

LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales: Consultation Analysis

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Wavehill: social and economic research

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Executive Summary

This report provides an independent analysis of responses to the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales consultation which was completed between July and October 2021. It sets out a summary of the views and perspectives offered by respondents with regard to the proposals.

Responses

In total, 1,328 individuals and organisations kindly took the time to offer their views on the Action Plan. Together, the consultation received 1,177 responses from individuals with an interest in the Action Plan, including members of the public. One hundred and fifty-one technical responses were also received from organisations across the public, private and third sectors.

Key Findings

Respondents offered a diverse range of views and perspectives, including views on the Action Plan itself, as well as observations that reflect broader public debates and discussions surrounding sex, gender, sexual orientation, and identity. Respondents offered reflections on the overarching objectives and the general orientation of the Action Plan, through to precise actions and wording within the document.

Respondents broadly welcomed the intention and ambition of the Action Plan. These included the Welsh Government's commitment to working towards greater equality for LGBTQ+ people. Respondents commended the ambition of the Action Plan, and were positive about its strategic vision and the approach to improving the awareness and profile of LGBTQ+ communities in policymaking and across Wales.

Many respondents offered thoughts and opinions on where the Action Plan could be strengthened. These often included suggestions regarding specific action points or themes highlighted within the Action Plan. Respondents often wished to see firmer commitments or further information with which to support the implementation of the Action Plan. From these perspectives, respondents felt that more explicit and precise action points would support more meaningful change from individuals and organisations, including in how they engage and support LGBTQ+ people.

Respondents also raised broader themes and issues surrounding the Action Plan that reflect recent public debates, including on sex, gender identity, rights, and freedom of expression. Some respondents, for example, had understood the Action Plan as seeking to introduce gender self-identification, and had rejected the overall approach on that basis. Key to understanding these views is that many brought preconceived or a priori assumptions or perspectives in interpreting the significance of the proposals within the Action Plan. The lens through which respondents interpreted the proposals at times led to misinterpretations or misunderstandings of the substantive content of the Action Plan.

Equality

Overall, respondents were positive about the existence of the Action Plan and the commitments that the Welsh Government are making towards equality for all in Wales. Some wished to see greater recognition and disaggregation of people under the term 'LGBTQ+' within the Plan. From these perspectives, the Action Plan presented an important opportunity to recognise individual identities across LGBTQ+ communities, including both sexual orientation and gender reassignment, alongside recognising their overlapping needs. Some felt that further clarity, information and definitions within the Action Plan would be helpful in ensuring that subsequent actions recognised and supported the breadth of experience amongst LGBTQ+ people.

Overarching Aims and Proposed Actions

Again, many respondents welcomed the general aims and intention of the Action Plan, including organisations across the third, private and public sectors. Some respondents felt that the Action Plan could be strengthened by providing clearer links between aims, themes and actions. Meanwhile, others felt that the inclusion of firmer commitments, including who would be responsible for certain actions and timescales, would be valuable in ensuring that meaningful change results from the Action Plan.

The specific priorities for respondents depended on their own perspectives and experiences. Some respondents focused on the need for protecting basic rights and preventing discrimination through education and training. Many respondents cited social shifts which have added urgency to the need to tackle hate crime and poor mental health, alongside a 'full life course' approach which recognises the disproportionate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic upon the oldest and youngest in society.

Key Challenges and Resources

Many respondents felt that a key challenge to the success of the Action Plan would lie in implementation. This included the importance of meaningful engagement with the Action Plan from individuals and organisations, as well as broader practical challenges that could act as a barrier to meaningful change. In response to these and other challenges, many respondents, again, highlighted the importance of further detail on how specific action points could be achieved in practice, and the outcomes and indicators that could be used to monitor progress. Furthermore, assigning those responsible for delivering certain points and including timescales for delivery were also felt to be important.

Funding was considered to be key to achieving the ambition of the Action Plan, as were broader resources and support. For funding to be effective, many felt that this should be ring-fenced and include supporting the implementation of specific action points. Data collection, analysis and use were also viewed to be crucial to the evidence base to support quality and timely policy interventions, whilst consistent guidance for public bodies, including schools, is crucial to its practical implementation.

Intersectionality

Respondents noted that it was positive that there was a focus on intersectionality in the Action Plan, although many felt that it was not sufficiently integrated into the points themselves. Coordination with other Strategic Equality Plans would be welcomed, as well as the role of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015). Particular concerns surrounding race & policing, sex & gender, and health, age & disability could be more explicitly addressed.

As well as considerations of protected characteristics, the intersectionality of the Action Plan could be improved through the recognition of socioeconomic factors, as well as the compounding of disadvantage including bullying experiences in school, employment or housing discrimination, and health inequalities, which is likely to entrench socioeconomic disadvantage. Concerns surrounding digital inequality and the gaps in service provision in rural areas of Wales were also raised.

Welsh Language

There were suggestions that the Welsh language could be better integrated throughout the Action Plan. It was proposed that the section on Home & Communities could be divided not only to disaggregate some of the action points under this theme but also to centre the Welsh language as part of a 'culture' theme or similar. The issues surrounding regional gaps in the provision of (LGBTQ+-inclusive) public services and gaps in Welsh language provision should not be conflated; these concerns should have their own action points.

The Term LGBTQ+

Many groups welcome the use of the term 'LGBTQ+' and feel that it is sufficiently inclusive, with '+' allowing for changing and evolving terminology. In this sense, some felt that it was not appropriate to choose a 'definitive' initialism and that the initialism, like policy, should be constantly reviewed and consulted upon as society evolves.

Many were concerned about the exclusion of intersex and asexual identities from the initialism and from the Action Plan more generally. Opinions were divided regarding the inclusion of the term 'queer'; some respondents were incredibly uncomfortable with the use of the term, whilst others positively identified with its use as an umbrella term.

1 Introduction

This report provides an independent analysis of responses to the consultation exploring the proposals contained within the draft LGBTQ+ Action Plan. It sets out a summary of the views and perspectives offered by respondents.

1.1 Background

The Welsh Government have been developing a cross-government LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales. The Action Plan has been developed in partnership with representatives from across the LGBTQ+ community and will help to coordinate action between the Welsh Government, stakeholders, the public, and other agencies. The aim of the Action Plan is to achieve the ambition of tackling long-term structural inequalities faced by LGBTQ+ communities across Wales. It sets out the concrete steps that the Welsh Government will take to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ people, challenge discrimination, and create a society in which LGBTQ+ people are safe to live and love authentically, openly and freely as themselves.

The Action Plan sets out an overarching set of actions with which to improve the recognition of LGBTQ+ people, and also includes a wide range of policy-specific actions relating to education, improving safety, housing, health & social care, and promoting community cohesion. The Action Plan is underpinned by the rights-based approach set out by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (IESOGI).

For more information on the Action Plan, please visit the Welsh Government website by clicking [here](#).

To support the development of the Action Plan, the Welsh Government sought the views of individuals and organisations across Wales. In order to understand the views and perspectives of respondents, the Action Plan was put to public consultation in July 2021. The Welsh Government also commissioned Wavehill, an independent research organisation, to prepare an overarching analysis of the issues and themes raised across responses.

This report presents the findings of the analysis. The themes and issues raised will be considered in the refinement of the Action Plan. The analysis is intended to generate discussion and ideas on how the Action Plan could respond to the voices, priorities and lived experiences of LGBTQ+ communities and wider stakeholders across Wales.

1.2 Responses

The respondents to the consultation represent a broad range of individuals and stakeholders with an interest in the Action Plan. In total, 1,328 responses were received over the course of the consultation. Together, the consultation received 1,177 responses from individuals with an interest in the Action Plan, including members of the public. One hundred and fifty-one technical responses were also received from organisations, including representatives from both the public and the private sectors as well as from the third sector:

Table 1: Organisation Type

Third sector organisations	43
LGBTQ+ groups	18
Local government	18
Religious groups	14
UHBs or NHS-affiliated groups	12
Professional associations	12
Women's groups	8
Political respondents	8
Other	6
Governmental organisations	7
Unions	5

Whilst this information gives us an indication of who responded to the consultation, it is possible that stakeholders are missing from this list due to missing or incomplete information submitted within consultation responses, including those submitted online and via email. For a full list of organisations that contributed to the consultation, please see Appendix 2.

1.3 Campaign Responses

There was evidence of campaign responses responding to specific issues within the Action Plan. Analysis suggests that at least 10 per cent of all responses shared similarities with other submissions. Drawing on sensitivity analysis, these responses contained more than 80 per cent of their content that was identical to that of other submissions.

Exploring coordinated responses further, there were two significant campaigns. One centred on conversion therapy and advocated a more explicit definition within the Action Plan. These responses felt that a clearer definition would be valuable in ensuring a balanced application of the law. Another campaign centred on gender-critical concerns and the belief that issues relating to sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity should be addressed separately.

1.4 Analytical Approach

Responses generated a range of qualitative information. The online questionnaire posed 10 questions asking respondents for their views, including on the potential impact of specific proposals. Whilst many responses were question-specific, other respondents submitted their responses via email, summarising their general views on the proposals. The specific questions in the consultation can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

In order to analyse the perspectives expressed by respondents, Wavehill conducted detailed thematic analysis, systematically examining each response and highlighting the themes and issues raised. Responses to each of the questions were then coded according to these themes. These were then mapped onto the seven themes of the Action Plan: Human Rights and Recognition; Ensuring LGBTQ+ People's Safety; Home and Communities; Improving Health Outcomes; Education; Workplace; and COVID-19 Response. Themes were drawn through the coding process across questions to ensure a holistic understanding of issues pertaining to multiple themes, as well as to broader themes around the Action Plan as a policy document.

1.5 Limitations

There are a number of limitations with regard to this analysis that are important to note. The respondents who contributed their views and perspectives are not necessarily representative of the wider Welsh public; it is likely that many respondents are based outside of Wales. There is a high likelihood of self-selection bias, wherein those with a particular interest in the Action Plan are more likely to participate in the consultation than are the general public as a whole. This increases the possibility that those who responded hold different views and perspectives from those found amongst the general population, including people and communities across Wales more broadly.

There was diversity in the level and depth of responses to various action points in the proposals from respondents. This may be due, in part, to the wide-ranging nature of the proposals, and to respondents placing varying degrees of importance on different aspects of the Action Plan. Many respondents did not answer every question, and it was not always possible to accurately determine their full position from the information provided. An

absence of response data does not suggest that a respondent does not hold views on specific aspects of the proposals. In addition, responses that discussed the general position on the Action Plan (rather than responding to the questions) did not always specify the action points on which they based their opinion.

These factors present challenges in analysing and communicating the balance of opinion. Due to large numbers of respondents not answering every question, interpretation of the balance of opinion must therefore be considered in the context of the questions asked. Therefore, presenting quantitative summaries of the themes and issues raised by respondents would likely misrepresent the balance of opinion, both amongst those responding to the consultation as well as amongst the views and perceptions of broader stakeholders across Wales.

We have therefore sought to communicate the balance of opinion qualitatively. We have only made statements of prevalence where clear patterns emerge, such as where themes or sentiments are widely held amongst respondents, or if they are peripherally held only by a few. In this respect, qualitative terms are only indicative of opinions on the basis of those who responded. Therefore, statements of prevalence should not be assumed to relate numerically back to the total number of people and organisations that responded to the consultation, or to the broader population.

Given these limitations, the aim has been to effectively and accurately communicate an understanding of the range of key themes and issues raised by respondents, as well as the reasons for holding particular views. Such information includes potential areas of agreement and disagreement between the different groups of respondents.

Taken together, therefore, this analysis should be considered to provide an indication of some of the views and perspectives held by people and communities with regard to the Action Plan, rather than a definitive account of people and communities across Wales.

2 Equality

Across the Action Plan, a key tenet of the proposals was the importance of strengthening and advancing equality for LGBTQ+ people across Wales. Respondents were first asked for their views on the Action Plan and whether it would improve equality amongst LGBTQ+ communities.¹

2.1 Ambition

There was support for the ambitious approach taken within the Action Plan. From these perspectives, respondents were positive about the overall objectives and scope of the Action Plan. Many responses from organisations, for example, praised the vision of the Action Plan, particularly the focus on rights and protection as well as on active participation and inclusion in public life.

Responses from individuals suggested that the Action Plan was symbolically important in demonstrating the Welsh Government's understanding of and commitment to addressing structural inequalities amongst LGBTQ+ communities. A common opinion was that the Action Plan represents an important step in identifying inequalities and discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ communities, which they felt to be a vital step in addressing them:

May I take this opportunity to say [that] I am extremely grateful that the Welsh Government is openly and warmly offering to help our community, in stark contrast to Westminster. It comes as a great relief to us all at a time when so many of us are seeing a deeply concerning rise in hostility, toxic media coverage, and a corrosive political landscape.

Individual response

Diolch yn fawr iawn i Lywodraeth Cymru am barhau gyda'r gwaith hynod o bwysig yma, yn enwedig mewn cyfnod lle mae'r naratif a symudiad gwrth-LHDTC+ ar gynnydd yma yng Nghymru.

Ymateb Unigol

Thank you very much to the Welsh Government for continuing this very important work, especially at a time when the narrative and anti-LGBT+ movement [are] increasing here in Wales.

