

# Deputations

## Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00 am Tuesday, 24th October, 2023

Dean of Guild Court Room - City Chambers

### Deputations

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**CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL**  
**POLICY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE**

**Item No 3**

**24 OCTOBER 2023**

**DEPUTATION REQUESTS**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Deputation</b>
<b>3.1 In relation to Item 7.11 on the agenda – Gender Recognition Reform</b>	LGBT Youth Scotland (in person – supporting written submission attached)

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## Supporting Paper for Committee by LGBT Youth Scotland 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023

### Deputation: 7.11 – Gender Recognition Reform

We would like to thank the Committee for taking time to listen to us today.

We would also like to thank Cllr. Mumford for putting forward the motions, the follow up roundtable discussion with partner organisations and also Cllr. Cammy Day for taking time to come and meet with 11 of our young people at their youth group.

I am Ann Marriott the Youth Work Manager at LGBT Youth Scotland and I cover our LGBTQ+ youth work across Edinburgh, Lothians and the Scottish Borders.

I have worked at LGBT Youth Scotland for over 20 years and had hoped that things for LGBTQ+ people would have improved during this timeframe. Whilst we recognise how far we have come in terms of some LGBTQ+ rights and recognition. If we look back in history, there were very few legal rights for LGBTQ+ people. There has been significant progress in terms of Equal Marriage Act, and now we celebrate 23 years since the abolition of Section 28 in Scotland. These positive changes should of course be recognised and celebrated.

Unfortunately, there is still hate and there are still significant challenges for LGBTQ+ people. Young people are telling us that things are not improving, and in many cases, rights are regressing. Every young person deserves to grow up in a country where they can flourish and thrive, where they're safe to love and be loved. It is simply not OK that LGBTQ+ young people are persecuted or penalised because of who they are, and their identity is not accepted.

We welcome all the recommendations being proposed at Committee today and believe this to be an excellent starting point.

There are areas we have added supplementary information or where we would like to see the recommendations strengthened and have highlighted these below.

4.10.1 employs an intersectional approach in their equality programme that doesn't focus on one equality strand at a time, but includes all protected characteristics, young carers and care experienced trans people.

4.10.2 publishes its revised schools and anti-bullying policy so that it is in the public domain as soon as possible.

**Systems are in place to record bullying incidents through the Education Management Information system SEEMiS but there needs to be a change in culture across education where the number of recorded incidents of bullying are not considered a deficit for the school, college or university until the recording of incidents is commonplace and second nature to education establishments across Scotland. From <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/3160/lis-education-report-2023.pdf>**

4.10.3 explores the possibility of undertaking the LGBT Youth Charter across the Directorate.

**We would welcome this as a positive measure to embed an inclusive approach to all equality strands. This would give confidence to staff, stakeholders and young people.**

4.10.4 celebrates examples of good practice in inclusive education. For example, promoting schools whose action has ensured the curriculum reflects the diverse range of families, pupils may have and promoting the Scottish Government's document, 'Supporting transgender young people in schools: Guidance for schools' and the Relationship, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) resource online which covers trans issues in relation to age and stage.

**We welcome this and LGBT Youth Scotland will be contributing to the development of RSHPE resources.**

4.10.5 ensures at the design stage that toilets in new schools will be inclusive.

**We welcome this. We also ask that all existing Edinburgh Schools ensure that toilets are easily available for trans, non-binary and disabled students.**

Corporate Services – Communication Service

4.11 The Council improves communication to the public in the following ways:

4.11.1 takes proactive action to make the public aware that trans people are welcome.

4.11.2 conveys very clearly what its stance is on issues such as harassment, freedom of speech, human rights, incitement of hatred etc and how this manifests itself in policies around letting of premises, demonstrations etc. and its impact on the trans community.

4.11.3 produces explicit communications about when it allows its premises to be used for freedom of expressing views, and that this does not necessarily mean the Council is supportive of these views.

4.11.4 considers a budget to support Pride Edinburgh on 24 June 2023 and in particular, the partnership work between (recommended amendment) 'LGBT Youth Scotland, Lifelong Learning and Canongate Youth'. It is important that Pride Edinburgh is an accessible event, welcoming the diversity of the LGBTQIA community, including trans and non-binary people.

**We welcome this recognising that the Pride Youth Space offers over 1000 young people the space to co-produce a mini festival in a space away from alcohol, supported by youth workers.**

**We would welcome consideration of yearly support in recognition of the positive impact for LGBTQ+ young people across the City.**

Corporate Services – Democracy, Governance and Resilience

4.12 In recognising the difficulty trans people may have in meeting the requirement to have voting ID that fulfils criteria, explore steps that may alleviate this problem. Examples of action might include:

4.12.1 encouraging Edinburgh voters who are trans to register early while issues still exist.

4.12.2 Identifying training needs for local election boards.

4.12.3 Where changes are out with the Council’s control e.g., to name changing processes in national systems, to lobby for change at a national level.

Council

4.13 That the Council:

4.13.1 senior officers, and others with influence over how services are delivered, take action to reinforce the organisational culture of the Council to be one of zero tolerance with regard to transphobia.

