

Cross-Party Group on LGBTI+ issues

Minute of meeting on Wednesday 14 November 2018

Venue: Scottish Parliament, Committee Room 2

1. Welcome and apologies

Present:

Patrick Harvie MSP	(Co-Convener – chairing)
Jamie Greene MSP	(Co-Convener)
Juliet Swann	Amnesty International Scotland
Magda Rakita	Intersex UK
Holly Greenberry	Intersex UK
James Morton	Scottish Trans Alliance
Vic Valentine	Scottish Trans Alliance
Fiona Donaldson Grounds	Scotland Against Intersex Surgery
Lewis Ryder-Jones	Scotland's International Development Alliance
Maruska Greenwood	LGBT Health and Wellbeing
Stuart Duffy	Pink Saltire
Christopher Ward	SX Scotland / Waverley Care
Paul Daly	LGBT Youth Scotland
Sacha Ponniah	Police Scotland
Scott Cuthbertson	Equality Network
Rebecca Crowther	Equality Network
Tim Hopkins	Equality Network
Matthew Waites	Individual
Patricia Johnston	Individual
Paul Cockburn	Individual
Michael Richardson	Individual

Apologies:

Stonewall Scotland
Scouts Scotland
James Banner-Rall, LGBT Officer for Greenock & Inverclyde CLP

2. Introductions and new members

It was agreed to accept the requests of (i) the Scottish Bi+ Network, (ii) Matthew Waites (individual), and (iii) Patricia Johnston (individual) to join the group. The group secretary will add them to the mailing list and notify the Standards Committee team.

3. Minute of previous meeting (5th September 2018)

It was noted that the figure near the top of page 2 of the draft minute of the previous meeting, for the total cost to the Equality Network of the secretarial support for the Group over the previous year, should be £750. With that change, the minute was agreed.

4. Matters arising from the previous meeting

All actions from the previous meeting had been completed:

- LGBT Youth Scotland's presentation on homelessness was circulated to the Group
- Relevant organisations were invited to today's meeting to discuss international issues
- Kezia Dugdale MSP submitted written Parliamentary Questions on homelessness and these were answered in October

Group members expressed disappointment that the Housing Minister, Kevin Stewart, had replied to Kezia Dugdale that diversity monitoring questions on sexual orientation and gender identity are too sensitive to ask in the context of homelessness.

Pink Saltire and LGBT Youth Scotland have submitted FoI requests to all local authorities about:

- what equalities data they hold on homelessness applications, and
- their equality impact assessments of their homelessness policies,

and they will report on responses received at the next meeting.

5. International LGBTI equality

The Group heard testimony from an overseas human rights defender hosted by Amnesty. Juliet from Amnesty noted that some defenders face extreme risk in their home countries (for this reason the testimony is not minuted).

Scott from the Equality Network spoke – see attached presentation.

Matthew Waites asked about the membership of the UK Alliance for Global Equality and Scott replied that currently the Equality Network is the only member organisation from Scotland, and there is only one other from outside London.

There was a discussion. Should the Scottish Government and Parliament be more vocal in speaking out about good and bad developments overseas. Scott's view was yes, but it's important to listen to activists in the country concerned before doing that. Harm can be done by saying something inappropriate, and activism must be decided by in-country activists.

Jamie Greene noted that the Scottish Parliament could do more to celebrate positive things, eg Taiwan's Pride event. In the international development debate a few weeks ago good work was highlighted in a few countries. Group members could take

up the lack of funding on LGBTI issues with the Minister for International Development.

Lewis from SIDA noted that SIDA is funded from the Scottish Government International Development Fund, but LGBTI issues are not on the radar of many SIDA members. SIDA currently lacks this voice, but LGBTI organisations could potentially get involved.

It was noted that there could be a real opportunity for LGBTI to become a strand of future international development funding.

Patrick Harvie suggested exploring this with the International Development Cross-Party Group.

Matthew Waites of Glasgow University spoke – see attached presentation.

There was a discussion. Lewis from SIDA noted that Scotland's international development fund is small, and part of it covers the running of the Scotland Malawi Partnership and SIDA. SIDA covers all countries, and public sector bodies, private sector bodies and NGOs are members. The framework for the work is the UN Strategic Development Goals – there is no direct mention of LGBTI in those, and there is a lack of knowledge on LGBTI in the international development sector. "Leave no one behind" is a prominent theme, but is currently focusses just on gender and disability.

SIDA might be able to work with LGBTI organisations to promote LGBTI inclusion in international development work. Scotland follows a partnership model – smaller NGOs do smaller projects, in the four priority countries. Could LGBTI NGOs be involved? Stonewall have a forum in London connecting LGBT to international development.

Scott from the Equality Network said that there were some structural issues with Scottish Government international development funding, eg turnover limits are problematic for organisations that do other work as well as international work.

It was noted that Amnesty's work was as a human rights campaign, not international development. Amnesty gets no government funding, so it is visibly independent.

Are LGBTI organisations in Scotland prepared to go to other countries to share, and do they have enough experience?

Scott from the Equality Network suggested that an alliance would be a good model, like the Equality and Justice Alliance (<https://hrrn.blogs.sas.ac.uk/files/2018/08/EJA-Briefing.pdf>). Equality Network is a member of a couple of international networks and is building relationships.

Juliet from Amnesty noted the importance of standing up on other issues, for example the rights of people with albinism in Malawi, and also the importance of supporting people at risk of harm including being killed.

Lewis of SIDA noted that in the international development sector there can still be an underlying assumption of the global north going to "help" the global south, and we need to address this.

Jamie Greene asked people to consider what can be done to help equality activism in Northern Ireland.

6. Updates on other matters / Other business

The TIE campaign were unable to attend today's meeting, but noted that they are doing international media work.

Holly Greenberry noted her thanks for the positive and welcome support from Scotland for Intersex UK. Intersex people don't all identify as LGBT, and LGBTI is an alliance. Intersex UK has engaged recently with the Home Office on intersex asylum seekers and refugees. They led on the intersex input for the UK Government's consultation on the Gender Recognition Act in England and Wales, and are supporting the UK Government Equalities Office on their forthcoming Call for Evidence on intersex issues.

Intersex UK is on the NHS England steering committee on intersex surgeries, and would like to see something similar in Scotland.

Intersex UK consider intersex and VSC (variations of sex characteristics) to be synonymous terms. The UN says that up to 1.7% of the population is born with a VSC, although a more conservative estimate is one in 250. The top issue is enforced medical interventions and abuses, without consent, that are non-essential and/or cosmetic. This needs to stop; families need to be signposted to peer support. Intersex UK does a lot of international engagement, for example at the UN, and the UN committee on the rights of children has condemned all nations of the UK on this.

Currently LGBTI organisations worldwide in total allocate a tiny proportion of their funds to supporting intersex NGOs. Intersex UK operates on around £7000 per year, and is supported by the Equality Network, but needs proper funding.

7. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 27th February, and agreement of main discussion items for the February and April meetings

Next meeting: Wednesday 27th February 2019, Committee Room 3, 6-8pm.

It was agreed that the February meeting will focus on older LGBTI issues and on the responses to the Scottish Government's consultation on the Gender Recognition Act.

It was suggested that the April meeting could look at intersex issues, and Group members could consider in advance which intersex issues they'd like covered.

AGREED ACTIONS

- LGBT Youth and/or Pink Saltire will update the next meeting about responses received to Fol requests to local authorities, about homelessness.