Individual response, translated from original

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

Many health organisations in particular endorsed the strategic vision outlined by the Action Plan, commenting that this reflected the person-centred approach taken in healthcare settings. The comprehensive nature of the Action Plan was recognised as being central to its success, and the ambition to deliver across the Welsh Government was reflective of the intersectional and structural nature of issues faced by LGBTQ+ communities:

We strongly endorse the strategic vision outlined in the Action Plan, that “everyone has the right to be safe, to be themselves and to lead lives free from discrimination”. We believe that a well-informed, compassionate and inclusive health and social care system can help people to achieve this ambition, both from the perspective of those working within the sector and [from the perspective of] members of the public who use health and social care services.

Nursing and Midwifery Council

We welcome the ambition of the [Action] Plan and attempts to ensure that it covers all parts of Welsh life.

Barnardo’s Cymru

2.2 Awareness and Profile of LGBTQ+ Communities

Raising the Profile of LGBTQ+ Communities in Policymaking

Many responded positively to the existence of the Action Plan and its role in raising the awareness and profile of LGBTQ+ communities, including in the formation of public policy. From these perspectives, it was vital that consideration be given to the distinct experiences and discrimination facing LGBTQ+ communities. These respondents felt that the Action Plan served to raise the profile of LGBTQ+ communities and that this would be important in addressing inequalities that they faced:

The vision, purpose and values are clearly evident. It is an ambitious Action Plan which looks great on paper, and we would love to see this future in Wales because only by achieving it can we improve the lives of people who live with the corrosive impacts of inequality on an individual and structural level.

British Association of Social Workers

More Specific Recognition of Groups within the Action Plan

Conversely, other respondents felt that the Action Plan could make more explicit reference to specific groups within and across LGBTQ+ communities. From these perspectives, it was felt that more could be done to situate the Action Plan in the wider policy and legislative context, as well as working to give more visibility to specific groups within the LGBTQ+ communities in an intersectional sense. In doing so, the Action Plan would be welcomed by those seeking greater recognition of certain groups in developing policy responses. The Action

Plan, from these perspectives, presented an opportunity to recognise individual identities across LGBTQ+ communities, alongside recognising their overlapping needs.

As an example, some respondents suggested that greater recognition be given to bisexual visibility within the Action Plan. From these perspectives, the Action Plan was perceived to amplify pre-existing discrimination and 'bi-erasure'.² Whilst individuals and groups that raised these concerns were positive about the overall focus and priorities of the Action Plan, they felt that it would be of benefit from a specific action point concerning bisexual visibility:

We are deeply disappointed and concerned that bi+ people and communities, the biphobia [that] we face, and our specific issues and experiences have not been recognised or included at all in the [Action] Plan. As bi+ people, we are often overlooked, made invisible, erased, and excluded even within LGBTQIA+ communities.

Bi Cymru

Other respondents were concerned that issues facing intersex and asexual communities were not highlighted or addressed within the Action Plan:

We found it telling that "I" wasn't included in the acronym, as this was reflected in the fact that intersex people were not referenced anywhere in the [Action] Plan. The term itself and the variations in human biology that together fall under the umbrella of "intersex" are not widely understood, so it would be good to see more of a focus on further research and education both for health professionals and the general public.

Public Health Wales

There is no recognition or inclusion of the experiences and disadvantages faced by intersex and asexual people. We feel that these communities are missing from this [Action] Plan, as well as the specific experiences and disadvantages faced by bi+ people not being addressed explicitly within the [Action] Plan.

Diverse Cymru

Likewise, it was felt by others that specific barriers, stigma and discrimination for those with learning disabilities could be more explicitly mentioned and addressed within the Action Plan:

The learning disability sector faces challenges when supporting heteronormative relationships, let alone LGBTQ+ relationships. These challenges are due to a lack of support for staff and parents/carers, the prevailing view that people with a learning disability will never progress past an adolescent relationship and a lack of power and agency to make decisions relating to relationships and intimacy. A person with a learning disability will face these barriers, in addition to the stigma, negative perceptions, and discrimination faced with being LGBTQ+.

² Bisexual erasure is the tendency to ignore or dismiss bisexuality or to question its existence or legitimacy as a sexuality.

Supported Loving Cymru Network

Some respondents who identified as gay or lesbian felt that they did not have sufficient visibility across the Action Plan. As some groups expressed that they did not feel visible throughout the Action Plan, explicitly highlighting different interests and needs within the Action Plan may address these concerns and improve recognition across all LGBTQ+ people:

The scope of the Action Plan also seems to vary widely: some of the proposed actions are very broad and lacking clear measurable outcomes, whilst others seem to be very specific and may only impact on the lives of a small minority of LGBT people. Priorities will need to be agreed, with input from stakeholders and relevant evidence, to identify the most significant inequalities to prioritise action and focus resources.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Raising the Profile of LGBTQ+ Communities across Wales

Some responses highlighted the opportunity to use the Action Plan to inform the wider Welsh public about structural issues facing LGBTQ+ communities. From these perspectives, it was recognised that the Action Plan should not be a manifesto for persuading the wider public of the aims of the Action Plan. However, some respondents highlighted that the Action Plan could highlight where structural inequalities are protected by existing legislation and where the Action Plan seeks to complement this:

Topics that impact LGBTQ+ individuals are wide-reaching, complex and sensitive in nature, and members felt that by not providing clear information about them within the consultation, there was a missed opportunity to help members of the general public be more informed prior to completion of the consultation itself.

Penarth Town Council

Rhaid, hefyd, wyllo rhag creu hierarchaeth o nodweddion gwarchoddedig. Bwriad Deddf Cydraddoldeb 2010 oedd cael gwared ar hierarchaeth ac mae peryg fod dod a gwahanol gynlluniau allan ar wahanol adegau a gyda gwahanol drefniadau mewn peryg o ddod a hynny'n ôl. Rhaid gwarchod fod pwyntiau fel rhif 20 (diwrnodau ymwybyddiaeth) ddim yn dod ar draul hybu nodweddion eraill.

You must also be careful not to create a hierarchy of protected characteristics. The Equality Act 2010 was intended to remove a hierarchy and there is a danger that bringing different schemes out at different times and with different arrangements runs the risk of bringing it back. It must be ensured that points such as number 20 (awareness days) do not come at the expense of promoting other features.

Cyngor Gwynedd (Council), translated from original

2.3 Clarity, Structure and Definitions

Across responses, there were general themes and suggestions with regard to improving precision and specificity within the Action Plan. These included suggestions on where greater clarity surrounding the scope and actions within the Action Plan would be valuable. This included, for example, indicating which parts of the government would be responsible for each action. From these perspectives, respondents highlighted that some actions included the intention to ‘consider’, ‘examine’, ‘seek to’, ‘explore’ or ‘work with’. A significant number of respondents sought greater clarity as to how this would be improving experiences for LGBTQ+ people in practice, since it was already the Welsh Government’s remit to ‘work with’ the UK Government on some of these issues.

Structurally, many respondents found the Action Plan to be difficult to read at length, with confusion between ‘Overarching Aims’ and ‘Specific Actions’, which were then also disaggregated by theme. Explanatory paragraphs under each of these themes, whilst perceived to be useful in explaining some of the rationale behind the themes, were seen by some to be inconsistent, sometimes repeating actions themselves and sometimes including important details which were then not captured in the action points below.

It was suggested that comprehensive definitions would be useful in enabling wider support for the plan, in recognition that one element of the structural inequalities facing LGBTQ+ people is a lack of understanding about their lives and experiences. With this comes an awareness of the specific, but interrelated, issues that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer people may face in everyday life, and clarity on the need for a dedicated Action Plan to support them in living authentically and thriving in society. It was raised that the young people’s version of the Action Plan was set out well in this regard, and the final Action Plan might include this feature. Consistency of terms is necessary for clarity, as many highlighted that there are differing definitions which can alter opinions depending on the definition depicted at that time.

There was hesitation from some respondents surrounding terms such as ‘heteronormative’ and ‘cisnormative’ within the Action Plan. From these perspectives, the Action Plan could be strengthened by including definitions of these terms. This would be valuable in ensuring clarity and common understanding with regard to the issues explored within the Action Plan, as well as any subsequent actions:

The language that it uses is without definitions, which makes me wonder how any collection of data, as recommended, can be done if everyone makes up their own meanings as they go along.

Individual response

2.4 Equality Impact Assessment

Some respondents commented on the approach and findings of the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) conducted as part of the development of the Action Plan. This included responses that welcomed the inclusion of equality impact assessments in considering and developing action plans. From these perspectives, full consideration of the range of impacts and consequences was important in ensuring that subsequent actions effectively address the issues facing individuals and communities:

A high-quality and comprehensive Children's Rights Impact Assessment and an Equality Impact Assessment were also published alongside the consultation documents. This is an aspect of the enactment of Welsh Government's duties under the 2011 measure and gives transparency to how the rights of children and young people and those with protected characteristics (including children) have been considered in the design of this [Action] Plan. I am of no doubt that the simultaneous creation of these documents will have enabled this [Action] Plan to be more comprehensively informed by children's human rights. As I have highlighted previously, [Welsh] Government must seek to implement practice of this nature with all public consultations.

Children's Commissioner for Wales

We very much welcome the publication of this Action Plan and recognise that this is a significant and positive step forward towards Wales becoming a more inclusive, safe and equal country. The publication of the detailed CRIA alongside the [Action] Plan is particularly welcome.

Children in Wales

Some respondents highlighted that they felt as though the impact assessments did not go far enough. Several campaign responses, for example, highlighted that they felt that the EIA did not sufficiently consider the implications of the Gender Recognition Act (2004) for the sex-based rights held by cis-gender women. There were concerns that the advancement of rights for trans people would result in a reduction of rights for others, including women. This was often raised with reference to broader public debates surrounding the importance of ensuring and protecting safe spaces for women. There were also concerns surrounding the perceived conflation of sex and gender within the Action Plan. Moreover, self-identification for gender recognition and reassignment is not explicitly covered in the Action Plan, with some respondents having understood the general sentiment of the Action Plan as potentially undermining the rights of certain groups:

There may be resistance among certain groups to certain aspects within the [Action] Plan because of sincerely held concerns about the impact of the perceived preference of the rights of some (for example, trans women) over others (cis-women).

Estyn

Amongst public bodies and third sector organisations there was strong disagreement with the understanding that advancing trans women's rights and cis-women's rights was not compatible. Many organisations felt that the Action Plan achieved a correct balance in seeking to address the longstanding stigma and discrimination faced by transgender people:

We want to emphasise, once more, that women's equality and trans equality do not contradict or compete with each other. We are pleased to see that the Welsh Government understands this and acknowledged this within the Action Plan.

Chwarae Teg

A number of responses, including from disability charities, felt that some of the concerns surrounding the safeguarding of people living with autism presenting gender dysphoria were unfounded and potentially harmful. They felt that there was no evidence that those living with neurodevelopmental disorders are more susceptible to persuasion towards transition. There were concerns that these ideas were being used to further gender-critical perspectives, including those holding homophobic and transphobic views:

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.

Learning Disability Wales

Some respondents also felt that a clearer definition of conversion therapy within the Action Plan would be valuable. From these perspectives, conversion therapy within the Action Plan could be interpreted to include a diverse range of activities, including treatments that seek to change a person's sexual orientation, as well as the promotion of beliefs such as the importance of marriage. Some respondents felt that there was a risk that any subsequent legislation that was not specific could impinge on freedom of religious expression, including in the promotion of marriage. Providing a working definition of conversion therapy and detail and clarity regarding proposed legislative action in this regard would be useful in addressing these concerns:

Without a clear definition of what the Welsh Government considers 'conversion therapy' for the purposes of legislation, it will be extremely difficult to formulate clear, effective and balanced law. We encourage the Welsh Government to work closely with experts in the field of psychology and psychotherapy, as well as legal experts in relevant fields, to develop such a definition.

National Secular Society

Whilst it is right that there should never be coercion (whether mentally, physically or emotionally) to change someone from a particular lifestyle, it cannot be right that individuals should be legally sanctioned for teaching their families and members the principles and tenets of their respective faiths which they have come to believe in either by tradition or conversion.

Interfaith Council of Wales

2.5 Equality Legislation

Some respondents raised views on the importance of aligning the Action Plan with existing legislation on equality. Some felt, for example, that specific reference to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) should be included in the Action Plan. From these perspectives, the Action Plan should set out clearly how it is supported by legislation. This would help to ensure coherence as well as effective subsequent action:

The LGBTQ+ Action Plan needs to be aligned to existing legislation and policy frameworks, including the Welsh Government Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) and equality objectives. When developing the LGBTQ+ Action Plan, the Welsh Government should use [legislation] to drive improvements, identifying how public bodies in Wales will be held to account for delivering against them, and aligning how requirements are met, where appropriate.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

There was also discussion surrounding protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010), specifically sex-based rights and religious freedoms that were similarly raised for the Equality Impact Assessment. Many responses also called for a commitment to transgender people's rights under the Equality Act (and more generally) and urged that rights not be in conflict. Organisational responses asked for the Welsh Government to provide a clear response and guidance on how to address these concerns:

All the Action Plans need to be aligned and include links with the [Well-being of] Future Generations Act — A more equal Wales. There should be a joint approach, and collaboration could assist this. There doesn't seem to be reference to Socio-economic Duty in the Action Plan.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

It was highlighted by a few responses the potential for repeal or amendment to the Human Rights Act 1998 by the current UK Government. These responses sought a commitment by the Welsh Government to campaigning and voting against any potential changes which might affect the basic rights of all LGBTQ+ individuals:

I am extremely concerned about current talk in Westminster of amending the Human Rights Act. I think [that it] is of very great importance that any potential action that could compromise the rights of any minority or protected characteristic is fought with great energy, especially considering [that] most members of the wider public are not interested in the subject, leaving minorities fearing for the consequences.

