

Meeting of LGBTI+ Cross-Party Group

6pm – 7:30pm, 1st September 2021

Initial Meeting

DRAFT Minutes

Agenda

1. Welcome and apologies

Present

MSP members

Emma Roddick, MSP, SNP
Jamie Greene, MSP, Conservative
Paul McLennan, MSP, SNP
Joe FitzPatrick, MSP, SNP

Returning Organisations

Dumfries and Galloway LGBT Plus – Iain Campbell
EHRC (Equality and Human Rights Commission) – Kenny Stewart
Equality Network (proposed returning secretariat) – Rebecca Crowther,
Tim Hopkins, Ella Fisher, Eleanor Sanders White
LEAP Sports - Helena Thomas
LGBT Health and Wellbeing – Maruska Greenwood
LGBT Youth Scotland – Paul Daly and Sarah Anderson
NASUWT – Nik James
Scottish Trans Alliance – Vic Valentine
Stonewall Scotland – Colin Macfarlane and Megan Snedden
Time for Inclusive Education – Jordan Daly and Liam Stevenson

New Organisations

Gender Inclusion Network – Emma Cuthbertson
Respect Me – Lorraine Glass
End Conversion Therapy – Tristan Gray
See Me – Anna Cook
OurStory Scotland – Dom Miller-Graham

Individuals

Heather Herbert (LGBT+ Labour)
Paul Cockburn
Stevie Maybanks
Teddy Hope

Danny Gibson (standing in for Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP)
James Banner-Rall

Apologies from members

Pam Duncan-Glancy, MSP, Labour
Paul O’Kane, MSP, Labour
Alexander Stewart, MSP, Conservative
Karen Adam, MSP, SNP
Connal Cochrane, Rangers Foundation
Christopher Ward, S-X
Iona Soper, Secure Scotland
Jim Hume, Support in Mind Scotland
Jill Wood, Engender
Deejay Bullock, Four Pillars
Kevin Guyan
Fiona Donaldson Grounds

2. Formal business of the initial meeting

- Office bearers / Conveners

Jamie Greene explained that he founded the group five years ago. The Group had run well and had evolved. It retained a quorate number of MSPs throughout, and many external members who attended regularly. When the Group was able to meet in person it was also a good social event. He hopes the next meeting can be in person, but also partly digital so everyone can attend.

Patrick Harvie can no longer continue as co-convenor due to his new position as a Government Minister, therefore it is necessary to find a new co-convenor. Emma Roddick was proposed, and was happy to accept. She is a new SNP MSP, representing the Highlands and Islands, arguably the first openly LGBT MSP for Highland and Islands, ‘definitely the first since the 19th century.’ She has previously done work at party and council level standing against biphobia, homophobia, and transphobia and hopes this group will help her stay abreast of what’s happening within the LGBTI sector and in relation to LGBTI equalities in Scotland. Jamie Greene and Emma Roddick were agreed unanimously as the co-conveners and office bearers of the Group.

Jamie Greene gave his formal thanks to Patrick Harvie. Patrick has been a superb ally of the CPG and a fantastic co-convener. He attended practically every meeting even as leader of a party, and despite any political differences he worked really well with Jamie on the issues the group tackle. Jamie doesn't think he could have kept the Group going as well without his help, and wants to ensure Patrick is kept in the loop about the CPG's work in the future.

There were two other MSP members in attendance. Paul McLennan, SNP MSP for East Lothian, has been a councillor for 15 years and is excited to be part of the group. Joe FitzPatrick is SNP MSP for Dundee City West, and convener of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee in this Parliament.

- Remit

It was agreed to carry forward the remit from the previous session:

‘The purpose of the group is to promote and discuss issues of importance to the LGBTI+ community in Scotland with a view to helping make their lives better.’

- Secretariat

It was agreed that the Equality Network (EN) will continue as the Secretariat. Jamie Greene asked what the relationship was between Scottish Trans Alliance and EN. Rebecca Crowther explained that EN is the charitable organisation and STA is a project within EN. Jamie Greene thanked EN and STA for doing the work of secretariat.

3. Programme for Government in relation to LGBTI Equality

The publication of the Scottish Government's Programme for Government was delayed until the next week, however the SNP / Green shared policy programme has been published. Tim Hopkins (Equality Network) outlined the areas concerning LGBTI equality and human rights legislation. The programme is available here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-and-scottish-green-party-shared-policy-programme/>

Joe FitzPatrick is here in an individual capacity as an MSP, and not in his role as convener of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice

Committee, however he stated that the Committee had met before summer recess to discuss important issues and they felt that the conversion therapy (CT) petition work should maintain momentum. The Committee invited written submissions over the summer.

There were 1400 written submissions, of which 400 have been published so far and are available here:

https://yourviews.parliament.scot/ehrc/petition-end-conversion-therapy-views/consultation/published_select_respondent? b_index=360

The committee will take oral evidence in the coming weeks. They intend to hear lived experience, and also to take evidence from the Scottish Government and UK Government. Kemi Badenoch, UK Government Minister for Equalities, has written to Christina McKelvie, Scottish Government Minister for Equalities, confirming that the UK Government will take CT legislation forward for England and Wales. Available here:

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-equalities-human-rights-and-civil-justice-committee/correspondence/2021/uk-government-update-on-legislation-for-conversion-therapy>

The group agreed that it would be helpful to have a clearer timescale for work on the CT petition and further legislative movement. The group agreed that there is a need to maintain pressure. Joe FitzPatrick felt that the CT petition campaign was really effective, and noted that at the May election all parties committed to a ban in their manifestos.

