

Note of Meeting:

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government meeting with LGBTI Stakeholders

18 November 2021

Attendees:

Shona Robison, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government
Shona Robison

Stakeholder Attendees:

██████████, Director, Equality Network
██████████, Manager, Scottish Trans
██████████, Director, Stonewall Scotland
██████████, Policy & Campaigns Manager, Stonewall Scotland
██████████, Chief Executive, LGBT Youth Scotland
██████████, Policy & Research Manager, LGBT Youth Scotland
██████████, Chief Executive, LGBT Health and Wellbeing

Scottish Government Officials:

██████████, LGBTI Equality Policy Team Leader
██████████, LGBTI Equality Policy Team

Agenda Item One: Reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004

1. The Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill will be introduced in this parliamentary year. Ms Robison was hopeful for a more respectful debate and atmosphere.
2. ██████████ acknowledged that trans people have felt less safe over the last four years while reform has been discussed, and that it was important to highlight that the Bill allowed people to access rights they already had. ██████ said that they were disappointed about aspects of the Bill, such as the exclusion of non-binary people.
3. Ms Robison said the purpose of reform was about making existing processes easier and fairer for a small number of people for whom the current process was difficult and unfair.
4. The issue of the current tone of the media was raised and stakeholders asked how the Government could frame the debate more positively.
5. Ms Robison stated media enquiries would be handled in a factual manner and would continue to encourage everyone to be respectful.
6. ██████████ noted that the question of age was contentious but was the most important issue for LGBT youth. Trans young people struggled to access

services as they were not able to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC).

7. Ms Robison agreed to invitation meet with the organisation's young person's group.
8. Stakeholders urged Ms Robison to consider international best practice around lowering the age to 16 years for applying for a GRC.

Agenda Item Two: Conversion Practices

9. Ms Robison mentioned that the Equality, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee had been gathering written and oral evidence for their consideration of the petition on banning conversion therapy. She noted that research had been published alongside the UK Government's consultation on banning conversion therapy. She acknowledged that some of the issues associated with banning conversion practices were not devolved matters and that the Scottish Government wanted to pursue both legislative and non-legislative measures.
10. Ms Robison said that the Scottish Government was establishing an Expert Advisory Group on Banning Conversion Practices which would be asked to agree a definition. The Group would include legal professionals, those with relevant expertise, and those with lived experience.
11. ██████████ stated it was vital that the remit of the Advisory Group be about how to end conversion therapy and not whether or not it should be banned. He also emphasised that it was vital to have at least one trans survivor on the Expert Advisory Group to give a perspective on trans conversion therapy.
12. Ms Robison said the remit of the Expert Advisory Group would be about how to ban conversion therapy and she agreed lived experience important.
13. ██████████ welcomed a letter from MPs sent to Liz Truss MP on the UK plans to ban so-called conversion therapy. He said he considered the best international example of banning conversion practices came from Victoria, Australia. ██████████ agreed and stated it was important to cover the loopholes in the UK Government's proposals such as the issue of consent.

Agenda Item Three: Health

14. ██████████ brought forward concerns that the mental health of LGBT people had worsened during the pandemic with many support services seeing significant increases in demand and that this was a significant area of inequality for LGBT people. Social media discourse stirred up by the GRA reform process was said to have had a particularly negative effect on the mental health of LGBTI people. Stakeholders were waiting to hear back about a meeting with the Minister for Mental Health.

15. Ms Robison acknowledged that the pandemic had exacerbated mental health issues and public discourse would not help and also understood that reform of GRA would heighten public discourse. Ms Robison stated that the Scottish Government's Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan set out a number of actions.

Follow Up Actions

1. Ms Robison agreed to reflect on how to challenge misinformation surrounding the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill.
2. Ms Robison agreed to attend a meeting proposed by LGBT Youth Scotland with their young person's group.
3. SG officials will be clear that legislation to ban conversion practices will be introduced by the end of 2023.
4. SG officials will confirm arrangements for the meeting between the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and LGBTI stakeholders.
5. SG officials will provide an update on the progress of the Equality and Human Rights Forum for Mental Health.