Individual response

3 Overarching Aims

The overarching aims of the Action Plan provide a strategic and common thread which runs throughout the proposals. They inform the nature and direction of the specific actions contained within the Action Plan. A central objective of the Action Plan is to strengthen equality and human rights for LGBTQ+ people. This includes ensuring that all legislation, public policy, and public services enshrine and protect all people, including those who are LGBTQ+. Respondents were then asked for their views on the substantive aims outlined in the Action Plan.³

3.1 General Perceptions

Respondents raised a diverse range of reflections and suggestions relating to the overarching aims contained within the Action Plan. These included observations towards specific aims, as well as more general comments on the structure and general orientation of the Action Plan. Many respondents welcomed the overall sentiment of the aims, which often stemmed from an understanding of the importance of addressing issues faced by LGBTQ+ people across Wales.

Meanwhile, others offered conditional support, recognising the importance and value of the stated aims, whilst offering broader thoughts and reflections. Some respondents, for example, felt that the Action Plan could be strengthened in places, including in providing clearer links between the aims underscoring the Action Plan and specific themes and actions. Some felt that there was overlap between some of the aims, actions and themes within the Action Plan. From these perspectives, clearer and more explicit links would be valuable in ensuring that actions work coherently and effectively towards the stated aims:

[We] agree that the overarching aims establish good principles for the [Action] Plan. Naming these as principles (rather than actions) may set a clearer tone throughout the rest of the document that differentiates between good ideas and principles and [the] expected outcomes and actions necessary for achieving them.

National AIDS Trust

Others felt that stronger links between aims, actions and themes could be valuable in establishing clearer commitments and ownership from stakeholders. These include responsibility for specific actions amongst relevant public bodies and governmental departments. Underscoring some of these perceptions was the importance of enacting meaningful change, which respondents felt would be advanced by firm and clear commitments from all stakeholders:

³ Question 2: Do you agree with the overarching aims? What would you add or take away in relation to the overarching aims?

Overall, the [Action] Plan would benefit from an initial outline prioritising actions linked to timescales. In addition, actions are not spread evenly across the different policy areas, so, for example, there are only three actions listed under Workplace, while there are 18 under Home and Communities (not including multiple actions grouped within a single action). Welsh Government may wish to consider explaining the rationale for and how actions are distributed [in order] to avoid creating the impression that some policy areas are less important than others. A clear link between the overarching aims at the start of the [Action] Plan and the actions listed under the different policy areas would help ensure the [Action] Plan's strategic priorities are clear.

Estyn

3.2 Public Sector Equality Duty

Respondents also commented on specific aspects and aims within the Action Plan. In terms of the duties and expectations placed on public bodies and organisations, some respondents were keen to explore how the Action Plan could promote and ensure meaningful and effective engagement. From these perspectives, respondents wished to ensure the effectiveness of engagement with duties to promote equality, including for LGBTQ+ people. Implicitly and explicitly, this included ensuring that organisations and services apply equality duties in ways that are inclusive and thoughtful, and not simply as tick-box exercises:

We would also support approaches that encourage transformational (rather than transactional) change.

Sport Wales

These are tick-box exercises; they need to be robust if we are to live in an inclusive Wales.

Denbighshire County Council

Respondents also commented on the importance of improving and extending diversity training within public sector organisations in order to encourage more meaningful engagement with Equality Duties. These issues are examined in more detail within the section on [Education](#).

3.3 Support beyond the Public Sector

Some respondents positively noted the public sector focus in the overarching aims. Whilst it is recognised that this is due to what is feasible under the Public Sector Equality Duty, respondents also highlighted that more could be done to ensure that private businesses and other organisations engage meaningfully in promoting equality for all, including LGBTQ+ people. Respondents also noted the increase in public service commissioning to private sector organisations, particularly within healthcare settings. From these perspectives, procurement

could be another lever with which to encourage and ensure that the private sector advances equality for all within their organisations.

As mentioned under the role of Equality Impact Assessments, this should go beyond compliance to ensure that this is embedded in working and management practices. This could be addressed by providing sufficient training and resources to demonstrate ‘best practice’ in this area or strengthening workplace equality indices such as the UK Workplace Equality Index. Further responses on this are addressed in the specific actions under the theme ‘Workplace’:

It is recognised that public bodies are subject to the PSED and any additional plans would be clearly linked to current practices. However, private business and other organisations have their part to play in contributing to an inclusive society and this should be recognised in the overall aims.

Newport Council

The Action Plan does cover the workplace; however, we would encourage the Welsh Government to look at their procurement process requirements to include businesses who are taking action to become inclusive, [which] will encourage larger employers to adopt a positive approach to equality and help to eliminate discrimination.

Chartered Institute of Building

3.4 Data Collection, Analysis and Use

It was raised that focus in the overarching aims should extend beyond data collection and towards meaningful analysis and use. In this sense, action 53 on research would be more usefully combined with the overarching aims, whilst action 56 should further require ‘analysis and use’ as part of its remit:

Emphasis shouldn’t just be placed on the collection of data — an analysis of the collected data and actions to address identified shortfalls in diversity are needed to realise actual change.

Equality and Human Rights Coalition (EHRCo)

Data collection, analysis and use are discussed in more depth in the section on [Resources](#).

3.5 Devolution and Relationship with UK Government

Some felt that the Action Plan should incorporate greater clarity regarding the interaction with existing legislation and specific devolved powers. Some respondents sought stronger language on commitments relating to the UK Government:

Where areas of policy are not devolved to Wales, the ability to influence and shape UK policy has proven difficult [...]. That is not to say that efforts should not continue, but it seems likely that we are to make rather stronger gains in areas where we are 'masters of our own destiny' — areas whereby we can raise awareness, e.g. staff/workforce (including volunteers) training, public services, and data collection.

Wales Principal Youth Officers' Group (PYOG)

3.6 Role of Independent Expert Panel

There was concern surrounding the developmental process of the Action Plan, and a need for detail regarding the role of the Independent Expert Panel. It was raised that this should not be a substitute for continuous engagement with the wider LGBTQ+ community, and should also reflect its diversity and intersectionality. There were a small, albeit vocal, minority who felt that the Action Plan had been influenced by Stonewall, with wider comments on the role as a lobbying organisation.

The co-production and the appreciation of lived experience in developing the Action Plan were deemed to be important in principle by many respondents; however, it was raised that an opportunity to use the wider existing knowledge in specific areas of the public sector has been missed. Many third sector organisations representing significant policy areas expressed a desire to be further consulted during the ongoing delivery of the Action Plan:

We note that consultation has primarily relied on social media, which is entirely understandable during the [COVID-19] pandemic. However, many older people in Wales do not have access to the Internet, and some will have limited digital literacy. As such, their voices, views and experiences are less likely to have been captured [...]. We therefore suggest that action 6 on formalising the Expert Panel should be strengthened to state that the [Expert] Panel should include an appropriate level of representation from older LGBTQ+ people.

Age Cymru

Evident co-creation with those with lived experiences is paramount to the progress of this Action Plan; it will not work without its people. Capturing a wide range of diverse participation and engagement at each stage is required. This means securing the 'hidden voices' of those who are excluded from services, and not just the loudest voices.

Viva LGBTQ+ Youth Group

Questions regarding the role of the Independent Expert Panel fed into wider responses concerning the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan (as mentioned in the forthcoming section on resources and challenges). Some technical respondents noted the existing governance and procedures for providing scrutiny within public services. Some also raised the introduction of a commissioner/advisor role, as also suggested by the Independent Expert Panel, as a means of providing leadership and accountability to the

delivery of the Action Plan. Clarity surrounding the role of any panel, commission or individual providing oversight on the draft Action Plan might help to mitigate questions raised over its implementation:

Accountability and monitoring of progress is welcomed and essential, but we would not be able to support the Independent Expert Panel in its role of holding local government and public bodies to account. The Council has its own governance arrangements, scrutiny and Cabinet, complemented by internal/external groups where appropriate, along with external scrutiny bodies, for example, Estyn, Equality and Human [Rights] Commission, Care Inspectorate Wales, etc., which would be better placed to provide oversight.

Newport Council

Our engagement with members and supporters also led to the suggestion by some that Welsh Government explore the creation of an LGBTQ+ Commissioner — in much the same stead as the existing Children’s, Older People’s, and Future Generations Commissioners for Wales — as a single office/entity for taking forward this Action Plan and wider work around LGBTQ+ issues in Wales. This was particularly in relation to queries around how actions would be monitored, scrutinised, and Welsh Government held accountable.

Tai Pawb

One of the overarching recommendations of the Independent LGBTQ+ Expert Panel [...] was for a National Advisor for LGBTQ+ Equality to be appointed to guide, monitor and evaluate implementation of the [Action] Plan. We support this recommendation and recommend that the proposed role of National Advisor for LGBTQ+ Equality should specifically include addressing health inequalities to mirror the role of the UK Government’s National LGBT Health Advisor, who has been a helpful catalyst for change across the health system in England.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

4 Proposed Actions

Drawing on the stated aims, the Action Plan proposes a range of practical actions. These proposed actions relate to specific issues, including in advancing human rights and recognition; ensuring LGBTQ+ people's safety; home and communities; improving health; education; the workplace; and the COVID-19 response. Respondents were then broadly asked whether they agreed with the proposed actions.⁴

4.1 Human Rights and Recognition

A key element of the proposals is that of actions that seek to defend and promote the rights and dignity of all LGBTQ+ people, including in assuming a full and equal role in Welsh society.

Recognition in Day-to-Day Life

A key theme raised by some respondents was the importance of recognising the rights of both sexual orientation and gender reassignment within day-to-day life:

I agree with the aims. I can't speak for others in the LGBTQ family, but as a gay woman, I just want to take an active part in my community and be allowed to enjoy my life as others do. It isn't hard. I'm not asking for special treatment. I just want to not have to worry or spend my life on edge.

Individual response

I think it is very important to make clear to the wider public that trans people in particular simply want to quietly get on with their lives in the way most people simply take for granted — we are not looking for special status or benefits beyond others, nor would we ever wish to somehow water down or take away the rights of women or anyone else.

Individual response

⁴ Do you agree with the proposed actions? What would you add or take away in relation to the actions?

Banning of Conversion Therapy

Overall, there was broad support for the banning of conversion therapy (CT), especially amongst technical responses from organisations. From these perspectives, CT is considered to be an unethical and harmful practice that has no place in society:

The Commission supports the ending of conversion therapy, which evidence shows is a harmful practice. Policies intended to end conversion therapy should cover practices relating to both sexual orientation and gender identity, and offer protection to people of all ages. The definition of what is and is not conversion therapy is critical. The target of policies to end conversion therapy should be harmful practices intended to change or suppress, in any way, someone's sexual orientation or their gender identity.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

The College is committed to working with people who seek help in the context of gender diversity. It considers that interventions that claim to convert transgender and gender-diverse people into cisgender people are without scientific foundation and, thus, both unethical and unacceptable. Thus, the College concurs with the views of many international professional organisations, such as the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, and the American Psychological Association, that psychological treatments to suppress or 'revert' gender-diverse behaviours are unscientific and unethical. The Royal College of Psychiatrists considers that use of conversion therapy with transgender and gender-diverse (or lesbian, gay or bisexual) people may be an act of discrimination under the Equality Act (2010).

Royal College of Psychiatrists Wales

In strengthening the Action Plan, many respondents suggested that a working definition of CT would be valuable. Within this theme, respondents raised a number of issues. These included ensuring that any ban of CT does not curtail any freedoms of religious expression. Others also felt that a clearer definition would be valuable in ensuring that certain support, such as gender affirmation for those living with gender dysphoria, does not fall under a blanket ban. Together, these respondents felt that greater precision with regard to CT would be important in any future legislation:

It would be helpful to define what is meant by the "conversion therapy", which is to be banned.

Interfaith Council for Wales

Conversion therapy can look very different in medical, therapeutic, commercial or faith-based contexts. Given the harm that can be caused, it is important that legislative measures by the UK Government to ban conversion therapy are based on strict liability and are targeted at all such practices that are harmful to those subjected to them, even if those carrying out or subject to them believe they are in the subject's best interests.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

We note that all reputable medical and psychological experts agree that 'conversion therapy' is ineffective, inherently homophobic, harmful, and unethical. All societies throughout the world should work towards ending the practice.

National Secular Society

Some respondents also highlighted that subsequent actions on CT should also include a strategy towards awareness raising, outreach, and engagement within faith-based and religious settings. This would also help to ensure that appropriate safeguarding measures are in place to bring an effective end to harm. It was highlighted that any legislation should reassess the eligibility of organisations who promote CT for charitable status and the benefits that this entails. Many respondents were firm in their views that there should be no religious exemption to any law.

Responses from providers of mental health services commented that any legislation should consider redress for victims and survivors of CT, as well as funding for an anonymous reporting system. It is vital that there is provision of specialist support that recognises these experiences and how they may intersect with other experiences of VAWDASV and structural inequalities. There should be clear actions to ensure effective support and protection for those affected. These should include funded engagement with specialist services that have expertise in so-called honour-based abuse, forced marriage, coercive control, and sexual violence to inform effective responses. Whilst the most violent CT practices are already covered by existing legislation, the specific harms of CT require dedicated legislation, resources and support:

We would like an expert reference group to be set up by the Welsh Government with the remit of bringing an end to conversion therapy.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU2) Coalition against Conversion Therapy

4.2 Safety

Another substantive area of the Action Plan seeks to embed and extend protection for LGBTQ+ people around public and private safety. This includes addressing abuse and discrimination in all of its forms.