4.13.2 implements staff awareness training to alleviate staff ‘fear of saying the wrong thing’.

**LGBT Youth Scotland, LAYC, Healthy Respect and Wester Hailes Youth Agency are rolling out Top Tips for Supporting Trans young people in Universal Youth Work Spaces to Multi Agency Teams across Edinburgh, including Edinburgh Social Workers. The LGBT Charter has training embedded into the programme.**

4.13.3 collates effective information gleaned from meetings such as the round table for use by officers when undertaking an integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

**We welcome this, as it would ensure an intersectional approach to decision making and implementation of new Policies.**

4.13.4 noting the difficulties identified above, lets the public know clearly how they can change their name on Council systems. In particular, reviewing the current process for changing a name on Council Tax records and, where within the Council’s remit, ensuring these processes, are made as straightforward as possible for trans people.

4.13.5 takes a wider approach to ensure safety, privacy and dignity in all Council facilities, striving to meet everyone’s needs, thereby, avoiding conflict and competing priorities.

4.13.6 notes that barriers around identity are only one aspect and services, if not already doing so, should also consider the systemic barriers in accessing services and education.

4.14 It is noted that the actions identified above will require to be considered with services. In doing this immediate activity will be identified and progressed, and further work/consideration undertaken for those requiring change in practice, systems and/or additional resource.

**We would welcome being part of conversations in relation to this.**

These recommendations are an excellent starting point, however there are many other aspects of LGBTQ+ young people's lives that are affected. **We would like to draw attention to the direct voices of young people:**

There is still hate and there are still significant challenges for LGBTQ+ people. Young people are telling us that things are not improving, and in many cases, rights are regressing. Every young person deserves to grow up in a city where they can flourish and thrive, where they're safe to love and be loved. It is simply not OK that LGBTQ+ young people are persecuted or penalised because of who they are, and their identity is not accepted.

As a national organisation we undertake research every 5 years and we have seen since 2012 that things have become harder not easier, particularly for trans and non-binary young people who are facing ever more transphobia.

For many reasons the world is a very different place in 2023 than it was when we last published Life in Scotland in 2018. We've had a pandemic, recorded hate crime is on the rise and issues surrounding the lives of trans people are often overanalysed, sensationalised by the media and misrepresented. These are the big picture issues that we knew about. What we didn't know was how these issues were impacting on the lives of individual young people in Scotland.

Cllr Day recently took the time to come and visit and listen to 11 young people:

One of the key themes that threaded throughout the discussion was the overall general feeling/sense of 'otherness' for LGBTQ+ YP. They feel othered and forgotten, erased, like their worth in society is null. Which is affirmed and re-enforced by the lack of services and representation for them and their community, as well as the harmful waves of transphobia and hate that is accepted as a societal norm.

They also talked about this in context with having to 'take abuse' and not speak up, for fear of conforming to the stereotypes of their community and transpeople being 'dangerous'. i.e., it's so damaging to be subjected to hate, but they don't feel they can do anything about it, because then they are conforming to the idea that they are either dangerous or a victim – they clearly said that they don't want to be 'the victim', they just want to live their lives.

Some of the key findings which make for difficult reading:



86% of participants said they face barriers to achieving their full potential due to a range of personal and systemic challenges including trauma. Our goal is to address these barriers to support LGBTQ+ young people to flourish and thrive.

- The vast majority of participants believe that homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia are a problem, both across Scotland as a whole, and in their local area.
- 69% of participants believe that transphobia is a big problem in Scotland

There is clear evidence that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations experience a greater incidence of depression, anxiety, suicidality, and substance misuse than the majority population. This is particularly evident in younger populations and is often linked to experiences of discrimination, prejudice, and isolation, or what is often referred to as 'minority distress'. It is important to note that poor mental health is not an intrinsic part of being LGBT, but individuals' mental health can be impacted by wider society.

- Just 17% of young people surveyed reported that they would feel confident reporting a hate crime to the police if they experienced one
- Only 10% of participants, rated the experience of school for LGBT people as "good".
- 81% of participants felt that the way that LGBTI people are portrayed in the media is not accurate.
- 77% of participants report experiencing anxiety.
- 50% had suicidal thoughts and actions.
- 43% experienced self-harm and,
- 26% with an eating disorder.

While we must acknowledge that this is the current situation, we shouldn't allow ourselves to accept that it is how things will always be. It's our role to take these young people's voices and make the strong case for ensuring LGBTQ+ young people and their needs are at the centre of decision-making. Only by doing this will we make Scotland the best place to grow up LGBTQ+.

We would like to thank Edinburgh Council for contributing funding to our youth service, for 30 years, as we know it is a vital lifeline for young people across the City.

Over the last three years Edinburgh Council funding has enabled us to work with 23 High Schools as they work towards the LGBT Charter.

This funding comes to an end in March, and we are concerned that without ongoing support for schools from LGBT Youth Staff that that LGBTQ+ young people's experience at school will not improve. We have heard from some pupils that doing the Charter is a start but equalities need to continue to be embedded if it is going to make a difference.

Having the opportunity to hear from young people is incredibly important and I would like to thank you again for taking the time to hear their voices at the deputation.

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