

LGBTQ+ Action Plan

Q1. Do you think the Action Plan will increase equality for LGBTQ+ people and what do you think the priorities should be?

No

Comments:

No, the opposite is true. At its heart is misogyny and homophobia. This appalling plan will take Wales back to the unhappy decades that preceded women's and gay liberation. It is a shameful document put together by gender identity theorists.

The "independent expert panel" is anything other than independent. The members of the panel who drew up the key recommendations appear to hold to one particular viewpoint, that sex is irrelevant and 'gender identity' is what matters. Such views do not represent lesbians and gay men whose sexual orientation is towards people of the same sex (rather than 'gender'). Those who adhere to gender identity ideology regard it as 'transphobic' to state that you are only attracted to people of the same biological sex. It is not surprising that the Plan is based on the primacy of 'gender identity', given that the Welsh Government explicitly commissioned Stonewall Cymru to select the 'stakeholders' whose views should be consulted.

The views of Stonewall and their supporters invariably also entail objections to the provisions for single-sex exceptions in the Equality Act 2010, thus rendering them opposed to the needs and preferences of most women and girls. We are therefore concerned about the balance of the views informing this Plan, and we are aware that expertise from other perspectives (including LGB Alliance Cymru and Merched Cymru) was summarily rejected.

The inadequacy of the process behind this plan causes reputational damage to the Welsh government. The Nolan BBC podcast, published on 13 October, reveals how inappropriate it is for a government to rely on the advice of a lobby group that represents extreme views. Thus the Plan and its intended outcomes stand no chance of achieving credibility with the public, unless moves are made immediately to consult properly.

We note that the words 'lesbian', 'gay' and 'bisexual' appear three times each, on each occasion in a list: 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ+)'. The term 'trans' appears 21 times. Even the word 'sex' only appears within the naming of Relationships and Sexuality Education (three times) apart from one reference in the Ministerial Foreword to 'sex characteristics'. Thus even a simple analysis of this sort tells us where the focus of the Plan is – that is, on the TQ+. This is simply not fair.

The lack of definition of some of the terms used makes it hard to discern what is really intended and what is needed. 'Non-binary' is a term with no legal definition, so the ten references to non-binary people in the Plan have no clear focus or identified need.

The plan will not increase equality for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people. It is manifestly clear that the Plan will damage their interests. Sexual orientation and 'gender identity' are two totally different things, and by conflating them in this way, quite apart from including the undefined 'queer' and '+', it is quite impossible to talk about these very different communities in a helpful way. The remarkably few mentions of 'lesbian' or 'gay' make it all too clear how little the issue of sexual orientation is really considered in this Plan.

Statements like 'LGBTQ+ people are more likely than their heterosexual counterparts....' (p5) seems to oppose the whole of the conglomerate LGBTQ+ to heterosexuality, when in reality, only LGB stands explicitly separate from heterosexuality. The misquoting of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act is yet another indication of the attitudes embedded in the Plan. On pages 5-6, reference is made to the 'specific needs and vulnerabilities being LGBTQ+ intersect[ing] with other protected characteristics including age, race, gender, religion and disability'. 'Gender' is not a protected characteristic. Sex is a protected characteristic, however. So is sexual orientation. Indeed, these are the ones that are most powerfully impacted by the ideology represented by Stonewall, Pride, Glitter etc.

The assumption that 'affirmation' is the only response to those young people suffering from distress about gender is a disaster and prevents proper diagnosis of trauma, fails to manage the difficulties faced by those with autistic spectrum disorders, and may amount to conversion therapy of lesbian and gay young people

The one clear priority, entirely unmentioned in this Plan, is to recognise that there are conflicts of rights

and that these must be faced without prejudice. Nothing can be effectively achieved by simply brushing aside the conflict between women's sex-based rights, including the right to single-sex facilities and services, and the rights claimed by trans-identified people. What matters especially to LGB Alliance is the concerted campaign to ignore the conflict between the rights/demands of those who believe 'gender identity' should take precedence over sex and the rights of people whose sexual orientation is towards others of the same sex.

Q2. Do you agree with the overarching aims? What would you add or take away in relation the overarching aims?

No

Comments:

No, we do not agree. The entire emphasis of these overarching aims is to prioritise the demands of trans-identified people and those claiming a non-binary identity, at the expense of the hard-won rights and protections for women, gay men, lesbians and bisexuals. The bundling together of 'LGBTQ+' is a kind of 'forced teaming' that takes no account of the specific challenges and needs of each group, and the significant differences between them. As a result, it fails many of these groups.

If the 'intersectional equalities training' promoted in 3 does not support the rights of women, or the needs of same-sex-attracted individuals, as has been the case with some such training already delivered in various parts of the United Kingdom, it will have failed a high proportion of those this Plan purports to support – as well as half the population.

Challenging heteronormative assumptions is clear and understood. Challenging 'cisnormative assumptions' is undefined, and given that many people entirely reject the term 'cis', this aim (4) reads as a provocative challenge to those who understand sex to be immutable rather than a desire to achieve anything positive.