Hate Crime and Policing

There was recognition amongst some respondents that hate crime is an often ill-defined concept, and that there should be greater clarity and definition concerning specific hate crimes that the Action Plan is seeking to address. The Wales Safer Communities Network commented on action 14 specifically that the underreporting of hate crime is usually due to a lack of engagement with and support for victims after they have reported it to the police. More importantly, the low likelihood of conviction rates and the possibility of encountering institutional homophobia, racism or misogyny in police forces should be addressed as primary concerns, which respondents felt to be the main drivers of low reporting rates.

It was further raised that engagement should be not only with PCCs but also with all law enforcement services (including transport police). Reliance on individuals such as Chief Constables or PCCs was raised as being unlikely to bring meaningful change, which would not address the structural issues within police forces:

The level of reporting is not the end point, but [it is] more that following reporting, there [needs to be] 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.

Wales Safer Communities Network

It would be good to see some specific reference to working across Wales with transport providers and British Transport Police to ensure that people using services understand where they can go if they feel unsafe or are being abused by other passengers.

Cardiff Metropolitan University

Some felt that the Action Plan could be strengthened by acknowledging specific hate crimes or groups. Respondents raised, for example, the specific safety concerns for LGBTQ+ people of colour in particular, including recognising the disproportionate and negative experiences within the criminal justice system. Some responses noted that the onus should be on the police to rebuild trust with Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups, but that increasing criminal justice presence was not the solution; funding should be prioritised towards social spaces, community groups, and safer transport at nighttime:

We feel that the wording in action 13 implies that LGBTQ+ people are one homogenous group with the same experiences in relation to hate crime and incidents and community safety.

Bi Cymru

I disagree with the emphasis on working with the police and with using hate crime reporting as a panacea for the wider societal problem of increasing hate/far-right ideology. The police in Wales need to be held accountable for their many failings. There are many LGBTQ+ people in Wales, myself included, who are [Black, Asian and minority ethnic] and Muslim — we already know that increased surveillance and criminalisation is not the answer. I would strongly advocate in favour of more funding for social spaces, community groups, [and] better or free buses — especially at night. Our communities and safety need investing in — not the service [that] we go to to report things when they have already gone wrong, and which manifestly does not keep all of us safe.

Individual response

Linked with educational actions of the Action Plan, many noted the importance of action point 16, ensuring that the police are informed of the issues that LGBTQ+ individuals face and how to support them. This included ensuring that the police are representative of the communities that they serve, including LGBTQ+ people:

Attracting more LGBTQ+ people and other individuals from diverse backgrounds to these frontline roles will help strengthen understanding and the relationship between law enforcement and minoritised groups.

Equality and Human Rights Coalition (EHRCo)

It was also raised that 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 progressing through Westminster). Similarly, some felt that action on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) should also include commitments to tackling specific issues, for example, by enforcing misogyny as a hate crime and ending the criminalisation of the reckless transmission of HIV:

This section should include an action to end the criminalisation of reckless transmission of HIV, which has been proven to be detrimental to those making accusations as well as alleged perpetrators, while also increasing stigma towards all people living with HIV.

National AIDS Trust

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

Responses regarding how to address VAWDASV included the need to provide gender-responsive, trauma-informed and needs-led support to victims. This should also recognise the unique features and dynamics of intimate partner violence (IPV) in lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships. Some respondents highlighted the importance of a preventative approach in addressing the root causes of the disproportionate violence against women, as well as against LGBTQ+ people more widely:

Specialist service provision needs to [be] sufficiently and sustainably resourced so that it can effectively provide gender-responsive, trauma-informed and needs-led support that is beneficial to trans, non-binary and cis-people [...]. LGBTQ+ people are not a homogenous group [...] they will experience all forms of VAWDASV within differing contexts.

Welsh Women's Aid

The [reason as to why] domestic abuse reporting is low is the same reason [as to why] we are not likely to report hate crimes: the system (organisations, policies, staff attitudes, etc.) is cis/heteronormative. We have heard from a range of LGBTQ+ survivors and know that issues such as outright transphobia and bi-erasure are rife in Wales.

Calan Domestic Violence Shelter

There was a strong response from groups and individuals in support of the continuing need for the provision of specialist services that offer women-only spaces. These responses sought to reaffirm the sex-based rights of women under the Equality Act 2010, and highlighted the oppression and violence that lesbian women in particular experience at the intersection of both homophobia and misogyny.

This should be understood alongside the responses from other organisations who insist that the Action Plan must be clear and confident in its assertion that LGBTQ+-inclusive responses should not be regarded as incompatible with a gendered approach to tackling VAWDASV, and should not detract from the need for support, safety and justice for all LGBTQ+ survivors of abuse. DASV organisations commented more widely that support should be both sex- and gender-informed. Calan DVS pointed to their Myriad Programme for recovery and resilience for gender-, relationship- and sexuality-diverse survivors of domestic abuse as an example of best practice in this area.

It was raised that a gender-neutral commissioning response will not be beneficial to any victims of abuse, be they cis, trans or non-binary, as it will fail to understand how someone's sex and gender inform experiences of violence and recovery. For example, domestic violence in lesbian relationships is thought to follow different patterns of coercive and/or violent behaviour and is often delegitimised and underreported, which can affect the support that

women in same-sex relationships receive. This requires the support of ongoing constructive dialogue and clear guidance from commissioners.

Others highlighted the important role of education in raising awareness and addressing issues underscoring VAWDASV, including identifying and challenging sexist and heteronormative practices, norms and stereotypes. This includes educating children and young people on respectful relationships through the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum. Respondents also highlighted the importance of training delivered within relevant organisations, especially in understanding and responding to specific experiences of VAWDASV within LGBTQ+ communities:

Additionally, we feel that police and other organisations such as housing associations, schools, social care, and healthcare should be required to have mandatory LGBTQ+ awareness, hate crime, domestic abuse, and sexual violence [...] training from a Victim Support perspective. Statutory agencies will not be able to identify LGBTQ+ needs and risks if they are not aware of the issues in the first place.

Victim Support

In creating a picture of the experiences of LGBTQ+ people (or, more broadly, [of] the experiences of anyone) of VAWDASV, police data fails to provide a valid picture. Not only is VAWDASV [...] significantly underreported, but it is often not incident-based, for instance, with coercive control. Many survivors do not report or are unable to report abuse due to structural inequalities and a culture of disbelief and victim blaming that remains pervasive. These barriers are exacerbated for Black and minoritised people, migrants, and those engaged with [the] criminal justice system. For LGBTQ+ people, these intersecting identities or experiences can further their experiences of discrimination. In the collection of data and creating a clear needs assessment to inform provision of support and protection, the Welsh Government must take into consideration how it will engage and include the needs of those whose experiences of structural discrimination mean they are not visible in formal data collection.

Welsh Women's Aid

There is no action or specific mention in regard to street harassment. There is a 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.

Wales Safer Communities Network

Online Safety and Social Media

Social media regulation emerged frequently in responses concerning safety. Of those highlighting the importance of online safety, many felt that the Action Plan could be more specific and provide more concrete detail. Many individuals and organisations raised issues surrounding online bullying for young people, and the need for more positive role models in the media:

I would strengthen the commitment to [tackling] abuse on social media. This isn't just directed at individual people, but our whole community. I see comment sections from media outlets awash with crude, offensive and often very wrong comments. These aren't challenged or removed. Freedom of speech is always quoted but not the responsibility that comes with that freedom.

Individual response

The NSPCC has led the campaign for a social media regulator, making companies subject to a legally enforceable duty of care that requires them to identify reasonably foreseeable risks and address them through systemic changes to how their services are designed and run. We have also argued that the regulator should have a specific duty to assess the risk of harms to particular groups of users, which considers the impact of harms from an intersectional perspective, and to assess how online harms may be disproportionately experienced by them.

NSPCC

Concerns surrounding misinformation in the wider media and public discourse with regard to trans rights and support for homophobic and transphobic groups were also frequently raised:

Especially given the ongoing vilification of trans people in public discourse, it is vital that governments are prepared to take a stand on protecting the rights of trans people.

National AIDS Trust

Some of the key challenges for the [Action] Plan are the rise of disinformation and rise in LGBTQ+ hate crimes across the UK. We believe [that] some serious action needs to be taken in conjunction with tech companies and the UK Government to tackle the rise in disinformation towards the transgender and non-binary community.

Shelter Cymru

What with the current toxic, and truly alarming, news/social media climate, I think it is extremely important that the Welsh Government stand firmly against what feels like a growing tide of misinformation and corrosive behaviour which now appears to be swaying political views in ways that deeply worry me as a trans woman. Very sadly, many of us are now too frightened to engage in trying to counter this tide for fear of

being singled out and violence — it is therefore extremely important that there are respected people and organisations able and willing to represent us and help to firmly and professionally counter this misinformation.

Individual response

4.3 Home and Communities

The Action Plan also sets out a range of actions designed to ensure that LGBTQ+ people feel a sense of belonging both to their community and to Wales.

General Perceptions

In response to the proposals regarding home and communities, some respondents noted that this section of the Action Plan covers multiple substantive areas of policy. This included the observations that some substantive issues are afforded one short action point, whilst others are given detailed and multiple sub-actions. Some responses supported splitting actions under this theme into different groupings, recognising that this is a crucial area for intersectionality with actions on homelessness, refugees and asylum seekers, regional disparities, and the Welsh language as well as culture and sport:

The grouping of actions is very broad and could benefit from further clarification as to why actions have been grouped in this way. Welsh Government may wish to consider breaking up this group of actions into clearer and more concise themes, or, alternatively, moving actions into less developed groups.

Welsh Local Government Association

The Action Plan would be clearer if the four actions on culture could be split from this section and placed in a separate section on the Welsh language, culture and sport.

Ceredigion Council

Regional Disparities in Support

Gaps in existing service provision were frequently raised by organisations in North and Mid Wales that meant that LGBTQ+ communities had inconsistent access to support. Many responses highlighted that more rural parts of Wales lived with greater prejudice in their communities and that policy should be sensitive to this. In these areas the fundamental work to eliminate discrimination, training for healthcare professionals, and guidance for schools and teachers were seen to be priorities:

Other priorities are supporting the communities in Mid and North Wales who don't have the resources and community hubs available in the South to promote mental health support, particularly for survivors of conversion therapy, make HIV prevention information visible in North Wales surgeries, and [...] support LGBTQ+ asylum seekers.

Rustic Rainbow

Authorities have also noted that the socioeconomic implications of the [Action] Plan are not adequately explored. As such, the experiences of LGBTQ+ people within rural communities are largely undeveloped.

Welsh Local Government Association

Some responses highlighted that whilst rurality and the Welsh language were both potential barriers to accessing public services or LGBTQ+ support groups, they were not mutually inclusive and action point 18 should disaggregate these points:

Not only does the geography of Wales serve as a barrier when accessing services such as sexual health clinics, but it also presents its own social challenges. In Wales there are currently sexual health clinic dead zones — with no in-person services for miles in certain areas. Powys does not have a sexual health clinic within its Health Board area.

Terrence Higgins Trust

Older LGBT+ people spoke of additional concerns they can experience in rural areas and how their remoteness can be very socially isolating. Rurality and distance from services can mean that there will be higher resourcing requirements for all services and groups to be within reach of [...] older LGBTQ+ people in rural areas than in urban ones.

Age Cymru

Efallai edrych ar y rhwystrau mewn cymunedau gwledig Cymreig hefyd, yn enwedig mapio os ydi pobl ifanc dal yn teimlo eu bod yn gorfod symud o'u cymunedau traddodiadol Gymreig i gael eu derbyn.

Prif Swyddog Ieuentid Cyngor Sir Ynys Mon

Perhaps look at the barriers in rural Welsh communities too, especially mapping if young people still feel they have to move from their traditional Welsh communities to be accepted.

Principal Youth Officer of Anglesey County Council, translated from original

Regarding Pride events and visibility, there were concerns surrounding both the centralisation of Pride events and the lack of support for regional Pride or grassroots events, in which visibility is arguably more crucial:

Unions felt that Pride Cymru was an issue that needed careful consideration. There was a strong feeling that Pride Cymru has been allowed to become the primary event for LGBTQ+ people, but in doing so has taken away funding opportunities for smaller, community-based events which arguably need funding much more. There's a strong feeling that Pride Cymru is now really Pride Cardiff and will always attract corporate/advertising funding, but smaller places where Pride is very much needed don't get any funding and they feel left behind/ignored and excluded.

Wales TUC

Homelessness

Whilst a specific housing project (Ty Pride) was referenced by the Action Plan, many organisations commented that more detail was required on homelessness, since many young LGBTQ+ people can become ostracised from their families, particularly those with a faith-based background, if they declare their sexuality. Multiple technical responses pointed towards or repeated the recommendations of Llamau's End Youth Homelessness 'Out On The Streets' report as demonstrating best practice in this area.

Many local authorities raised the disproportionate level of homelessness amongst young LGBTQ+ people, whilst housing charities also expressed the need to consider the discrimination experienced by older people in sheltered accommodation or with social care providers. Tai Pawb noted that they had published guidance for providers of accommodation for older people becoming LGBTQ+-friendly, and that action 30 on sharing best practice was well received:

Provision of adequate homes for young people overrepresented in the at-risk category (care leavers and young LGBTQ+ people) will require investment. Whatever the resources are, a joined-up approach is required. Neither of these initiatives/boards [is] mentioned in the Action Plan and it will be important to ensure that they are so that no one is reinventing the wheel or duplicating effort.