Tristan Gray of the End Conversion Therapy campaign group said they were very pleased at the response at the election from the parties and the candidates. 55 candidates who pledged support directly were elected.

Jamie Greene agreed that the campaign has been successful but that nothing is certain yet so it is important to keep working on it.

4. LGBTI+ CPG moving forward

Rebecca Crowther (Equality Network) noted that over the summer there had been discussions between some members about the role of the CPG. She suggested that it is imperative that the Group does not end up being seen as just a talking shop.

The following points were made:

- It is key for anything that is discussed in the Group to be geared towards having some positive impact on MSPs or government.
- It is important to make sure the Group hears from intersectional voices, and to reach out to equalities and advocacy groups working with other minority communities such as POC, BAME, disability, and Women's sector groups such as Engender.
- It is important to maintain momentum within meetings. Policy work is slow, and there is currently a very toxic atmosphere for trans people and other LGBTI people. It is therefore important to encourage everyone to keep going.
- A Group Slack channel was suggested as a way to maintain momentum on actions between meetings.
- It was suggested that topics of discussion could tie closely to the legislative agenda – this is rather different from how the Group's agenda was developed before.
- It would be good to ensure that we always come away from these meetings with actions.
- We should aim to have co-conveners from all parties if possible.

Jamie Greene agreed with these comments, and added:

- The new Group should not just be a continuation of the old group. There are new members and previously we may have fallen into a comfort zone.
- We should increase activity as a pressure group within the parliament.
- Previously the Group may have struggled with defining who was responsible for drafting things like letters to represent the whole Group.
- The Group doesn't have a social media presence, partly due to concern around responsibility for admin. Jamie suggested that the Group could use social media more, especially to engage

more with those in rural areas who might feel disconnected from those in Edinburgh. However, some members raised concerns about online toxicity around LGBTI rights and equalities.

- Internally to the Group, Slack would be a good way of ensuring members are up to date on what is being done.
- Jamie supports increasing actions within the Group and pressure to improve the lives of LGBTI people in Scotland.
- MSP members of the Group can help to ensure that LGBTI voices are heard in conversations around legislative change.

Liam Stevenson, Time for Inclusive Education, pointed out that a presence on social media is not necessarily a good idea, because it's so toxic. He suggested that being proactive behind the scenes would be a great idea but was not sure social media would help.

Emma Roddick noted that it was understandable that the group was 'in defence mode' last session and hopes this won't be the same this session. She supports the Group being proactive. She was happy to hear Jamie mention rural issues as there's still lots of misunderstanding about the work being done in rural areas.

Jordan Daly, Time for Inclusive Education, agreed with the concerns raised about social media. It is important to think about who would be administering any social media presence because it can be very harmful to read abusive responses. The group would have to consider the welfare of members.

Jordan agreed that more public-facing work such as open letters would be beneficial. There is strength in the collective voice around the table. LGBTI groups are being targeted, so it would be positive to collaborate to help combat online hate and disinformation.

Rebecca Crowther pointed out that it is important to get more people involved and to be visible. She noted that the real work doesn't happen on twitter. The work of the Group is important, as well as how the members make use of the Group to influence policy.

It was agreed that it would be helpful to find out what is 'FOI-able' from Slack discussions. Jamie Greene noted that we should ensure that the Group remains a space that is safe in which to discuss and talk freely.

People who oppose LGBTI equality often make FOI requests about LGBTI equality organisations. It is therefore important to ensure that we are very clear about what is within the remit of a CPG. It is also important that no comments or documents are put out in the name of the Group that do not reflect the view of the group.

5. Questions for Government, and FMQs

The Group could ask MSP members to submit questions to the government, or ask them verbally, including at First Minister's Questions.

6. Requests to join this CPG

All the organisations and individuals listed (under item 1 above) as present or as having sent apologies were approved as members.

7. Updates on other matters / AOB

Colin Macfarlane (Stonewall Scotland) gave an update on Afghanistan. Colleagues from Stonewall UK have been working around the clock with Rainbow Railroad to help ensure safe passage out of Afghanistan. He is proud of his colleagues' work on this. The UK Government has given priority for safe passage and settlement for LGBT+ people. Colin invited organisations who get requests for support for passage out of Afghanistan, to refer them to Stonewall.

Kenny Stewart (Equality and Human Rights Commission) noted that they have also written to the Foreign Secretary, regarding colleagues at the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

Maruska Greenwood (LGBT Health and Wellbeing) said that the organisation has just published the first major Scottish research on the experiences of trans people at work and when looking for work. This was welcomed. Available here:

<https://www.lgbthealth.org.uk/resource/trans-people-scotland-work/>

Lorraine Glass (Respect Me) stated that there is a young filmmaker competition, launched by Respect Me and the Royal Conservatoire, which is inviting entries. It would be amazing to see young LGBTI+

entries so please share with networks – details available here:
www.respectme.org.uk/news/

Eleanor Sanders White (Equality Network) gave a Pride event update: Dumfries Pride is on 11th September, Oban Pride on 25th September, and Grampian Pride is on the 24th October.

Rebecca Crowther noted that we're not currently circulating the members' email list – anyone who wants to contact one or more other members, for now please email rebecca@equality-network.org

8. Consideration of main discussion items for the next 2 meetings

This item was postponed to email discussion.