Data collection (5) will not be improved so long as the key fact of an individual's sex is confused with or replaced by 'gender identity'.

As for the formalising of the Independent Expert Panel (6), the exclusion of any representation from groups representing people whose sexual orientation is towards people of the same sex or natal women means that the failure to support the needs of these two groups, long discriminated against, will merely be aggravated. Again we see that this plan is rooted in homophobia.

Q3. Do you agree with the proposed actions? What would you add or take away in relation the actions?

No

Comments:

It is not made clear what 'rights' trans and non-binary people currently lack or are under threat, that they need to be defended and promoted (7). We fear that what is intended is the removal of women's sex-based rights by permitting self-ID and allowing such self-identified 'gender' to be the key characteristic, rather than sex. Clarity and protection of women's sex-based rights, including such things as single-sex hospital wards, prisons and domestic abuse refuges, is essential. So too is the right of gay men and lesbians to be attracted to those of the same sex – and not harassed as 'transphobic' for not agreeing that they are attracted to others of the same 'gender'.

Given the lack of any definition of non-binary, or any clarity about what is meant, it is unclear what recognition is being promoted in 8.

Action 9 appears to be a Trojan horse, designed to permit self-identification and destroy the rights of women and LGB people to privacy, and to set their own boundaries.

Action 10 is of considerable concern given that straightforward neutral and exploratory psychotherapy, an absolute essential for young people and most adults contemplating potentially irreversible hormonal or surgical changes to their bodies, has been termed 'conversion therapy' by activists. To fail to support a young person in distress and enable them to explore the sources of their distress seems entirely unethical.

Removing biological sex from such documentation as birth certificates, police records, NHS records (11), is potentially disastrous, as a few tragic cases have shown.

It seems absolutely essential that any approach to human rights considers the situation of women, still discriminated against in many ways despite some legislation designed to combat such discrimination. Recognition of women's specific needs must form the basis of any changes being made regarding rights of others that may impinge on women's rights.

Ensuring LGBTQ+ People's Safety

Women's services are being sacrificed in the name of 'inclusion'. Trans people need their own services in relation to violence of all sorts. The insistence that transwomen must be permitted to access domestic abuse refuges, rape crisis centres etc. does not serve the needs of either group.

The reference to 'hate crime' (which here appears to mean, at least in part, 'hate incidents') is, from information given elsewhere, liable to include such 'crimes' as 'misgendering' which is hard to put in the same category as many of the ways in which lesbians and gay men are targeted (which is not to suggest that trans people do not suffer harassment and discrimination, merely that misgendering appears to have become forefronted, and skews the data).

Home & Communities

Pride events (actions 20 and 21) routinely actively exclude lesbians, and gay men have been targeted for supporting 'sex not gender'. We note that the list of events given is strongly skewed to those who come under the 'trans umbrella' and that there is a marked emphasis on the Trans Day of Remembrance, even though murders of trans people are happily extremely rare in the UK.

Will 'representation' (point 23) mean that male-bodied people can supposedly represent women on the organisations running sport and culture? Will 'participation' (25) mean that women's sport becomes effectively mixed sex?

The situation for lesbians and gay men who arrive as refugees or seeking asylum is serious. A homosexual orientation may be illegal, even punishable with death, in their countries of origin. It is essential that storage and sharing of information is managed with extreme sensitivity in case of a return to their former home where such information could have serious consequences (33, 34, 35).

Improving Health Outcomes

We certainly hope that more work will be done to make life easier for all older and disabled lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people in need of social care. The needs of these groups are different and it is essential that this is fully accounted for, rather than being worked on through some amorphous 'LGBTQ+ specific health and social care training' (action point 36).

We are deeply concerned about the intentions behind point 43, concerning the 'Gender Identity pathway for children and young people'. If it is not recognised that children and young people are at risk of being pushed into a gender identity crisis through homophobia, peer and internet influence, the desire to find an 'easy' solution to distress resulting from abuse (physical, sexual and emotional) or other trauma, and social difficulties which may relate to autism, then the absolutely crucial neutral and exploratory psychotherapy that is essential will not be provided. This could be a catastrophe for the children and young people concerned, and for health and care services in Wales.

Adults are, of course, entitled to make decisions about their lives, but the NHS has quite strict guidelines about what medications can be provided for various conditions and will, in the normal run of things, only fund those which are known to be of observable benefit. Enabling GPs to initiate hormone therapy (point 44) which is a physical intervention for a psychological difficulty, and leads to changes in the body which will become irreversible after some time (particularly for women taking male hormones) seems a remarkably casual approach to something so potentially damaging. We wonder whether GPs are comfortable with being put in this position, given the lack of adequate evidence for the benefit of this treatment.