Individual response

Angen gweithio mwy ar gefnogaeth i rieni hefyd oherwydd dyna sut mae lefel uchel o bobl ifanc LGBTQ+ yn diweddu'n ddigartref am bod y rhieni yn methu derbyn eu rhywedd.

Prif Swyddog Ieuenctid Cyngor Sir Ynys Mon

Need to work more on parental support as well because that's how a high level of LGBTQ+ young people end up homeless because their parents can't accept their gender.

Principal Youth Officer of Anglesey County Council, translated from original

Both Shelter and End Youth Homelessness Now raised the need to collect and publish LGBTQ+ homelessness data, alongside mental health data, to understand the ways in which housing and homelessness services may exacerbate social inequalities.

Responses indicated the wealth of existing knowledge in the housing sector on LGBTQ+-specific issues, with specific recommendations for meaningfully addressing homelessness and housing inequality. Many individual responses raised anecdotal instances of discrimination in the private rental sector, despite obvious protection under equality law. This highlighted the need for engagement with the housing sector and for further action points with which to address this:

We want to see the Welsh Government collect and publish more data on LGBTQ+ homelessness. We agree mental health statistics are important, but we also believe [that] rates of homelessness would also be crucial for our organisation and others to work in partnership with housing and homelessness services to ensure that they are not exacerbating the societal inequalities we see currently.

Shelter Cymru

The Welsh Government should consider Llamau's report and recommendations when redrafting the Action Plan to make the intentions clearer and defined, going beyond the sole scope of considering evaluations; ensure action is undertaken to understand and respond to the disproportionate number of LGBT people who are homeless in Wales; [and] provide leadership and support for local authorities to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty when identifying and responding to the housing needs of their diverse populations.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Services

Whilst the range of action points dedicated to LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers was welcomed by technical respondents, many raised concerns regarding the ability of the Welsh Government to deliver concrete action in these areas without the devolution of relevant briefs. Actions 31 and 32 centre on 'encouragement', whilst action 31 in particular could be reworded to provide clarity as to whether it was in the Welsh Government's power to make amendments to the ASF1 form.

Similarly, it was raised that action 33 is something that the Welsh Government should have already done in order to identify improvements to the Action Plan as a capstone policy in this area, and it was unclear as to which 'organisations' they were committing to supporting and how this support might be delivered:

[On action 33] *Many of the actions under 'consideration' are actions that should be part of the [Action] Plan, and investigating and reviewing policy to seek to improve it should be routine.*

Platform

4.4 Improving Health Outcomes

In response to the significant inequalities in accessing health and social care, the Action Plan sets out a range of actions designed to improve access and outcomes for LGBTQ+ people.

General Perceptions

Health and social care providers responded overwhelmingly in suggesting that this theme should be 'health and social care'. This would strengthen the 'full life course' approach across the Action Plan and improve the cross-cutting theme of intersectionality. Specific consideration of older LGBTQ+ people, as well as people living with disabilities, would further improve the representation of all LGBTQ+ groups and the health concerns which they may face. Targeted public health work was also raised as a means of reducing the health inequalities experienced by LGBTQ+ communities overall.

Many responded positively to the focus on trans healthcare, particularly the establishment of the Welsh Gender Service. More detail might be given as to other specific areas of healthcare that are particularly relevant to those in LGBTQ+ communities. Access to adoption might be included, alongside the action on maternity and fertility treatments, as well as giving more detail on mental health provision (given the weight of statistics used elsewhere in the Action Plan).

Ageing and Social Care

There was a considerable response from public and third sector organisations which highlighted the need to address the ageing population of LGBTQ+ people, and an appreciation of the full life course of an individual. Many responses noted sometimes stigmatising situations in social care settings and that these should go beyond 'compliance'. In particular, it was noted that an increasing number of private organisations provide essential health and social care services within a mixed economy of care and, as such, any public sector training should equally apply to any publicly commissioned services.

Alzheimer’s Society Cymru highlighted the need for sensitive data collection in this regard, recognising the need to consider LGBTQ+-specific needs when addressing advanced care planning:

Our research has highlighted that while health and social care staff and their managers are committed to upholding the rights of LGBTQ+ older people in Wales, they often have significant knowledge gaps about LGBTQ+ lives and experiences of marginalisation (historic and current) and lack confidence when it comes to facilitating meaningful conversations about the relevance of gender identity and sexual orientation to an individual’s care and support needs [...]. Participation needs to be compulsory for health and social care workers and embedded in ongoing education from pre-qualifying level onwards.

Academic at Bristol University

As the population living with HIV ages, increasing numbers are reliant on residential and domiciliary care. People living with HIV have told NAT about stigmatising treatment in these situations, and the need for adequate training, including on HIV-related matters and on more general rights of people in social care, must be included in this training.

National AIDS Trust

Research on experiences of loneliness and isolation, as well as support for older LGBTQ+ people’s mental health needs, was suggested by some respondents, recognising that many older LGBTQ+ people live alone and may not have an extended network of family upon whom to rely. Action point 40 should explicitly reference the needs of older people, as well as those of younger people:

Alzheimer’s Society Cymru is aware that LGBTQ+ people disproportionately live alone and are disproportionately affected by social isolation, mental health conditions, and alcohol use — three key risk factors for dementia. We are also aware that some of the symptoms of dementia can have particular implications for LGBTQ+ people, particularly concerning being ‘out’ as well as stigma experienced in care facilities.

Alzheimer’s Society Cymru

Gender Clinics and Gender Recognition

For those in support of the priorities of the Action Plan, there was an overwhelming positive response to the introduction of the Welsh Gender Clinic and the commitments to reviewing the gender identity pathway. Access to timely and empathetic care continues to be profoundly difficult for people in the trans community. It was raised that pushing basic trans care (hormones) into the field of primary care/GPs might free up the NHS GICs to cater to more complex cases. Many responses raised the issue of incredibly long waiting times to access appropriate services:

In order to take a children's rights approach, I welcome the [Action] Plan to review the gender identity pathway for children and young people in Wales following the review in NHS England [...]. This ensures Article 24 of the UNCRC is met, and I would welcome a similar review in Wales. Welsh Government should include young people in this review [...]. During discussions with our Youth Panel, some stated that they were aware from friends, family and other individuals who identified as transgender that the time [for which] individuals are on the NHS waiting list is exhaustive, and that this was a real issue with children and young people's mental health in particular.

Children's Commissioner for Wales

Until the creation of the Welsh Gender Service in Cardiff in 2019, there was arguably no gender identity pathway for trans and non-binary people in Wales. This was, instead, outsourced to England, and remains to be for those aged under 17.5 [years]. It could be argued that the Senedd cannot commit to [reviewing] what they do not have, and should, instead, commit to continued growth of the Welsh Gender Service to reduce the waiting time from the current 2+ years to the target of 18 weeks through the expansion of the service through training and recruiting more specialists in the team as well as the Local Intermediate Gender Teams. This can then be extended down to pick up children and adolescents.

Denbighshire County Council

More attention needs to be given to developing regional healthcare services for trans citizens that provide access to gender-affirming treatments closer to people's homes, and to ensuring GPs have the knowledge and confidence to provide more support and treatments through primary care services.

Individual response

Rredaf ei bod yn siomedig nad yw'r cynllun yn cynnwys gwybodaeth fanwl am gyflwyno gwasanaethau iechyd traws i blant a phobl ifanc traws yng Nghymru.

Ymateb Unigol

I think it is disappointing that the [Action] Plan does not include detailed information on the delivery of trans health services for trans children and young people in Wales.

Individual response, translated from original

Addressing the needs of non-binary people was deemed to be crucial here, although some questioned why addressing 'perception' was the focus of action point 45, rather than committing to reviewing the services themselves:

The language of this action point seems to suggest that it is “public perception” that needs adjustment, rather than the disparity that exists in access to services. If that disparity is addressed, public perception will follow.

Public Health Wales

Health processes, databases, administrative structures, etc. set up based on cisgender norms routinely fail transgender people (who typically need a bespoke mix of male, female and trans-specific healthcare). These would be straightforward to solve: for example, replacing uses of “female/male” in the database with specific health needs ([e.g.] “has/does not have a cervix” [...]) so that reminder letters are sent to the correct cohort.

Individual response

Some of these responses were concerned that homophobic and transphobic groups were suggesting that people with learning disabilities are susceptible to persuasion towards transition, which may have negative impacts on how neurodivergent people access healthcare. Learning disability charities responded overwhelmingly that this poses a threat to the autonomy and agency of neurodivergent people, rather than presenting a safeguarding risk:

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.

Learning Disability Wales

The sector often acts reactively, treating LGBTQ+ issues as ‘problems’ that need addressing from a safeguarding perspective. This ignores the disabled person’s rights to receive correct information and to have space for discovery and decide how they want to live their lives.

Supported Loving Network Wales

[As for] anti-trans activists arguing that people with disabilities should not be allowed to transition, their focus is especially autism and ADHD, but I recently came across an absurd story of someone being denied for being a wheelchair user. As part of considering reform to healthcare for transgender people, explicit direction should be given that disability ought not to be used as any kind of barrier whatsoever to transition. This includes for young people.

Individual response

HIV and Sexual Health

It was frequently raised that the Ministerial Foreword should be amended in order to avoid the connotation that HIV is a 'gay disease':

Not all LGBTQ+ people are at increased risk of HIV and, further, it is important not to equate LGBTQ+ health with HIV [and not to equate] HIV with people who are LGBTQ+. However, the burden of HIV falls especially on specific groups, including men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans people. Therefore, attention to HIV-related matters is a vital part of an LGBTQ+ Action Plan.

National AIDS Trust

More might be done to address sexual health more generally across Wales, including addressing regional gaps in sexual health service provision and ensuring Welsh language services. Given that there is already some public health work targeted at combatting issues in which LGBTQ+ people are disproportionately at risk, there needs to be more granularity in relation to how action 36 on targeting public health activity will result in anything different from existing provision and what public health work will be undertaken. This should also make specific reference to HIV. Wales was the first UK nation to commit to ending new cases of HIV by 2030, and it must act to ensure that this becomes a reality. This might include committing to the Welsh HIV Action Plan as recommended by the IEP, and dedicated funding for National Testing Week and World AIDS Day. However, it should be recognised that the Welsh HIV Action Plan is not the same as a Sexual Health and HIV Action Plan, and this should be corrected:

[Action 41: Sexual Health & HIV Action Plan] needs amending, as nobody has asked for an Action Plan that blends both of these areas. The HIV Action Plan is an existing Welsh Government pledge and is underway; [an Action] Plan that also includes the much wider areas of sexual health would be a much different undertaking. Please amend this action to reflect what the community asked for and what the Welsh Government is giving us.

Fast Track Cardiff & Vale

Wales has the worst late diagnosis rates of HIV anywhere in the UK and, as such, ensuring opt-out testing in A&E and GP surgeries should be a priority, as well as addressing the continued stigma associated with HIV by some health professionals. This was supported by the move to telemedicine appointments:

The recent availability of virtual GP appointments and increased support for e-prescriptions could be tailored to create a world-class sexual health and support service. If they chose to, an applicant could, from start to finish, select their experience to be entirely personal to them without the need to queue in a sexual health clinic for hours if they [did not] want to or face any stigma that may be present at a GP practice. Remote sexual health testing also has its advantages for those from backgrounds

where stigma is higher, such as LGBTQ+ and Black, Asian and [minority ethnic] communities, and those with disabilities.

Terrence Higgins Trust

Action 36 should also make specific reference to HIV and there should be further actions to implement diversification of access to PrEP, opt-out HIV testing in all healthcare settings, and improvement in awareness of HIV indicator conditions among healthcare providers.

National AIDS Trust

Fertility, Maternity, Adoption and Surrogacy

One UHB commented that to ‘continue’ to support fertility and maternity was not appropriate; rather, it was more about equitable access and appropriate care and support. A few responses also raised questions regarding adoption and surrogacy processes, recognising these as being important for many LGBTQ+ parents:

Feedback from our staff suggests that the services being described here are not yet “accessible and straightforward to use” for LGBTQ+ people, so the “continue to [ensure]” seems premature. It was suggested that surrogacy should also be included in this point.

Public Health Wales

Fertility treatment for LGBTQ+ parents was mentioned but not adoption processes, which are often difficult for LGBTQ+ parents.

Individual response

The continuation of some existing practice is cited throughout the Action Plan. Are these current practices assumed to be effective or is their effectiveness based on structured review and assessment, therefore justifying their continuation? It’s unclear within the [Action] Plan.

Equality & Human Rights Coalition

Mental Health

Some respondents felt that the Action Plan could provide more focused and more detailed actions surrounding mental health. From these perspectives, mental health was especially important when considering the evidence provided throughout the document of the high prevalence of mental health problems amongst LGBTQ+ people. Some respondents also commented on the adverse impact of conversion therapy upon mental health. Others also cited the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for older age groups who

might have experienced loneliness and isolation, and for young people who have experienced significant disruption to their education and social lives:

Given the longstanding nature of this [mental health] challenge and the gravity of impact caused by the [COVID-19] pandemic, we would like to see a specific aim included to address this longstanding injustice which aims to tackle longstanding mental health needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

There needs to be more detail here on what is meant by mental health services, whether the [Action] Plan refers to tier 0/1 services or more specialist services, and whether this also refers to primary, community and secondary mental health services. There also needs to be an action around undertaking a robust assessment of need, so that services can be designed and resourced appropriately.

