

Wales Safer Communities Network response to: Welsh Government- LGBTQ+ Action Plan

Closed 22 October 2021

Introduction to the Wales Safer Communities Network

The Wales Safer Communities Network was established in January 2021 following the recommendations of the Welsh Government's Working Together for Safer Communities Review. The Network aims to become the strategic voice for community safety in Wales, working collaboratively to champion and support community safety partnership working, and influence the shaping and development of national policy and local practice.

Consultation questions

The Action Plan has six main themes: Human Rights and Recognition; Safety; Home and Communities; Health and Social Care; Education; and the Workplace. We would like your thoughts on the proposed actions within each theme. You may want to comment on one or all of these areas.

Please use the following questions as the basis of your response. You are welcome to add additional comments or information if you wish.

Question 1: Do you think the Action Plan will increase equality for LGBTQ+ people and what do you think the priorities should be?

The Action Plan has the opportunity for delivering some improved equality outcomes for LGBTQ+ people and potentially for laying down the foundations for further improvements. System and process change is likely to be easier to achieve than changing hearts and minds and should help lead to better service delivery and increased equality of opportunity. As someone recently commented, 'this was illegal during my life-time, whilst section 28 and the media response to HIV/Aids did damage for another generation'.

Question 2: Do you agree with the overarching aims? What would you add or take away in relation the overarching aims?

We agree with the overarching aims. However, there are questions around the potential training and resources that will be required to deliver and implement them successfully.

Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed actions? What would you add or take away in relation the actions?

Ensuring LGBTQ+ People's Safety:

- Action 14 is to review the under-reporting of LGBTQ+ hate crime with the aim to improve the level of reporting. We agree with this action but think that it needs to be developed further, so that it is not the level of reporting that is the end point, but that following reporting that there is improved engagement and support for victims. Only then will they feel safe. If there is increased reporting but nothing happens or changes following the report then the likelihood is that people will stop reporting future incidents.
- There is a potential missed opportunity to link the reporting or other elements with the Serious Violence Duty that is being introduced through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill which is currently progressing through Westminster.
- Action 15 refers to working with media platforms and tech companies to tackle hate crime and misinformation. We agree with this action, but we think that by removing, trying where possible to work with the Westminster Government on this, as was in the recommendations by the independent panel, the level of influence may be diminished.

Health

- Action 35: We agree with the action in regard to targeting the areas that are disproportionately impacted, but fear without a wider community acceptance that this will be to deliver services at crisis rather than to prevent the escalation.

Workplace:

- The actions support training, employment protections for trans staff and the importance of collection of data, all of which are important. There could be an action around breaking the glass ceiling for women who are LGBTQ+, who are impacted by the socio-economic situation for women and the lower wages, resulting in a higher risk of exploitation.

General:

- Lack of focus on data sharing which may assist in planning and delivering responses, yet there appears quite a lot of data collection. With the data collection how will consistency between agencies be ensured? Will there be a set equalities form? If so will it be based on a basic one such as used in the Census or a more detailed one as used by Stonewall Cymru?
- There is a lack of focus on intergenerational opportunities. As mentioned under question 1 there are some generations for whom it may be harder to accept and process, but by working together across generations may reduce barriers and improve community cohesion and understanding.
- There is no mention of the impact on LGBTQ+ in regard to isolation and loneliness, which can occur as people come out but also as they become older when the LGBTQ+ social scene may no longer be appropriate.

- The need to normalise LGBTQ+ people and relationships through the presence in adverts or campaigns – for example, with two people of the same sex being able to walk down the street holding hands. Holding hands with a partner is sometimes accompanied with a risk of abuse, hate crime, violence and often, for women especially, risk of unwanted sexual approaches and misogyny.
- There is no action or specific mention in regard to street harassment, which may link to the suggestion above for normalisation in the media.
- There is some early evidence around some Trans hate groups being linked with extremism. If you look to America the number of Trans people killed is increasing. We don't want that trend to come to Wales, so there may be opportunities to learn and take preventative actions.
- There is a missed opportunity within the actions for mentors from the LGBTQ+ communities to support those who are younger or who are managing the coming out process (which can happen at any age). This may also help with cohesion across the LGBTQ+ community, especially across generations who may have varied lived experiences.

These are the comments from a community safety perspective, please see the WLGA response for a Local Authority perspective.

Question 4: What are the key challenges that could stop the aims and actions being achieved?

- There may be too many to deliver at once, which could result in a post-code lottery depending on which are prioritised first in areas.
- The ongoing debate in regard to sex and gender could lead to the derailing of the plan or to certain elements of it. There is already some anecdotal evidence that non-binary or masculine looking women are being challenged if they are using the correct bathroom facilities, even though they are the only facilities that they have ever used.
- The actions in the plan do not appear to be 'SMART', there are no timelines linked to them and no clear indication of who will be delivering or responsible for overseeing them locally.
- The impact and focus on devolved and non-devolved partners and legislation could lead to some barriers. In addition, messaging may be difficult if there is different messaging coming from Westminster and carried by the national media outlets causing additional confusion.

Question 5: What resources (this could include funding, staff time, training, access to support or advocacy services among other things) do you think will be necessary in achieving the aims and actions outlined?

It is really difficult to identify what resources will be required without timescales and SMART actions. We think that there will be a need for resources but cannot identify

when and exactly what without having a clearer understanding of the roll out of the actions and the timescales for delivery.

Question 6: Do you feel the LGBTQ+ Action Plan adequately covers the intersection of LGBTQ+ with other protected characteristics, such as race, religion or belief, disability, age, sex, and marriage and civil partnership? If not, how can we improve this?

The LGBTQ+ action plan does attempt to cover intersectionality, but the lack of reference to the Race Equality Action Plan and the lack of mention of LGBTQ+ and this action plan in the Race Equality Action Plan suggests that there is more to be done and developed in this area to make appropriate links and to address issues relating to intersectionality. There is also the risk for other characteristics without a specific plan may be seen as lower priority and therefore mis-recording of primary cause for hate crimes for example could take place.

Question 7: We would like to know your views on the effects that these proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Providing all elements of the action plan are delivered bi-lingually we have no comments under this question.

Question 8: Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy approach could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

No comments

Question 9: This plan has been developed in co-construction, and discussions around language and identity have shown that the acronym LGBTQ+ should be used. This stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning people, with the + representing other sexual identities. As a result we refer to LGBTQ+ people in the Plan.

What are your views on this term and is there an alternative you would prefer? Welsh speakers may wish to consider suitable terminology in both languages.

As with the Race Equality Action Plan and the need to acknowledge that Black Asian Ethnic Minority are not one group and should be referred to by their individual cultures, so the members of the LGBTQ+ are not all identical and do not identify the same. To be equal, the LGBTQ+ plan should follow the same guidelines and acknowledgement that not all LGBTQ+ people are the same or have the same experience. Without doing this there is a risk that the individual and separate communities that make up the LGBTQ+ acronym may become invisible, and the aims of the plan therefore not delivered.

Question 10: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

There is a proposal for the Independent LGBTQ+ Expert Panel to become a permanent group who will oversee the delivery of the action plan. How will this group link and work with the equivalent overseeing group for the Race Equality Action Plan? How will they do more than will be required by Public Sector bodies who have duties around equality legislation and have scrutiny and reporting structures in place?

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