

Ned Sharratt
Public Petitions Clerks
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP



11 December 2015

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1573 (Statutory teaching of LGBTI+ issues)

Dear Mr Sharratt

Thank you for your letter of 28 October on behalf of the Public Petitions Committee asking for our response to the discussion on 27 October of Petition PE1573. Time for Inclusive Education is calling for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex plus (LGBTI+) issues to be made statutory in the curriculum. You have asked us to outline what the Scottish Government currently does to ensure LGBTI+ pupils are supported and the school environment is a positive one for LGBTI+ children. You would also welcome details of the Scottish Government's strategy for supporting LGBTI+ pupils and if the Scottish Government does not have a specific strategy the Committee asks whether one will be developed. We welcome the opportunity to respond.

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is the national approach to learning and teaching for young people aged 3-18 in Scotland. The Scottish Government only sets broad guidelines. Schools needn't stick to rigid learning paths and can make their own decisions on what to teach pupils. This means that curriculum content is a matter for schools and local authorities to decide. Teachers, head teachers and professional educationalists are best placed to decide what is taught in Scotland's schools.

Current Support

Scotland is considered to be one of the most progressive countries in Europe in terms of LGBT equality. According to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association Europe Rainbow Map which reflects the national legal and policy human rights situation of LGBTI people in Europe, the United Kingdom was ranked highest in 2014 with 82%: the next closest country was Belgium with 78%. This is in part due to our inclusive definition of gender identity in the Offences (Aggravation by Prejudice) (Scotland) Act 2009 in addition to the introduction of same sex marriage by both Westminster and the Scottish Parliament.



Our *National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People* sets out a common vision and aims to make sure that work across all agencies and communities is jointly focused on tackling all types of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying. The National Approach is currently being refreshed to ensure that it remains current, reflects policy developments, is in line with the legal framework outlined in the Equality Act 2010², and captures findings from the recent *respectme* research *Bullying in Scotland 2014*. *The Scottish Government is pleased that Stonewall Scotland and LGBT Youth Scotland are members of the working group taking this work forward.*

We have established and wholly fund *respectme*, Scotland's anti-bullying service. *respectme* is managed and delivered in partnership with LGBT Youth Scotland and Scottish Association for Mental Health. *respectme* works with all adults who work with children and young people to give them the practical skills and confidence to deal with all types of bullying behaviour, wherever it occurs, and for whatever reason.

Specific action on homophobic bullying

In addition, Stonewall Scotland and LGBT Youth Scotland will be invited to a future Scottish Advisory Group on Relationships and Behaviour in Schools meeting, chaired by Dr Alasdair Allan, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, to specifically discuss homophobic bullying.

Learning and Teaching Scotland (now Education Scotland), in conjunction with LGBT Youth Scotland, produced a toolkit on *Dealing with Homophobia and Homophobic Bullying in Scottish Schools* to support teachers in recognising, challenging, and reducing homophobia and homophobic bullying in their schools.

We have also supported development of the FIT DVD, Stonewall's highly successful play for schools aimed at tackling homophobic bullying. Copies of the DVD were sent to every secondary school in Scotland.

The *National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People* explicitly mentions homophobia and every training session that *respectme* has delivered to teachers, care workers and parents since 2007, covers homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Of the 29 Local Authorities who have worked directly *respectme*, 25 have policies that specifically mention homophobia. *respectme* will continue working with local authorities to update and improve their policy positions.

The LGBT Learning Journey, produced by Education Scotland and LGBT Youth with help from Stonewall Scotland focuses on building positive relationships across both school and wider communities that are inclusive of all. It reflects on the development of equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, and aims to address homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. Practitioners are given the opportunity to explore the use of language and sexual orientation with learners at third and fourth level whilst supporting learners to reflect on how we develop positive, inclusive relationships. The learning journey can be found here -

http://www.education.scot.nhs.uk/resources/e/genericresource_tcm4858537.asp?strReferringChannel=inclusionandequalities&strReferringPageID=tcm:4-851590-64&class=l3+d218589

² The technical guidance for schools can be found at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/publication/technical-guidance-schools-scotland>

Education Scotland also provides a series of short videos within the Journey to Excellence website that considers how to improve approaches to equality education for LGBT young people. They include :

[Promoting LGBT equality through the curriculum](#)
[LGBT equality education impact on young people](#)
[Partnership working to promote LGBT equality](#)

Education Scotland has engaged positively with Stonewall Scotland, LGBT Youth Scotland and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) through their membership of Education Scotland's Diversity and Equality Network. They had a direct influence on the school self-evaluation toolkit HGIOS4 and new inspection frameworks and provided workshops at Education Scotland's prejudice based bullying event on 23 November 2015. EHRC, LGBT Youth Scotland and Education Scotland offered workshops on understanding and recording and reporting on prejudice-based bullying. Education Scotland looks forward to continued effective partnership working with its Diversity and Equality Network.

Education Scotland continues to improve resources for inclusion and equality within its webspace and recently offered a 'GLOW meet' to celebrate Transgender Awareness Week. This Glow TV event aimed to raise awareness and understanding of issues relevant to trans-inclusivity within educational contexts and had a target audience of teaching and service staff.

The session on 23 November was led by Sara Turkington, Equality and Inclusion Officer at Ayrshire College and Oceana Maund, a trans woman and Scottish Transgender Alliance volunteer.

The Standards for Registration from the General Teaching Council for Scotland requires teachers to commit to "the principles of democracy and social justice through fair, transparent, inclusive and sustainable policies and practices in relation to: age, disability, gender and gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion and belief and sexual orientation."³ Further, part 5 of the Code of Professionalism and Conduct on Equality and Diversity requires teachers to engage and work positively with pupils, help pupils understand different views, perspectives and experiences and develop positive relationships as well as recognise that they are role models.

Education Scotland continue to offer rights training based on equality and universal dignity and this is available to all local authorities.

Next Steps

Following the retendering process, *respectme* has also been asked to consider what more can be done to improve teacher confidence around homophobic bullying.

We very much advocate training around Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood education and would encourage local authorities and schools to provide training for their teachers. We encourage organisations who offer training on LGBT issues to contact schools and local authorities directly.

³ Page 5 at <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/the-standards/standards-for-registration-1212.pdf>

We have ongoing conversations with Stonewall Scotland and LGBT Youth Scotland on a variety of educational issues. We will engage with them on this work and have responded positively to meeting the petitioners, Time for Inclusive Education.

We will invite LGBT Youth Scotland and Stonewall Scotland to a future SAGRABIS meeting to discuss homophobia in schools and what more can be done in schools as well as explore whether the toolkit on *Dealing with Homophobia and Homophobic Bullying in Scottish Schools* should be updated to provide teachers with the confidence and capacity to tackle homophobic bullying. This will be considered after the revised *National Approach* is published next year.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

ANN MILOVIĆ
Policy Adviser
Support and Wellbeing Team
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Scottish Government

Annex A

Curriculum for Excellence: Health and Wellbeing Experiences and Outcomes:

https://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/health_wellbeing_experiences_outcomes_tcm4-540031.pdf