Royal College of Psychiatrists

In the LGBT+ community, those affected by [mental ill-health] is as high as 70 per cent, and young trans people are particularly vulnerable. Many LGBT+ people will avoid healthcare settings as they do not feel safe.

Unison

4.5 Education

In building on recent reforms to the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum in schools, the Action Plan sets out a range of actions designed to support practitioners in engaging with an LGBTQ+-inclusive curriculum.

General Perceptions

Many responses offering reflections surrounding education (again) highlight the importance of detailed and specific action points. Respondents often felt that the Action Plan could be strengthened with more focused and more precise actions. Some felt that action 47 could clarify for whom precisely professional learning and training were intended. For action 48, which seeks to ensure that training empowers professionals to support LGBTQ+ people, it was noted that this might be more appropriate under the 'Workplace' section. Others responded that the hate crime prevention programmes referenced in action point 51 should either fall under the 'Safety' section or further clarify its specificity to educational settings:

It is unclear how action 51 relates directly to education. It would be helpful to be more explicit around the elements of hate crime prevention programmes that could be best incorporated into school and college provision.

Estyn

New Curriculum for Wales

The importance of education was a consistent thread throughout the responses, with many organisations dedicated to the support of young people and education highlighting the need for clear guidance on RSE in the new Curriculum for Wales in schools. With the new curriculum moving away from a prescriptive model, many felt as though it is critical that guidance be provided to schools to ensure that all children have age-appropriate, LGBTQ+-inclusive education. It was also noted that the curriculum should specify training requirements; however, action point 47 was not clear as to for whom this training was intended:

While we welcome action 47, we would like to see some more specific detail here about what this investment will include. We would like clarity on how much will be invested in professional learning on designing a fully LGBTQ+-inclusive curriculum, over what time period, and what this training will include. We feel this action could also be strengthened by adding a commitment to investing in evidence-based LGBTQ+ resources to support the design of an inclusive curriculum [...]. RSE is a complex and specialist area of the curriculum that focuses on issues that can be sensitive and that can lead to teachers, students and parents sometimes feeling anxious, embarrassed and vulnerable. High-quality, inclusive RSE is dependent upon having a well-trained workforce with the confidence to co-construct relevant content with children and young people.

NSPCC Wales

We strongly support Welsh Government's plans to make RSE education in schools more LGBTQ+-inclusive, but would like to emphasise 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.

Learning Disability Wales

We also acknowledge that misinformation can cause more harm than good, so we would encourage that the Welsh Government ensures appropriate healthy relationship education to young people is carried out by qualified people.

Platform

Some responses cited the need to look beyond RSE curriculum for LGBTQ+-inclusive education, either within the wider school curriculum, beyond dedicated teaching and learning time. Equally this should extend beyond school settings and into colleges and vocational training centres:

Many on our Youth Panel felt the inclusion and integration of LGBTQ+ [not only] within the Relationships and Sexuality Education content and delivery but also through the visibility of LGBTQ+ lives and experiences across the curriculum, such as history or maths.

Children's Commissioner for Wales

There is the opportunity to think about an inclusive curriculum for vocational qualifications, where health, social care, and childcare may be of particular relevance. There may be a role for Qualifications Wales as part of this. Similarly, training for tutors and those who provide pastoral oversight of learners and apprentices is essential.

ColegauCymru

[There should be] fully resourced and considered embedding of the mandatory RSE as part of the new curriculum, and advocating for a 'whole-school approach' for the prevention of VAWDASV.

Welsh Women's Aid

There was evidence of hesitation towards Relationships and Sexuality Education in the new curriculum from some respondents based on the centrality of parental choice. Equally, there was some concern that RSE is still taught from a religious perspective in school settings, hindering the ability of children and young people to learn all aspects of sexuality. There was also a belief that some state schools will feel pressure from faith-based schools to practise their teaching from the same faith-based perspective:

The recently passed Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill allows [faith-based] schools to continue to teach RSE from a faith-based perspective. This means [that] children will continue to be inculcated with the idea that same-sex relationships are wrong — if, indeed, they are taught about them at all.

National Secular Society

Whole-System Approach

Many responses highlighted the need for taking a school-wide or institution-wide approach to education and young people. This considers not only the RSE curriculum but also the wider curriculum, as well as out-of-school activities including sports, and implies training for teachers, governors, and support staff and guidance on how best to support children and young people presenting gender dysphoria. The 'Education' section should also include further education and higher education more substantively:

Focusing on the actions in relation to education, there needs to be a much more whole-system approach to education, albeit with specifics for individual areas of education. The entire preamble to the actions on education focuses solely on schools, the new Curriculum for Wales, and compulsory education. This is a serious failing. There is not a single mention of further education, work-based learning & apprenticeships, higher education, or adult learning in this prelude to the actions, only one of which specifically mentions FE and HE.

ColegauCmyru

Sicrhau polisiau cryf 'Ysgol Gyfan', hyfforddi staff ysgolion/athrawon, grwp LGBTQ+ ym mhob ysgol i fagu hyder mewn pobl ifanc i fedru derbyn eu rhywedd.

Prif Swyddog Ieuenctid Cyngor Sir Ynys Mon

Ensuring strong 'whole school' policies, training of schools and teaching staff, [and] LGBTQ+ groups in all schools to build confidence in young people to be able to accept their gender.

Principal Youth Officer of Anglesey County Council, translated from original

Some responses highlighted that any training should extend to school governors and support staff:

It is important that consideration is also given to training for governors. Any complaint or concern regarding school practice would be considered by the governing body, so any training/resources should reflect this requirement.

Welsh Local Government Association

Training for schools is welcomed. It would be useful if this was put on for governors also and that a governor for LGBTQ+ was appointed. There needs to be confirmation of whether this will be free training or whether supply cover will be provided. The strategic investment in professional learning and training on designing a fully LGBTQ+-inclusive curriculum is welcomed. However, in order for this to be successful, it must be developed and delivered by highly qualified professionals. Further clarity around how schools will access this training will be needed. In addition, sufficient time will be required by school-based professionals to develop the resources and implement the professional learning.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Many local authorities were seeking leadership from the Welsh Government as well as guidance on how to support transgender children and young people who present gender dysphoria. Resources and training were seen to be key to the success of the new curriculum:

Having all-Wales guidance for transgender in schools is extremely important. There needs to be guidance which can be used across all of Wales, which includes legislation and correct terminology to ensure consistency. This is really important for us and something which is definitely required.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Colleagues in Education & Children's Services have noted their clear support on the proposed guidance for schools, and ask whether this will clearly articulate how a [school] supports a child under 16 [years of age] to present in the gender of choice when the parents object and how they may square this guidance with the current legislative framework that sits with Westminster. We are now dealing with questions and requests for support from schools across Carmarthenshire, and in light of recent challenges to local authorities, we kindly ask that this work is prioritised so that we can support our learners in the best possible way.

Carmarthenshire County Council

It was also raised that there are existing mechanisms in schools for addressing bullying and wider school life which should be recognised and supported through the Action Plan:

Barnardo's services working with LGBTQ+ children and young people advocate for a whole-school/organisation approach to [tackling] homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying and we would urge Welsh Government to ensure that this is a central part of the LGBTQ+ Action Plan (as it pertains to education). There should be a clear, whole-school approach to zero tolerance of bullying in schools, with teachers and practitioners empowered to support those children and young people who are affected by this.

Barnardo's

[There should be] action for Welsh Government and NHS Wales to ensure all schools provide appropriate staff training and have clear policies that support transgender children. These include tackling bullying, effective safeguarding, parental concerns, and practical considerations (such as appropriate language, use of toilets and changing rooms, and uniforms).

Royal College of Psychiatrists

There is no reference [to] the need to ensure that existing participatory mechanisms in schools are fully inclusive and enable the voice of LGBTQ+ pupils to be captured. School councils and other processes for engaging pupils on matters pertaining to their education and school life must ensure that they are fully representative of the whole school community.

Children in Wales

[It must be ensured that] local authorities analyse bullying data gathered by schools, to identify trends and help establish solutions in line with their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Advocacy and Role Models

Some respondents highlighted the importance of positive role models in school settings, and supported this as a way of addressing bullying in schools:

We could do so much more with gay advocacy — people who are out, living good lives, contributing to society, as role models as much as to show how important gay people are in society and how they just want to live happily and safely.

Individual response

We also encourage the Welsh Government to work with the WCVA to promote LGBTQ+ role models and champions from across the third sector, including as many sectors as possible, not just from the world of culture and sports.

Shelter Cymru

4.6 Workplace

The Action Plan also sets out a range of provisions designed to tackle inequality and discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ people within the workplace.

General Perceptions

Some respondents felt that this section could be strengthened by further dedicated action points which are otherwise dispersed throughout the Action Plan:

The WLGA is supportive of actions listed within this section of the [Action] Plan, but also notes that the limited number of actions within this section disguises the wider cumulative implications on “workforce”, particularly within local authorities, as these actions are dispersed throughout the [Action] Plan.

Welsh Local Government Association

Many responses highlighted the role of the private sector and the third sector in delivering change in parallel with the public sector (addressed previously under ‘role of private sector’ in Overarching Aims). Diversity training should be available to all, not just within the public sector and not just ‘when necessary’; a prior understanding of these issues should not be assumed for those already within a post in public sector organisations.

Responses from trade unions were concerned with the lack of prior consultation on the draft Action Plan, and the lack of emphasis on fair work and the role of trade unions within the Action Plan more generally. The role of workplace equality representatives was highlighted to identify specific equality issues, scrutinise workplace policies and procedures, and represent individuals. These should be funded roles to ensure that they do not fall to the bottom of the list of priorities. This should be supported by data collection, analysis and use:

It would be useful to provide guidance to organisations and businesses about how they should benchmark their current position, with suggested proposals about how they could make improvements. This will support accountability and transparency, as well as strengthening opportunities for shared learning and the spread of good practice.

Equality & Human Rights Coalition

There was considerable concern amongst responses with regard to large public sector organisations, including Cardiff University's potential withdrawal from the Stonewall Diversity Champions scheme. Many saw this as part of a wider concerted effort to discredit Stonewall. One UHB and the Royal College of Nurses raised the importance of the NHS Wales Rainbow Badge, with Wales being one of the last home nations to introduce it. This was seen to be another important awareness-raising scheme and tailored workplace initiative to support inclusive practices in workplaces which could be used across sectors:

In addition to better data collection, the Charter also asks for a commitment to embedding an inclusive culture through tailored initiatives that are suitable to their workplace environment.

Chartered Institute of Building

We strongly support the introduction of the Rainbow Badge Scheme, as it helps to provide an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals by raising visibility and awareness, with a focus on education and awareness needed before the badge is given to staff to wear.

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Workplace Discrimination

Experiences of bullying, discrimination and (sexual) harassment in the workplace were raised as a key concern for individuals and from trade unions, highlighting that it is (unfortunately) likely that LGBTQ+ workers will be at risk of being unfairly targeted for redundancy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Access to appropriate toilet facilities and safe, private spaces within the workplace was raised as being fundamental to an inclusive working culture. This is particularly a barrier for trans and non-binary people, but it also remains an intersectional issue for people living with disabilities or religious people:

Appropriate toilet facilities remain a huge issue in workplaces, despite the Equality Act 2010 protecting against direct and indirect discrimination.

Wales TUC

Promote the importance of preventative action on the part of employers and mitigate against bullying and harassment through the development of policies, training and support in an inclusive way that reflects the particular experiences of LGBT workers, as an interim measure until the statutory Code of Practice on workplace harassment is published.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Recruitment and Staff Retention

Recruitment was frequently cited as a key area for actions relating to the workplace. Loopholes in the Equality Act were raised as potential employment discrimination in religious settings:

We would also like to see a recommendation concerning recruitment. Advertisements should specifically state that the post is open to people [regardless of] their sexuality or gender. They should also be placed in publications and other places where they are likely to be seen by LGBTQ+ people. It should also be borne in mind that some institutions make use of external agencies for recruitment of staff.

University of South Wales

While we welcome strategies to tackle anti-LGBT+ discrimination in the workplace, we are concerned that loopholes in the Equality Act 2010 make it easy for some employers to discriminate against LGBT+ candidates in recruitment. Where employment is for the purposes of an organised religion, employers can discriminate not only on the basis of religion or belief but also on the basis of sex, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, and sexual orientation in order to comply with the doctrines of the religion.

National Secular Society

It was also raised that in order to improve diversity in workforces, there should be a focus on staff retention and working culture, alongside inclusive recruitment processes:

Welsh Government may wish to consider how they can work in partnership with local government to ensure that resources allocated to improving training provision stay within the sector. Additionally, they may also wish to consider how the [Action] Plan's actions contribute to the development of a more inclusive and positive public sector culture that welcomes and retains diverse staff.

Welsh Local Government Association

4.7 COVID-19 Response

Recognising the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly regarding well-being and mental health, the Action Plan sets out two actions aimed at ensuring that subsequent responses and support consider the experiences and needs of LGBTQ+ people.

