

FOI 202400418063

Meeting the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills had scheduled with LGBT Youth Scotland on 25 January 2024.

1. Minute or note of the meeting.

LGBT Youth Scotland – Cab Sec Meeting – 25/01/24

The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged the current challenging cultural context both for LGBT young people and the organisations that seek to support them

- Detrimental impact of debate around GRR. Increase in anti-trans rhetoric in politics and media filtering into classroom and interactions with families – transphobia seen as socially acceptable
- Increased pushback against LGBT inclusive education and LGBT youthwork. Still a minority oppose, but noticeable uptick
- Teachers reporting an increase in transphobic language and bullying
- Life in Scotland report noted 20% of trans young people leaving with no qualifications because of how negative their experience of school has been – more inclined to leave early
- Difficulty of working with staff who are reluctant to engage with LGBT inclusive education and creating an inclusive whole school environment due to lack of knowledge or own beliefs
- Important to ensure all pupils receive an inclusive educational experience
- Difficult to publicise good work around LGBT inclusion – don't want to expose young people to abusive comments on LGBT inclusive social media posts
- Importance of engaging with parents including groups like the National Parent Forum of Scotland to help promote understanding, bust myths and build community support
- Importance of positive interventions in primary school where views are still being formed

Overview of LGBT Youth Scotland

- Have been LGBT Youth Scotland since 2003, previously Stonewall Youth project (no tie to Stonewall Scotland)
- Youthwork services
 - Currently running 22 groups a year supporting 1500 young people across 31 local authorities

- Run face to face groups in 11 local authorities, work in others through a digital service
- Offer coaching, safe space community groups
- Policy work
 - Young people able to come and meet and influence directly
 - Able to gather data from young people and aggregate research
 - Run participation programmes and youth commissions
 - trans rights youth commission
 - Voices unheard youth commission –peer-led research on LGBT young people’s experiences of domestic abuse
 - Mental health youth commission currently being established – will present options to young people and they will decide what their priorities are
- Schools work
 - Work in primary, secondary and tertiary education
 - Around 15 years’ experience in educational settings
 - Previously ran support groups in schools e.g. LGBT/equalities clubs. Feedback from young people was this approach wasn’t effective
 - Now focus on a whole school approach
 - Focus on all pupils not just those who identify as LGBT
 - Less focus on curriculum (covered by national approach – Scottish Government in partnership with TIE) and more on working with staff teams on creating an inclusive culture e.g. challenging stereotypes about gender and sexuality
 - Evaluate interventions to ensure they are providing a more positive learning environment
 - Young people led – adapt to feedback provided from young people on what works, and on what their priorities are
 - What do young people want from LGBT inclusive education? Feeling safe – knowing they have knowledgeable and supportive teachers.
 - Teachers need the resources to be able to support effectively

Charter Mark programme

- Teachers unclear how to support young people – Charter working to change culture and ethos of the school
- Have developed training around the [Supporting trans young people in schools guidance](#) – equipping staff with tools to implement guidance
- Have updated the Charter in response to Life in Scotland education report
- Also work with private schools including residential and boarding schools
- Some engagement with denominational schools – often requires a more tailored approach. Importance of working with senior leadership to ensure whole school buy-in rather than one or two invested teachers
- In regular communication with TIE to ensure work dovetails together
- As part of Charter Mark have developed foundations award
 - stage before bronze where develop tools and processes that can be used to increase inclusion across the organisation.
 - Have offered at local authority level – focus on ensuring policies align with equalities legislation and public sector duty. Two local authorities signed up so far – one central belt and one north
- Needs not to be a tick box exercise/tokenistic – embedded into the school/local authority’s culture and policies
- Young people need to be involved in the process and provide feedback. Success measured by if pupils think their school has become more inclusive
- Increased focus on inclusion, challenging stereotypes and tackling prejudice benefits other protected characteristics [evidenced by year 1 [LGBT Inclusive Education Progress and Evaluation Report](#)]
- Cabinet Secretary expressed interest in visiting a school which has achieved its Charter Mark.
- **Action:** *Ms Gilruth’s office will contact LGBT Youth Scotland to identify a suitable school and make arrangements*

Funding

- Scottish Government fund TIE to deliver the national approach to LGBT inclusive education – largely curricular approach but also focuses on professional learning for teachers and student teachers

- LGBT Youth Scotland receive Scottish Government funding through the Directorate for Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights. Do not receive any funding from the Learning Directorate.
- Require to charge schools/organisations for Charter – currently not self-sustaining. Intention is to move towards being able to provide for free if revenue streams improve through other channels

Education Reform

- Environment post-covid is now different, need to adapt
- Need to work with GTCS to embed the teaching standards including commitment to equality and diversity
- Currently work with Education Scotland – need to look at how that will be carried through within Education Reform
- **Action**
 - *Officials to speak with Education Reform to ensure views of LGBT young people are included through reviewing composition of working groups*
 - *LGBT Youth Scotland offered to establish youth commission on education reform*
 - *LGBT Inclusive Education Implementation Group will continue to assess the impact of LGBT inclusive education among LGBT young people, making use of education reform youth commission to conduct peer led research where data gaps remain*

Challenges in schools

- Mobile phones–guidance under review. Aware of how social media use in schools can impact prejudice based bullying
- Questioned if SEEMiS can be used to track incidents of homophobic /biphobic /transphobic bullying? Do teachers know how to record incidents of LGBT related bullying?
- Monitoring and tracking including desegregation of data on prejudiced based bullying by protected characteristic - do schools have an accurate gauge of the scale of homophobic/biphobic/transphobic bullying and incidents in their school?

- LGBT Youth Scotland gather their own data on bullying and experiencing homophobic/biphobic/transphobic language and behaviours in schools
- PISA doesn't look at inclusive curriculums – limited scope of what 'good' education looks like – what is and isn't measured
- Scotland leader in inclusive education – be proactive in pushing a positive narrative

2. Who attended the meeting.

Jenny Gilruth, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Mhairi Crawford, Chief Executive, LGBT Youth Scotland
[redacted s38(1)(b)], LGBT Youth Scotland
[redacted s38(1)(b)], LGBT Youth Scotland
[redacted s38(1)(b)], Scottish Government

3. How long the meeting lasted.

The meeting lasted 30 minutes.