Education

Action point 47, with its emphasis on 'inclusivity', appears to be promoting the sort of RSE and other curricula that have run into trouble in some authorities in England and Scotland. Telling children that they can change sex, that there are many 'genders' and they should decide what they are, is not only confusing for many but risks pathologising non-conformity to sex stereotypes by implying that such non-conformity must mean a child is trans/non-binary etc. Additionally, those young people who are clear about the dimorphic nature of sex and the reality of same-sex attraction may find themselves bullied or ostracised for failing to go along with the currently popular ideology.

For this reason, a proper anti-bullying programme, protecting all gender-non-conforming children, whether they identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or non-binary, or hold to beliefs that others do not share, is of considerably greater importance than focusing on 'hate crime'. Suggesting that failure to subscribe to a particular set of views could constitute a criminal offence does nothing to help children and young people deal with mental health issues or to promote their wellbeing.

As raised elsewhere, without serious consideration of the conflict of rights between women and trans-identified individuals, inclusivity (52) is liable to mean an abusive context for women. It also leads to hate campaigns targeting women who do not believe 'inclusion' must mean that male-bodied individuals should be included in women's spaces.

Workplace

Once again, without considering the potential conflicts between the needs and interests of women and those of transwomen, the proposals may mean more discrimination against women in the name of 'trans rights' and 'inclusivity'.

Covid-19 Response

There is no doubt that children and young people have suffered hugely during the Covid-19 pandemic, deprived of their peer group, the interactive and stimulating education that would support them in 'normal' times, and the social life of such importance to the development of teenagers. It is also true Black, Asian and ethnic minority people have been disproportionately affected both by the illness itself and by employment impacts.

In terms of the various groups covered by this Plan, the lack of specific focus on any of the groups that fall under the LGB banner means that key issues are missed. For example, while it is known that domestic abuse rose considerably during lockdown periods, it is less frequently recognised that bisexual women are more likely to be targets than heterosexual women. It is a shame that such issues are not addressed in this Plan.

Q4. What are the key challenges that could stop the aims and actions being achieved?

The failure to define key terms makes it impossible to see how the Plan can be implemented or evaluated. The very poor initial survey research means that there is no set of data to which future comparisons can be made to measure progress.

Women's groups and others like LGB Alliance who do not subscribe to gender identity ideology will not accept these recommendations. This is likely to mean that a majority of the population of Wales will not be behind it, and certainly some of the groups this Plan ostensibly seeks to support (particularly lesbian, gay and bisexual people) will note that their needs, wishes and aspirations have been subsumed into a gender ideology framework.

The utter inadequacy of the Equality Impact Assessment is serious. Judicial Review might halt the Plan before it could get properly underway.

As mentioned, the lack of work to manage the potential conflicts between protected characteristic groups means the Public Sector Equality Duty has been failed.

Q9. This plan has been developed in co-construction, and discussions around language and identity have shown that the acronym LGBTQ+ should be used. This stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning people, with the + representing other sexual identities. As a result we refer to LGBTQ+ people in the Plan. What are your views on this term and is there an alternative you would prefer? Welsh speakers may wish to consider suitable terminology in both languages.

LGBTQ+ is a nonsensical forced teaming of at least two entirely different things. LGB represents those with a same-sex sexual orientation. The T refers to gender identity, and the Q and + refer to a wide range of people with different needs. There is no legal (or medical) definition of 'gender identity'.

LGB needs to be considered separately, as it always was from the late 1960s until 2015. There is a body of expertise built up through the work done during that time to address discrimination, harassment, needs in older age, the approach of health and care workers, support for lesbian, gay and bisexual teenagers and young adults, etc. Building on that could produce a really useful Plan for this group.

Q10. We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

This Plan should be abandoned and an entirely new process started towards two different Plans, one focusing on LGB issues and the other on TQ+ matters. Only in this way can the real needs of these very different groups be effectively addressed. The issue of conflicts of interest must be addressed. Consultation with groups such as Merched Cymru and LGB Alliance Cymru is essential. At the moment this document should cause both embarrassment and concern to the Welsh Government. It is a case study in discrimination against the protected characteristics of sex and sexual orientation. It has clearly been written by activists who wish to erase sex and sexual orientation as protected characteristics and replace them with their doggedly held belief in "gender identity". The Welsh Government must wake up to the fact that these activists are dictating policy, then writing the action plan (while excluding any who disagree with it), and then setting themselves up for more paid work to "implement" this regressive plan.

Taxpayers and elected representatives must wake up to what is going on. At the moment you are supporting a complete change in the way society organises - by eliminating the importance of biological sex and same sex attraction - and not allowing any democratic discussion of this fundamental change.

It is not too late to stop this plan. We encourage you to listen to subject matter experts who will discuss facts not minority beliefs on the subjects discussed. As LGB people who have fought all our lives for our rights we will not accept our legalised erasure and we will do everything we can to oppose this appalling plan.

You are about to submit your response. Please ensure you are satisfied with the answers you have provided before sending.

Name Katharine Harris

Organisation (if applicable) LGB Alliance

If you want to receive a receipt of your response, please provide an email address. Email address

kate.harris@lgballiance.org.uk