General Perceptions

Of those respondents offering reflections on the proposals, they often highlighted the disproportionate effect of the COVID-19 pandemic upon LGBTQ+ people as a critical intersection between health, social and economic disadvantage. It was recognised that the sectors affected by changes in the labour market are likely to disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ people who are overrepresented in these sectors:

The [COVID-19] pandemic has heightened the socioeconomic disadvantages that are being faced in our communities, and the impact [that] poverty has and is having on people continues to grow. This will impact housing requirements, and emphasis on these issues could be included within the [Action] Plan.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Evidence suggests the economic downturn caused by the [COVID-19] pandemic is impacting on the arts & culture, travel & tourism, and hospitality sectors. These are sectors where (historically) LGBTQ+ workers have been overrepresented because [they] have been easier to be openly LGBTQ+ in. And as the recession deepens, it is likely that LGBTQ+ workers in those sectors will be at risk of redundancy.

Wales TUC

5 Key Challenges and Resources

Respondents were asked to reflect on the key challenges or potential barriers to realising the aims of the Action Plan.⁵ In further understanding the Action Plan in practice, respondents were then asked for their views on the resources that would be required in order to effectively address and deliver on the aims and actions.⁶ These consultation questions have been combined into one section to reflect the crossover in responses between the challenges in implementing the Action Plan and the specific resources required in order to do so.

5.1 Implementation

There was an overwhelming response from organisations who felt that implementation was the biggest challenge for the Action Plan. Some felt that key to the successful implementation of the Action Plan would be coherent links between aims, actions and outcomes. For specific themes or actions, respondents often highlighted that greater detail or specificity would strengthen the Action Plan. This included further information on what success for each action point might look like, how this might be achieved in practice, and the procedures for monitoring and evaluation:

There are many instances in the [Action] Plan where the actions are to 'consider', 'examine', 'seek to' or 'explore'. Without specific outcomes attached to most of the actions, NAT is concerned that there is insufficient impetus in the [Action] Plan for making progress in the key areas and, further, that there aren't clear targets to aim for or ways of measuring if desired outcomes have been achieved.

National AIDS Trust (NAT)

O ran blaenoriaethau, credaf fod angen sicrhau bod y camau gweithredu yn cael ei gyflwyno a'i gweithredu i'r eithaf o'u potensial, mae peryg oherwydd geiriad rhai o'r argymhellion a'r gweithrediadau iddynt gael ei weithredu i'r safon neu fan lleiaf posib, hynny yw, geiriau megis 'ystyried' sydd ddim yn ymrwymiadau pendant a llawn.

Ymateb Unigol

In terms of priorities, I think there is a need to ensure that the actions are delivered and implemented to the best of their potential. There is a danger from the wording of some of the recommendations being implemented to the minimum possible standard, i.e. words such as 'consider' which are not absolute commitments.

Individual response, translated from original

Furthermore, some respondents felt that assigning those responsible for delivering certain actions within the Action Plan would be valuable in ensuring relevant engagement. Including

⁵ What are the key challenges that could stop the aims and actions being achieved?

⁶ What resources (these 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?

proposed timescales for each action was also considered to be valuable by respondents, helping stakeholders to prioritise actions:

To ensure [that] the [Action] Plan is effective, greater clarity around anticipated timescales of delivery and ownership of actions is required. Furthermore, the overall efficacy of the [Action] Plan would likely be enhanced by a more robust consideration of how actions listed within the [Action] Plan intersect with the already established priorities identified by Welsh Government in other relevant documents.

Welsh Local Government Association

There were a variety of responses from institutions seeking details on the implementation of the Action Plan, including the monitoring procedures. Some felt that this should be beyond the oversight of the Independent Expert Panel and be formally evaluated using indicators, citing existing procedures or public bodies already in place to deliver this oversight role. For this, outcomes and targets should be set — the use of SMART targets was frequently mentioned. In order to address the demands of intersectionality, there should be alignment with other strategic equality plans:

From our experience, we feel that any work undertaken in this area should be led by independent, impartial professionals and/or organisations and that the outcomes represent a broad and balanced range of opinions and protected characteristics. In our experience, any work which does not come from this background is likely to be challenged extensively and could stop the aims and actions being achieved.

Denbighshire County Council

Our engagement with members and supporters also led to the suggestion by some that Welsh Government explore the creation of an LGBTQ+ Commissioner — in much the same stead as the existing Children’s, Older People’s, and Future Generations Commissioners for Wales — as a single office/entity for taking forward this Action Plan and wider work around LGBTQ+ issues in Wales. This was particularly in relation to queries around how actions would be monitored, scrutinised, and Welsh Government held accountable.

Tai Pawb

[There should be] clear alignment with other strategic equality programmes and Action Plans to ensure systematic and joined-up delivery approaches are deployed in recognition of intersectionality and cross-cutting and interrelated equality priorities.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

5.2 Ring-Fenced Funding

A key resource for a variety of respondents included funding. For funding to be effective in addressing the aims of the Action Plan, some felt that it should be ring-fenced towards supporting specific actions or services:

Long-term and ring-fenced core funding should be allocated to provide the services.

Pobl Group

Funding challenges in the third sector remain a big threat; however, this sector is often commissioned to provide service provision across Wales. Age Connects Morgannwg would like to see increased, long-term and ring-fenced core funding to provide services.

Age Connects Morgannwg

[Resources] may need to be centrally allocated, as otherwise staff cannot commit to the implementation of this really important work.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB

Many local authorities and public bodies cited the need for additional funding in order to deliver the additional responsibilities placed on them as a result of the Action Plan:

Local authorities have consistently highlighted the issue of limited capacity and resources when delivering strategies associated with equalities. Increasingly, local authorities are also highlighting [...] an increasing need for specialist knowledge in the face of increasing public interest in aspects of the equalities agenda. It is important, therefore, that the Welsh Government provides adequate resources to support the delivery of the Action Plan, or coordinates or commissions specific guidance, resources and support to facilitate delivery.

Welsh Local Government Association

5.3 Data Collection, Analysis and Use

The ability to collect, analyse and disseminate consistent information and data was also considered to provide an important resource in supporting the Action Plan. Many public sector organisations, particularly public bodies and local authorities, highlighted that whilst certain data are already collected with regard to service provision, there is an urgent need for a consistent approach across Wales. This is critical in creating a meaningful baseline for future interventions, whilst considering the sensitivity of data collection in this area. For some, this might be used for creating an evidence base for the Action Plan itself.

Data collection was raised throughout the Action Plan in relation to multiple themes as well as the overarching aims. For example, in response to the 'Workplace' section:

A number of actions lack sufficient detail regarding scope, for example, actions relating to data collection. It is unclear whether the Welsh Government intends this point to be specific to recruitment practices or have wider applicability.

Welsh Local Government Association

Meanwhile, in the 'Education' section:

[It must be ensured that] local authorities analyse bullying data gathered by schools, to identify trends and help establish solutions in line with their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

It was suggested that action point 4's commitment to population-level analysis should include specific commitments to supporting the ONS on the findings of the 2021 Census, which contains questions on sexual orientation and gender identity for the first time. These also involve supporting the public sector in using it not only in policy and service design but also in its monitoring:

This talks about population-level analysis, but there is one survey in Wales that holds this information, which allows for a granular analysis (Census). There is also no adequate population-level data for children and young people in Wales that measures this. How can we support youths when we don't know where they are or the numbers of children and young people in the community?

PRISM

Many responses highlighted the need not only for data collection but also for their meaningful analysis and use. Equally, the weakness and unreliability of the types of existing data that are collected when considering sensitive issues and multiple protected characteristics were considered to exacerbate existing structural inequalities:

Emphasis shouldn't just be placed on the collection of data — an analysis of the collected data and actions to address identified shortfalls in diversity are needed to realise actual change. It would be useful to provide guidance to organisations and businesses about how they should benchmark their current position, with suggested proposals about how they could make improvements. This will support accountability and transparency, as well as strengthening opportunities for shared learning and the spread of good practice.

Equality & Human Rights Coalition

In creating a picture of the experiences of LGBTQ+ people (or, more broadly, [of] the experiences of anyone) of VAWDASV, police data fails to provide a valid picture. Not only is VAWDASV [...] significantly underreported, but it is often not incident-based, for instance, with coercive control. Many survivors do not report or are unable to report

abuse due to structural inequalities and a culture of disbelief and victim blaming that remains pervasive. These barriers are exacerbated for Black and minoritised people, migrants, and those engaged with [the] criminal justice system. For LGBTQ+ people, these intersecting identities or experiences can further their experiences of discrimination. In the collection of data and creating a clear needs assessment to inform provision of support and protection, the Welsh Government must take into consideration how it will engage and include the needs of those whose experiences of structural discrimination mean they are not visible in formal data collection.

Welsh Women's Aid

Some respondents raised issues regarding the disclosure of personal information (GDPR) and the potential for identifying people as LGBTQ+ without their consent if not handled carefully. Others highlighted potential inconsistencies with specific actions within the Action Plan; actions on data collection should give particular consideration to looked-after young people, those living with disabilities and older people with regard to autonomy, social care & health, and supported living facilities, and those living with dementia. These data should also be 'dynamic' in recognising changing and evolving identities:

We are concerned that, if not implemented with sensitivity and discretion, this may put pressure on people to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity, even if they wish this to remain private to them or if they are still unsure about their orientation or identity. No one should feel pressured or coerced into revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity unless absolutely necessary.

National Secular Society

Action 5, action 29 and action 31 [refer] to different forms of data collection, but action 11 refers to the removal of personal markers from documentation. These actions seem to be contradictory. Action 11 refers specifically to recruitment data, but improvement of data collection should be across the organisation.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

This should also ensure that we support an 'active offer' that [is] not based on making assumptions about people's LGBTQ+ status, which takes account of individual identity and does not require individuals to self-identify at every interaction with health services.

Velindre University NHS Trust

5.4 Training, Advocacy, and Role Models

There should be inclusive training and awareness across the public sector with the expectation that professionals take part and provide an informed service, extended to all third party contractors and partners. Many responses called for the Welsh Government to embed these in their procurement process requirements.

Respondents commented that training should include teachers, health professionals, youth workers, and those working with carers, as well as services commissioned to deliver public sector contracts. Such training should be objective and rounded, including issues surrounding gender dysphoria and understanding of all sexualities. Effective training in this area should not conflate equality with ‘treating everybody the same’, which risks sustaining inequalities (rather than tackling them), but rather should seek to understand context, life histories, and social circumstances:

This would benefit from tasking leaders with sourcing the appropriate training. Our report ‘Celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion’ (Estyn, 2020) found that the effective addressing of LGBTQ+ bullying is the result of leaders establishing an ethos in their institution that is positive about LGBTQ+ rights. In addition, our report recognises the need to establish robust systems to identify and address issues of bullying as they arise. This action would be improved by being explicitly linked to leadership.

Estyn

We would recommend placing greater importance on training staff to avoid teaching and enforcing a gendered curriculum. Teachers and staff should feel comfortable in offering support to students who do not conform to gender stereotypes.

Pobl

Particularly given current concerns about misinformation, students, pupils, teachers, and support staff should be able to safely access expert help in finding a range of quality, up-to-date LGBTQ+ representations and information. Libraries provide pupils and students with spaces and resources outside of formal classrooms and reading lists and they do so via staff trained to support self-led information seeking. We recommend that the Welsh Government encourages schools, colleges and universities to value and develop these services.

Library and information profession in Wales

[There should be] training on the introduction and oversight of specific LGBTQ+ safeguarding and awareness measures in the public health and social care services, such as deployment of independent LGBTQ+ Guardian roles, and for all private health and social care providers, including counsellors and psychotherapists and all those who offer pastoral and similar such emotional, spiritual and psychological well-being services, to have access to this training and as a requirement for their ongoing registration [...].

Individual response

It isn't clear here if the training being described here would be separate from/in addition to the current "Treat Me Fairly" statutory training for NHS staff.

Public Health Wales

Further work on positive role models and imagery was key to this, as was advocacy:

In relation to all sectors, it would be positive to see a greater move towards LGBTQ+-positive images and language — this has started but needs to continue.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB

We also encourage the Welsh Government to work with the WCVA to promote LGBTQ+ role models and champions from across the third sector, including as many sectors as possible, not just from the world of culture and sports.

Shelter Cymru

Initiatives such as an advocacy service could be shared, as no one organisation may be able to commit to it, but it would be very useful to access when needed.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB

5.5 Consistency

Consistency was frequently raised as a barrier to the success of the Action Plan, particularly concerning training, education, and data collection:

There is a lack of leadership from [Welsh Government] in terms of any training to ensure consistency across local authorities. This would need to be centralised, rather than falling on [local authority] equality officers. [There] needs [to be a] national approach.

Denbighshire County Council

Fel sy'n cael ei grybwyll yn y Cynllun Gweithredu mae'n bwysig sicrhau cysondeb deilliant ar draws y wlad. Er enghraifft, mae'r nod o sicrhau diogelwch yn bwysig gan fod nifer o unigolion LHDTG+ yn teimlo'n fregus mewn cymdeithas, ond credwn fod hyn yn benodol bwysig mewn ardaloedd fel Gwynedd gan fod y gymuned yn debygol o fod yn fwy gwasgaredig nac y byddai, e.e. yng Nghaerdydd. Bydd felly angen mwy o warchodaeth yn erbyn aflonyddu ac ati a rhaid sicrhau cefnogaeth addas ym mhob ardal.

As mentioned in the Action Plan, it is important to ensure consistency of [outcomes] across the country. For example, the aim of ensuring safety is important as many LGB+ individuals feel vulnerable in society, but we believe this is particularly important in areas such as Gwynedd, as the community is likely to be more dispersed than the in Cardiff. There will, therefore, be a need for greater protection against harassment etc., and appropriate support must be ensured in each area.

