

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10am, Tuesday 24 October 2023

Gender Recognition Reform

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee agree the proposed next steps in this report which were developed following a roundtable and series of follow up meetings with participants.

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Report

Gender Recognition Reform

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Following the [motion agreed at Committee on Gender Recognition Reform](#), a roundtable discussion was arranged by the Council Leader with representatives of the trans community, members of political groups, the Chief Executive and relevant officers. The discussion focused on issues for trans people and whether there were practical actions the Council could take to further support the community. Additional individual meetings with attendees and those unable to attend took place between April and August. It is proposed that the feedback received is now used to engage with services.

3. Background

- 3.1 A [statement in November 2022](#) set out that the 'Council believes Edinburgh should be a welcoming and safe place for trans people, where they are able to access employment, education, housing and healthcare, and live their lives free from discrimination and fear'.
- 3.2 This report follows the motion agreed at the City of Edinburgh Council Committee meeting on 9 February 2023 'To recognise the importance of hearing more about the lived experience of trans people, and therefore agrees that the Council Leader should arrange a round table meeting in the next five weeks, involving representatives of the trans community, members of political groups and relevant senior officers. This will have the purpose of discussing practical actions which the Council could take within its services to directly help and support trans people. Council agrees the outcome of this event will be reported to the Policy and Sustainability Committee'.
- 3.3 While there is existing work across the Council to support the trans community, the roundtable was an opportunity to test whether there was more that could be done. Existing support and work includes:
- 3.3.1 Self-identification for transgender colleagues in the workplace is supported.
 - 3.3.2 An established LGBT staff STRIDE network.
 - 3.3.3 Delivery of trans training to the Corporate Leadership Team.

3.3.4 LGBT youth charters (delivered by LGBT Youth Scotland) are progressed across Edinburgh's non-denominational schools.

3.3.5 Development of Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index over the next year.

3.4 In addition to the above, the Council delivers a range of plans to support equalities, for example, the 2020-23 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (for Education).

4. Main report

4.1 A round table discussion was arranged by the Council Leader on Thursday 20 April 2023 with representatives from Scottish Trans Alliance, LGBT Youth Scotland and LGBT Health and Wellbeing. Members from each of the five main political parties (Labour; SNP; Green; Liberal Democrat and Conservative), the Chief Executive and three other Council officers were also present.

4.2 Follow-up meetings were then held with attendees and with Edinburgh Rape Crisis and NHS Lothian who were unable to attend.

Summary of Feedback

4.3 A summary of the key points from the discussion is outlined below.

Healthcare

4.3.1 Participants identified that there was an increase in mental health issues in the trans community, exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. They noted that there had been:

4.3.1.1 increased calls to LGBT Health and Wellbeing from trans people seeking support, with increasing severity of issues including mental health concerns;

4.3.1.2 an increase in the use of the digital support service at LGBT Youth; and

4.3.1.3 an increase in the reporting of self-harming and suicide amongst the trans community reported by the Royal Hospital for Sick Kids.

Education

4.3.2 The inequality of support between non - denominational schools (who are signing up to work towards the LGBT Youth Charter) and denominational schools (who have not signed up to the LGBT Charter) was raised as an issue.

4.3.3 The transition from primary school into secondary schools was noted as the most difficult time for young trans people.

Access to services

4.3.4 It was felt that often the biggest barrier can be before trans people attempt to access services. This can be due to anticipated discrimination and perceived lack of awareness from organisations.

4.3.5 Access to services can often be hampered by the lack of accessible venues for the trans community.

Participating in public life

- 4.3.6 Systems to accommodate name changes were flagged, in particular the requirement to have identification (ID) for voting risks trans people being unable to vote.
- 4.3.7 Due to the current social climate, there has been a need for some organisations supporting the trans community to make public events and celebrations private to protect attendees.

Good Practice

4.4 Participants also acknowledged areas of good practice including:

- 4.4.1 Where senior staff have improved the culture of the organisation, stringently enforcing zero tolerance to discrimination, influencing staff behaviour and ultimately creating a positive perception by the public.
- 4.4.2 The Chalmers Sexual Health Centre was cited as a building which has top to tail cubicles in their toilets which ensure privacy.
- 4.4.3 Edinburgh Rape Crisis was noted as having been trans inclusive with an open self ID policy since 2008. For example, The By and For service supports LGBT people including trans people, who are survivors of rape or sexual assault.
- 4.4.4 The work of Police Scotland in North Edinburgh towards the LGBT Youth Charter has seen an increase in young people being more confident to report a hate crime.
- 4.4.5 A partnership between LGBT Youth and the Employability service supports all organisations that they work to ensure a smooth transition into the workplace for young people.

Recommended areas for further work

4.5 Participants recommended the following areas for further discussions and investigation:

- 4.5.1 Using an intersectional approach in equality action planning
- 4.5.2 Ensuring relevant policies, such as school anti-bullying policies and Council positions are in the public domain.
- 4.5.3 Celebrating examples of good practice in inclusive education
- 4.5.4 Ensuring at the design stage of a build that toilets will be inclusive
- 4.5.5 Actions that reassure customers, including trans people, of inclusive services
- 4.5.6 Staff training to alleviate 'fear of saying the wrong thing'
- 4.5.7 Identifying and addressing systemic barriers
- 4.5.8 Re-enforcing the organisational culture with zero tolerance to transphobia
- 4.5.9 Support to mitigate barriers out with the Council's control, such as ID requirements for voting.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Engagement with services is now required to consider the feedback from the participants. This will be built into the programme of work for the Members Equality Working Group and advice will be provided as to whether there are changes which should be made now in response to the feedback. Otherwise, actions will be developed as part of the Council's Equality and Diversity Framework which is due to be updated in March 2025.
- 5.2 Progress will be reported to the Members Equality Working Group and Policy and Sustainability Committee.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Any proposed activity arising from the report will need to be contained within existing budgets or considered as part of a reprioritisation of resources based on costed proposals.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The round table was arranged to enable engagement with those who represent organisations that support the trans community and could reflect the views and experiences of the trans community with regard to Council services.
- 7.2 Any proposed work will require further consideration of impact and an IIA to record this consideration.
- 7.3 Actions to improve Council services for the trans community would contribute to the Council's public sector equality duty under The Equality Act 2010 and to the Council's priority: Create good places to live and work.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Original '[Gender Recognition Reform](#)' motion put forward by Councillor Mumford on 9 February at the City of Edinburgh Council Committee meeting
- 8.2 [Motion by Councillor Heap on Transgender Day of Remembrance](#), November 2022, The City of Edinburgh Council Committee

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.