EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
DRAFT BUDGET SCRUTINY 2020-21
SUBMISSION FROM LGBT YOUTH SCOTLAND

LGBT Youth Scotland’s vision is that Scotland is the best place to grow up for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex young people. We play a leading role in the provision of quality youth work to LGBTI young people that promotes their health and wellbeing, and we are a valued and influential partner in LGBTI equality and human rights.

We welcome this opportunity to engage with the Equalities and Human Rights Committee on their Draft Budget Scrutiny 2020-21 – our response discusses the public funding we receive, how it is used and reported on, and the impacts of our work on LGBTI young people and national equalities outcomes.

**What are the key public policy areas where individuals and protected groups are struggling to access their rights?**

Our Life in Scotland research\(^1\) shows that for LGBTI young people the key areas are **mental health** – 84% of LGBT and 96% of trans young people indicated that they had experienced at least one mental health issue; **education** - 52% of LGBT young people reported school or education as the place in which they experienced the most discrimination with 92% of LGBT young people and 96% of transgender young people experiencing homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying during their time in education and 63% saying it negatively impacted their educational attainment; **housing** - 15% of LGBT and 22% of trans young people felt forced out of their home and left under negative circumstances; and **hate crime** - 35% of LGBT, 41% of trans young people and 51% of non-binary young people experienced a hate crime or incident in the last year.

**Which groups of people are most likely to be affected and why?**

Young people tell us that rurality has a significant impact on their lives. Lack of access to safe spaces and feeling isolated are key factors. Only 39% of LGBTI young people living in rural areas thought their area was a good place to live compared to 70% of those living in urban areas.

Trans young people are consistently more likely to be impacted negatively with issues such as mental health, experience of hate crimes and how accepted they feel within Scotland and their local communities. Young trans people tell us that public debates about their existence and rights, as well as abuse through social media (both targeted directly at them, and through posts shared online) are significant factors.

LGB people are around twice as likely to report symptoms of poor mental health than heterosexual adults and have around 1.5 times higher prevalence of depression and anxiety disorders than heterosexual adults\(^{ii}\).
LGBT young people that use our services are likely to have intersectional issues that must be considered as this presents additional barriers to them accessing their rights.

**What type of public sector funding (European, national or local) is provided to your organisation to support vulnerable groups and those with protected characteristics to access public services?**

LGBT Youth Scotland currently receives funding from the Scottish Government to deliver a programme of work that aims to reduce the discrimination experienced by LGBTI young people and the wider community; to build the capacity of public bodies to meet their needs; and to engage directly with communities and provide opportunities for LGBTI young people to engage in civic Scotland. This includes policy and influencing work, engaging with schools and education authorities, co-ordination of LGBT History Month and the implementation of the LGBT Charter as well as funding half a post for our digital youth work service. This equates to just under 25% of our funding per annum.

Our direct youth work services for young people receive some funding from local authorities although we have witnessed a steady decline in this funding over the years and in some areas such as Dundee and Glasgow where the need for our services and number of young people accessing them are significant we receive no or very little funding from the public sector. In the majority of areas any local authority funding is agreed on an annual basis and dependent on money being available in local authority budgets. Overall around 23% of our annual funds come from local public sector funding with 23% of that being through the NHS (mainly in Edinburgh).

This leaves us with more than half our annual income to source through other income streams such as trusts and foundations, events and corporate fundraising, individual donors and training delivery.

We are also concerned about the impacts of Brexit which may limit the opportunities of young LGBTI people to take part in European youth projects for example through Erasmus funded projects.

**Is the level of public sector funding provided enough to deliver national priorities and better outcomes for people and communities, please provide evidence?**

Long-term planning is increasingly difficult as funding from many sources is short-term.

As outlined above, LGBTI young people in rural parts of Scotland do not receive the same level of support from our services. We do, however, provide an online youth work service which goes someway to bridge the gap.

Our aim is to provide services for LGBTI young people across Scotland but limited resources and the country’s geography make it more difficult to achieve this objective. We have a strong presence in the central belt as well as parts of the Borders and Dumfries. However, we are not able to provide services to much of the Highlands and Islands and across remote rural areas.
Demand for our services exceeds what our funding allows us to deliver. Where our services are oversubscribed, we have to split youth groups to a manageable level – for example in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. However, this impacts on staff capacity. Due to lack of funding it is not always possible, for example in our Perth service.

In areas of high demand for direct support work with LGBTI young people such as Dundee and Glasgow, where there is no, or very little public sector funding available, it puts a significant financial strain on the organisation. It is a considerable challenge to use funds raised elsewhere to ensure these services are delivered particularly given the reduced public sector funding across the youth work sector in general and knock on effect of many organisations bidding for the same funding through trusts and foundations.

Are there public funding challenges for the third sector; if so what would be the implications for delivering equalities and human rights outcomes?

As noted, annual and project funding means that long-term planning becomes difficult making it harder to develop and grow services where needed.

The continuing struggle to meet core costs is one many charities have but a particular challenge we have is the need for safe spaces to host our youth work services and staff across Scotland. Annual costs for buildings and other core work are not reflected, or fully reflected, in some of the funding we receive as much is project based. This means that we struggle to cover ‘core’ costs. If we do not have safe spaces to deliver our work, the reality is that our services would not be able to function.

One potential solution that we would welcome would be local authorities providing and maintaining properties that we could use to run our services. Of course, we are acutely aware that local authorities have further funding cuts coming, but we hope that they do not see these essential youth services as an option to make savings.

LGBT Youth Scotland has built decades of experience and a strong evidence base of the need for our work to be funded. However, we are aware of increasing competition to access funding. It is clear that there is often not enough funding for all, we feel that there needs to be more money in the ‘pot’ to ensure that equalities funding is sufficient.

The stark reality is that if we are not able to fund our services, it directly impacts on our ability to provide services for young LGBTI people, and means that we will not be able to reach into the areas where we do not have services. This process of reducing our reach and impact to the bare essentials due to funding shortages, clearly limits our ability to effectively deliver against equalities outcomes.

Between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2019:

- In the region of 1,000 young people across Scotland engaged with LGBTI Youth Scotland through 831 group work sessions, totalling over 1,777 hours.
- Over a quarter of publicly funded secondary schools in Scotland have achieved or are working towards the LGBT Charter. 60 organisations were awarded the LGBT Charter.
What type of administrative systems are in place to monitor the impact on equalities and human rights outcomes from public sector funding to the third sector?

All of our Scottish Government funded work links to the outcomes of the Scottish Government. LGBT Youth Scotland report on progress using an evidence-based approach, research, measurement tools, quotes from young people / service users and statements regarding our impact.

Our strategic plan considers our contribution to national outcomes in Scotland at a Government level as well as National Youth Work Outcomes linking into Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) and SHANARRI wellbeing indicators.

Evidence of impact is collated across the organisation using both quantitative and qualitative data including session records from youth groups, one to ones and digital chat, as well as annual surveys carried out with young people and case studies collated by youth workers. Youth work managers analyse data from services monthly to ensure that outcomes are being met across all projects and that projects are meeting the needs of young people.

All of this evaluation data is fed into the planning process for the following year so that we are continuously learning and improving.

In addition to this is our Life In Scotland research, is repeated every 5 years giving a moving picture of what it's like to be an LGBTI young person in Scotland and track longer term changes to Scottish culture.

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iii Data from our Strategy for a Sustainable Future 2018-2023, Year One Monitoring Report