

LGBTQ+ Wales Action Plan - Consultation Response: Learning Disability Wales (22.10.2021)

Learning Disability Wales is a national charity representing the learning disability sector in Wales. We work with people with a learning disability and their families, Welsh Government, local authorities, disabled people's organisations and the voluntary sector to create a better Wales for all people with a learning disability.

We are also responding as part of the Supported Loving network.

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?

We strongly support this plan. We think that the priorities generally are appropriate. We are strongly supportive of this plan's inclusivity towards transgender and non-binary people. We believe that strengthening the rights of LGBTQ+ in Wales in general will have a positive effect on people with a learning disability. However, we would have liked to have seen more concrete measures for people

with learning disabilities and other marginalised people in this proposal.

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 in general and think the goals are well chosen. We do think it would be good to look closer at how people with multiple protected characteristics (particularly people with learning disabilities) could be better supported.

We strongly support Welsh Government's plans to make RSE education in schools more LGBTQ+ inclusive but would like to emphasize the need to make sure special schools are not left out of these changes. It is often even harder for children with learning disabilities than for other children to access reliable and affirmative information, so we ask Welsh Government to make sure they are not further disadvantaged through these policies.

Question 3

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

We would like to see further actions regarding support for people with learning disabilities who are LGBTQ+ (see below).

Question 4

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

There can be significant challenges for people with learning disabilities taking control of all aspects of their life. Families and carers of people with a learning disability, as well as wider society, can often view them as not being real adults who have adult feelings and deserve to live adult lives¹. It is therefore important that Welsh Government ensures that people with a learning disability, as well as other disabled people, are given the same access to information and support as everyone else.

This is particularly important since transphobic and homophobic groups have argued that autistic people specifically are vulnerable to suggestion and are being convinced that they are transgender when they are not. We have no evidence at all that these claims are valid. But we are concerned that beliefs like these might impact the way that people with learning disabilities and neurodivergent people are given support. Welsh Government must ensure that every LGBTQ+ person has access to support and having their own knowledge or discovery of who they are confirmed.

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?

Apart from the issues mentioned above, it is also worth noting that many areas of support are strongly gendered and this can pose a challenge for people looking for support. We have heard from one young non-binary person who was very distressed to be placed in women's shelters after facing a domestic abuse situation. It is important that trans and non-binary people with learning disabilities can safely access support where their identities are validated. Where

¹ See also our 2019 article Everyone Needs Love: <https://www.ldw.org.uk/everyone-needs-love/>

social care services are gendered the policies and languages describing them should be made more inclusive in order to make sure LGBTQ + service users are not further marginalised.

We would also like to emphasize the need to create safe spaces for people with a learning disability to discover who they are and to learn about LGBTQ+ issues. We are also concerned that many people with a learning disability might not be sufficiently aware of their rights and ways to have those enforced. Welsh Government should assign specific funding and resources to enable these spaces. The best way to go about this would be to engage directly with self-advocacy organizations for people with a learning disability (All Wales People First as well as local People First Groups) to explore the logistics of this.

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To keep your response anonymous (including email addresses) tick the box.**