would suggest that the Committee enquire:

- How specifically the two compulsory courses within *Education and Society 1* and *Education and Society 2* address LGBTI+ issues.
- Whether or not these courses and sessions that address LGBTI+ issues are being delivered to students who are studying to teach in Catholic schools.
- Is it possible that the relevant LGBTI+ content from the elective courses in Sociology 1 and Sociology 2 can be delivered to all pupils.
- As UoG has referenced them: write to LGBT Youth Scotland to enquire further as to the content of the University's programmes and courses, and if they feel that they are sufficient or whether more needs to be done in this area.
- Whether the University is confident that *all of their students* are equipped to address LGBTI+ issues within the learning environments that they go into post-graduation.

Response to University of Dundee Letter: PE1573/E

We would suggest that the Committee:

- As UoD has referenced them: write to LGBT Youth Scotland to enquire further as to the content of the University's programmes and modules, and if they feel that they are sufficient or whether more needs to be done in this area.

- Enquire as to whether or not the LGBTI+ specific content within their year 3/4 **elective** (non-compulsory) module could be made available to all students, as opposed to only students who **choose** to take the module. Due to the important nature of these issues, we don't feel that they should simply be elective modules.
- Whether the University is confident that *all of their students* are equipped to address LGBTI+ issues within the learning environments that they go into post-graduation.

Response to LGBT Youth Scotland Letter: PE1573/D

LGBTYS' survey that they reference further emphasises that curricula inclusion and improved teacher training is what LGBTI+ young people want. We are pleased to see that LGBTYS agree with us that teachers need the confidence to tackle LGBTI-phobia when they see it, and to teach LGBTI+ issues, and we feel that their submission supports our aims.

We would agree with LGBTYS that *"Improvements in LGBT students' educational experiences have not been consistent within Scottish schools and there are still high levels of prejudice and exclusion...evidence indicates that education is not getting it right for every LGBT child and young person."* This, clearly, indicates that a lot more has to be done on top of the existing work that is being carried out by the Scottish Government, and again re-emphasises that a rethink regarding strategy in this area is required.

We would suggest that the Committee enquire from LGBTYS whether they are satisfied with the Scottish Government's current strategy, that has been outlined in their letter **PE1573/J**.

Response to Stonewall Scotland Letter: PE1573/C

We are pleased that Stonewall Scotland support our aims in regards to teacher training and LGBTI+ inclusion within CfE, and believe that the points that Mr Macfarlane raise further emphasise the need for a direct, conclusive strategy from the Scottish Government and we note that he agrees that this is required.

He highlights, again, the problem with CPD funding whereby many schools are not able to afford the *Train the Trainer* programme, and other training courses that are available. This is a recurring issue, and unless it is addressed we will not effectively tackle any of the issues that we have raised within our petition. We note with interest that *"...the UK Government awarded two million pounds in funding to organisations tackling Homophobic, Biphobic, Transphobic (HBT) bullying in schools in England."* We would hope that the Scottish Government could be equally as direct in their approach towards tackling these issues.

Conclusion

We are pleased that the organisations who work consistently and professionally within this field are in agreement with us on tackling the issues that we have brought forward. We feel, however, that more discussion is required - there are a range of options and solutions available to resolve these problems, but we are not yet satisfied that the Scottish Government have found the correct one. We recognise the work that the Scottish Government, the EIS and others are doing in this area - but unfortunately it is not working - and more meaningful, direct action from a governmental level is required. We know that many LGBTI+ youth in our schools are feeling isolated, excluded and being bullied. We know that many are choosing to self harm, and many are attempting or committing suicide. We know that all teachers do not currently have the skills and the confidence to teach LGBTI+ issues effectively, to provide support for their LGBTI+ pupils and to tackle LGBTI-

phobia if and when it appears. There are many points that we have raised that have consistently been backed up in all of the submissions: from issues with funding and CPD budgets, to a need for improved teacher training. As a result, we are not yet satisfied that the issues within our petition have been conclusively addressed or a clear strategy presented as to how to tackle them, and so we would request that it not be closed at this point. We are fully prepared to co-operate with the Committee, the Scottish Government and any other relevant body in this area, in order to reach an effective solution. We hope that the Committee can assist us in effecting real, meaningful social change and improving the lives of LGBTI+ youth across the country.

Regards,

Jordan Daly, Liam Stevenson and John-Naples Campbell
Time for Inclusive Education (TIE).