

## Meeting of LGBTI+ Cross-Party Group

6pm to 8pm, Wednesday 4th March 2020

Scottish Parliament, Committee Room 6

### Agenda

#### 1. Welcome and apologies

##### **Present:**

Jamie Greene MSP	(Co-Convener – chairing)
Patrick Harvie MSP	(Co-Convener)
Mary Fee MSP	
Gail Ross MSP	
Rebecca Crowther	Equality Network
Scott Cuthbertson	Equality Network
Ella Fisher	Equality Network
Vic Valentine	Scottish Trans Alliance
Stephen McCabe	LGBT Health and Wellbeing
Emery Kennedy	NetworQ Orkney and Orkney Pride
Megan Snedden	Stonewall Scotland
Susan Hart	Scottish Borders LGBT Equality
Jim Hume	National Rural Mental Health Forum
Paul Daly	LGBT Youth Scotland
Maruska Greenwood	LGBT Health and Wellbeing
Matt Dabrowski	Out Scotland
Kat Lord Watson?	NASUWT
Ben Munnoch	Individual
Matthew Waites	Individual

##### **Apologies:**

Rona Mackay MSP	
Sarah Skerrat	Royal Society of Edinburgh and SIUC
Arlene Smyth	Turner Syndrome UK
Kevin Guyan	Advance HE
Blou Hyland	LGBT Plus
Alistair Rose	S-X
Organisation	Scottish Bi+ Network
Fiona Donaldson Grounds	Individual
Stevie Maybanks	Individual
	Highland LGBT forum

#### 2. Introductions and new members

Following her stepping down following being made a government minister thanks were made to Jenny Gilruth MSP for her involvement in this CPG from its early days and congratulations on her new position. Thanks were also offered to Annie Wells MSP who has also had to step away from this group role due to her appointment as deputy party leader.

#### 3. Minutes of the last meeting (30th October 2019)

The group approved the minutes of the last meeting of the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2019.

#### 4. Matters arising from the last meeting

No matters arising.

#### 5. The intersection of living rurally in Scotland, managing mental health and being LGBT+

The discussion was begun by Jamie Ross acknowledging that this topic is not only extremely important but has gained a lot of interest and it was good to have people from all over including from as far away as Orkney.

The presentations were started by Rebecca Crowther from Equality Network discussing their findings from their 'Further Out' report looking at LGBT experiences in rural Scotland.

Scott Cuthbertson also from Equality Network discussed how the survey included him running 14 community meetings the most Northern in Lerwick in Shetland and the most Southern in Dumfries. There were also smaller meetings in more casual settings around rural Scotland. This data is what was used in the report.

The statistics were processed by Vic Valentine from the Scottish Trans Alliance and there were many interesting results. These include that 62% believed LGBT people outside Scotland's biggest cities faced more inequality than those within.

One common theme throughout the responses was discrimination in healthcare and a belief that public services are not meeting the needs of LGBT people (34% of people felt this). There were 8 themes throughout the report and all of these themes came down to either wellbeing or mental health.

A useful comparison is between this report and the Rural Mental Health Survey conducted by the Rural Mental Health Forum which encompasses the entire population in rural areas. These comparisons show mental health issues were higher for the LGBT survey in all areas but depression.

Gail Ross stated she feels education is key to progress. Said she had school kids surprised at the resources available from TIE and these children are going home and telling family members about it and spreading the knowledge.

It was also pointed out that acceptance can vary greatly within an area and relies a lot on having a central hub where people can congregate.

Next, Jim Hume from the National Rural Mental Health Forum presented on the report the Forum has produced in collaboration with Support in Mind Scotland. The report is titled 'Well Connected Communities: A study on community approach to mental health and wellbeing in five rural regions of Scotland.'

Jim began by explaining that the Scottish Government definition of rural, is townships below 3,000 people, which is 20% of the Scottish population. This is about a million people with 98% of the Scottish landmass being classified as rural.

The report found that the lack of anonymity in rural areas is a problem as there is still stigma surrounding mental health. It also found that people want to be connected in low level ways, locally, in non-clinical settings, pre-crisis in their community. The forum feels the best way to tackle this is to work with a variety of different groups in the communities and raise awareness of mental health and how to help those struggling.

Jim agrees with the findings of Equality Network that lived experience is the best way to showcase LGBTI+ concerns as, due to being a minority, it will never win in a numbers game, and this is especially true in rural settings.

Next Susan Hart from Scottish Borders Equality shared her lived experience of being LGBT in a rural area. Scottish Borders Equality was founded in 2006 and started as a forum before progressing to what it is now. Trustees are local people who either identify as LGBT or uphold LGBT equality and rights.

Susan explained that the Borders has great wealth as well as deprivation. It also has the highest amount of landowners actually living on their land in Scotland. The area's biggest challenge for LGBT people is social isolation which obviously ties into poor mental health. There is a lack of LGBT spaces and very expensive transport links. In some research Pink Saltire did in the Borders they found that 85% of those asked felt they needed more social LGBT events and groups.

Susan was then asked by Kat what the schools were doing to tackle ignorance around LGBT issues. Susan said there is still a significant lack of knowledge pervading the education system. However, many are taking part in the LGBT Youth charter scheme to improve knowledge and understanding around these issues.

Following Susan there was a presentation from Steven McCabe, the helpline coordinator for LGBT Health and Wellbeing. The helpline is the oldest LGBT helpline in the UK and runs two helplines, one for the Lothian area and one national one. In general the makeup of the calls it receives are 50% emotional support, 20% information, and 30% for both. 23% of the calls received are from rural Scotland. 40-50% of the calls are regular callers and this is often due to them having no local LGBT specific services and therefore the helpline is the only place people can verbalise being an LGBT person. In addition most of the people calling are single and, especially in rural areas, things are generally much more isolating when single.

Following this presentation there was discussion of the possibility of using the service to create LGBT connections in more isolated areas but it was agreed this would need greater resources than are currently available.

Emery Kennedy from NetworQ Orkney was the last speaker. She gave us an insight into her lived experience growing up LGBT in Orkney. She explained that Orkney has a very distinct identity, and therefore there are challenges for LGBT people trying to integrate fully. She then went on to discuss the work she has done in spreading awareness, including planning Orkney's first pride for later this year. It has gained a lot of support from local businesses which is very positive to see. She explained that it will have a very Orcadian atmosphere, showing that the LGBT part of the community is still very Orcadian in nature. She is also organizing smaller events throughout the year. She is aiming to ensure there is a constant feeling of welcome

for LGBT people in Orkney, and doesn't want to risk limiting that purely to Pride.

The whole group found the presentation extremely interesting and were very grateful to Emery for being so honest and open about her lived experience.

## 6. Requests to join this CPG

The requests to join by The Rural Mental Health Forum, Registers of Scotland LGBT+ Network, and Out Scotland were approved.

Rangers charity foundation has been referred to join and it was decided it would be good to get in touch in person before approving

## 7. Scottish Government's consultation on the draft Gender Recognition Bill

This was raised to ensure that everyone was aware there is a consultation ongoing and that if they haven't filled it in it closes by the 17<sup>th</sup> March.

## 8. Updates on other matters / AOB

Matthew Waites raised the idea of having someone who could work across all the organisations to advise on research methodology. It was noted as an idea but pointed out that lots of them already collaborate on reports and methodology.

## 9. Consideration of main discussion items for the next two meetings (next meeting 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020). Date following this TBC.

Discussing how education is handling raising awareness and understanding about LGBT issues was suggested as it came up so much in this week's discussion.

It was also proposed to have another meeting focused on asylum seekers, possibly inviting back the people who had spoken at the last one.