Cyngor Gwynedd, translated from original

5.6 Resistance

Many respondents cited the broader public perceptions and stigma faced by LGBTQ+ people as a potential barrier to engagement with the Action Plan. This included explicit and implicit resistance to the Action Plan from individuals and organisations. Some highlighted recent political and media controversies, including towards trans people, as evidence that there is considerable resistance to certain aspects of the Action Plan. From these perspectives, resistance towards LGBTQ+ people and the Action Plan itself could shape or restrict institutional responses:

This is an area of public policy that is the subject of national and international debate. Sometimes, public debate about balancing the sex-based rights of women and girls and the rights of trans people can be divisive; it can also be threatening, hurtful and sometimes dangerous for individuals who campaign on the issue. This can serve to deter public bodies and governments alike from developing policies and implementing them. Legal challenges can also significantly delay the implementation of new policies and guidance in this area [...]. A further key challenge that may prevent the aims and actions being achieved is the attitudes and beliefs that some in the wider community may have surrounding the LGBTQ+ community. Not everyone is supportive of the LGBTQ+ community, and although the Action Plan may educate some individuals and provide those who are LGBTQ+ with further support, it will not prevent them from receiving hate from certain individuals. To mitigate [...] this risk, human rights need to be at the heart of this document, and Welsh Government needs to be bold in standing up for the human rights of all, particularly people with LGBTQ+ identities (whose rights are often threatened).

Children's Commissioner for Wales

The Action Plan may need to better consider the gender-critical voice and challenges that are raised. Some groups are very vocal and guidance on addressing this is needed.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Given recent campaigns, it is inevitable that an attempt will be made to position improvements for trans people as antithetical to rights for women. This has not been addressed at all in the [Action] Plan, but it is vital for [Welsh Government] to address the question and develop a fully considered way forward to avoid the good work proposed in the [Action] Plan from being derailed.

Public Health Wales

A further key challenge which may impact on deliverability of the [Action] Plan is the increasing legal and political complexity, challenge, and sensitivities around consulting and engaging with all relevant stakeholders associated with this agenda (which we understand now [include] gender-critical organisations).

Welsh Local Government Association

6 Intersectionality

Respondents were then asked for their views on whether the Action Plan recognises the intersection of LGBTQ+ with other protected characteristics. These include race, religion/belief, disability, age, sex, and marriage and civil partnerships.⁷

6.1 Alignment with Other Strategic Equality Plans

It was frequently raised in responses that the LGBTQ+ Action Plan should be approached in parallel with other relevant strategic Action Plans to ensure meaningful intersectionality. These would include the Race Action Plan for Wales, the Nation of Sanctuary Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan, and the Welsh Action on Disability. This might require joint monitoring and timescales:

[There should be] clear alignment with other strategic equality programmes and Action Plans to ensure [that] systematic and joined-up delivery approaches are deployed in recognition of intersectionality and cross-cutting and interrelated equality priorities.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Subsequently, we are not sure intersectionality has been adequately situated in the Action Plan, since there is no substantive engagement with how homophobia, biphobia and transphobia interact with sexism, racism or ableism, for example.

Chwarae Teg

It would be advisable that both the LGBTQ+ Action Plan and National VAWDASV Strategy and Delivery Plan recognise the interaction of VAWDASV with 'so-called conversion practices', including the rape and sexual assault of lesbians, forced marriage as a mechanism of controlling sexuality, and the use of coercion and control by abusers related to someone's sexuality or gender identity.

Welsh Women's Aid

We welcome the acknowledgement that this Action Plan forms part of a wider approach to strengthen equality and human rights protections, and it should be read alongside the Strategic Equality Plan, Race Equality Action Plan, Framework for Action on Disability, and Gender Equality Plan in order to meet the needs of people with multiple protected characteristics.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

⁷ Do you feel the LGBTQ+ Action Plan adequately covers the intersection of LGBTQ+ with other protected characteristics such as race, religion/belief, disability, age, sex, and marriage and civil partnership? If not, how can we improve this?

There is also the challenge of ensuring that the various Welsh Government equality Action Plans complement each other where possible (for instance, on data collection and analysis, [potential] training, etc.) and do not duplicate or, worse, contradict each other. The possibility of fatigue and disengagement, should too many equality initiatives be perceived to be introduced close together (requiring additional work from public services or the private sector), should also be considered.

ColegauCymru

6.2 Race

Responses highlighted both specific action points which acknowledge the experiences of people of colour who identify as LGBTQ+ as well as how to more broadly integrate considerations of race and ethnicity across the Action Plan. Some felt that further consideration should be given to the proposed Race Disparity Unit and the Equality Data and Evidence Unit and how they could support the delivery and analysis of the Action Plan. This should be reflected not only in action points on safety and data collection but also throughout the Action Plan. For example, action point 56 should specify what it means by ‘diversity data’, and should (again) imply data analysis and use (not just collection).

There was concern from some respondents that the Action Plan does not sufficiently acknowledge the specific safety concerns for LGBTQ+ Black, Asian and minority ethnic people. They felt that the Action Plan could go further in recognising and addressing negative and disproportionate experiences in interactions with the police and the criminal justice system more widely. From these perspectives, responses that sought to co-construct solutions with relevant organisations only went a certain way to addressing this. Some felt that funding should be prioritised towards social spaces, community groups, and safer transport at nighttime:

I feel that the policing section of the [Action] Plan is downright insulting. There is an implication that LGBTQ people of colour do not have reason to distrust the police outside of their feelings. There is no recognition that Welsh police have an issue with institutional racism and queerphobia. In order to tackle a problem, you must name it.

Individual response

6.3 Sex

As previously discussed, there was a strong concern raised with regard to the impact of the Action Plan upon the sex-based rights of women, girls and lesbians based on the premise that the rights of cis-women and trans women were incompatible. Some were dissatisfied with the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment in this regard.

6.4 Faith

Responses called for a disaggregation of religions and beliefs under action points which reference 'faith', and for a more nuanced approach to be taken. This should consider the existing relationship between church spaces and LGBTQ+ groups, particularly in rural areas, and reinforce that religion and LGBTQ+ rights are not necessarily in conflict. Some were concerned about the lack of consideration of faith-based sex segregation, and that the approach assumes religious opposition to the Action Plan, leading to a naive approach:

In the 'easy-read' document, we suggest sensitively using additional symbols (e.g. Star of David, Holy Koran) denoting faith to the drawing of a Christian church currently included.

Welsh Gender Team (Cardiff)

6.5 Age

As previously addressed in this report, organisations highlighted the need for a full-life approach to any specific policy relating to the Action Plan. Alignment with Age Friendly Wales, as well as other Strategic Equality Plans, is key to recognising the experiences of older LGBTQ+ people, many of whom have lived through the criminalisation of whom they are, and have experienced significant stigma, discrimination and (potentially) trauma.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales supported the recommendations of the IEP which recommended a new code of practice under the Social Services and Well-being Act, which specifically examines the needs of older LGBTQ+ people.

Examples of pre-existing research and resources in this area were also highlighted, such as 'Care Under the Rainbow', Trans Ageing and Care research, and the Diversity Trust. Research highlighted that staff often are completely unaware that they have LGBTQ+ residents and staff within their homes or conflate equality with 'treating everybody the same'. Collecting data on service use and users' care and support needs to show that different minority groups have different needs in later life, depending on their life histories and social circumstances, and that 'treating everybody the same' risks sustaining inequalities (rather than tackling these):

Age Connects Morgannwg believes there need to be more actions to support older people. Whilst the proposed actions will have an impact on today's older people, there is a greater focus on subsequent generations. Today's older people have lived through times of extreme discrimination and criminalisation of who they are. This sensitivity must be recognised and respected.

Age Connects Morgannwg

There's a catch-22 situation when it comes to identifying and recording LGBTQ+ identities. Particularly in the older members of that population, there is still a residual fear of identifying themselves to authorities, particularly in health or the police.

Rustic Rainbow

The specific needs of young people were also raised by many responses, some of which are addressed in the 'Education' section. However, to fully address the needs of LGBTQ+ youth, particularly regarding mental health, actions across the Action Plan should be strengthened:

When referring specifically to the youth work sector (action 19), whilst the voluntary sector is mentioned here, local authorities (who have the statutory duty for the participation, coordination and provision of youth work and youth support services) are not. This is an omission which needs correcting.

Wales Principal Youth Officers' Group (PYOG)

6.6 Disability

Responses from third sector organisations reinforced the need for further consultation with stakeholder groups in this area. This should not only recognise that 'disability' in itself is not singular but also centre the experiences of individuals who live with different disabilities which come with different support needs.

Most significantly, broadening the focus of the Action Plan to include social care in addition to health is paramount to addressing the needs of people living with disabilities. This plays into the specific stigma and discrimination experienced by some individuals with learning disabilities in particular:

The sector often acts reactively, treating LGBTQ+ issues as 'problems' that need addressing from a safeguarding perspective. This ignores the disabled person's rights to receive correct information and to have space for discovery and decide how they want to live their lives.

Supported Loving Network Wales

On education, some respondents emphasised the need to ensure that special schools are not left out of these changes, citing that it is often even more difficult for children with learning disabilities than for other children to access reliable and affirmative information. For LGBTQ+ people with a learning disability to be fully informed, all guidance in relation to the Action Plan must be made accessible/easy to read in English and Welsh, and funding should be in place to support this:

We strongly support Welsh Government's plans to make RSE education in schools more LGBTQ+-inclusive, but would like to emphasise 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.

Learning Disability Wales

Amongst the many challenges our sector faces, empowering individuals, families and staff to support heteronormative relationships is already a struggle. We must support LGBTQ+ individuals better. To do this requires a challenge to the view that people with a learning disability are not sexual, and could never be part of the LGBTQ+ community because they lack understanding/capacity.

Mencap

6.7 Socioeconomic Disadvantage

Many responses highlighted the need to consider socioeconomic disadvantage as a feature of an intersectional approach. Recognition of compounding disadvantage (from bullying experiences in school to workplace discrimination alongside health inequalities) is likely to entrench socioeconomic disadvantage.

Digital inequality was frequently cited as a concern in this area. Whilst online training and guidance are useful, there should be sufficient space and funding for other modes of delivery. Digital exclusion is particularly significant for older and more rural communities, which further compounds other inequalities raised in the responses regarding age and regions. Younger people without access to internet devices might be limited in their ability to find and join support groups or seek information and guidance. Therefore, there must be not only a focus on both online resources and support, but also strong systems in place in health, social care, and educational settings to support all LGBTQ+ people:

I'd add something about digital inclusion, as not all LGBTQ+ people are online and in rural areas/in lockdown, online has been the only feasible way of offering support.

Rustic Rainbow

7 Welsh Language

Respondents were then asked for their views on the impact of the Action Plan upon the Welsh language.⁸

7.1 Welsh Service Provision

The predominant concern surrounding the Welsh language was ensuring bilingual provision of services across Wales:

Un o elfennau hanfodol gwasanaethau iechyd meddwl yw'r cyfathrebu rhwng unigolion, ac un o elfennau sylfaenol cyfathrebu yw iaith. Os nad yw gwasanaethau iechyd meddwl ar gael yn y Gymraeg i bobl LHDTC+ mae'n bryder mawr gennym nad yw pobl yn derbyn y gefnogaeth sy'n addas iddynt.

One of the essential elements of mental health services is the communication between individuals, and one of the fundamental elements of communication is language. If mental health services are not available in Welsh for LGBTQ+ people we are very concerned that people are not getting the right support.

Welsh Language Commissioner, translated from original

The phrase "Welsh medium" appears just once in the document, despite the fact that almost every action, and certainly every action that involves direct (whether one-way or two-way) communication with LGBTQ+ people, must support bilingual communication. This is especially the case with regard to health and social care.

Royal College of Nurses

7.2 Support Groups: Partnerships and Funding

One way of supporting the Welsh language would be to build partnerships with existing Welsh language organisations and stakeholders. Additionally, some support resourcing for LGBTQ+ groups to support bilingualism for their members:

⁸ 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?

We recognise that there may be different challenges for LGBTQ+ people in our more rural, Welsh-speaking communities, but there is also an opportunity through key organisations and individuals to challenge some of those very local perceptions and challenges.

Carmarthenshire County Council

Commissioning of services or organisations that receive funding from Welsh Government should include a requirement to deliver inclusive services through the medium of Welsh to ensure there is advocacy and support available for Welsh-speaking LGBTQ+ people and better resourcing of LGBTQ+ groups to encourage and promote bilingual services.

Individual response

7.3 Welsh Language and LGBTQ+ Terminology

Since language and identity are crucial for both LGBTQ+ and Welsh-speaking communities, providing a clear glossary of terms in the Action Plan and explicitly stating that training will be made available in Welsh are particularly important for schools and the curriculum in Welsh-medium settings:

Rydym yn ymwybodol bod ansicrwydd ynghylch y termau sy'n addas i'w defnyddio yn y Gymraeg ym maes LHDTG+ ac mae'r cwestiwn hwn ynddo'i hun yn tanlinellu'r ansicrwydd hwnnw yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg. Hoffem awgrymu felly y dylid sefydlu grŵp terminoleg a fyddai'n cytuno ar dermau sy'n ymwneud â hunaniaeth LHDTG+ yn y Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg ar gyfer Cymru ac sy'n ymgysylltu â chynrychiolwyr o'r maes ar lun y grŵp sydd wedi'i sefydlu i drafod cydraddoldeb hiliol.

We are aware that there is uncertainty about the terms suitable for use in Welsh in the LGBTQ+ field, and this question in itself underlines that uncertainty in both Welsh and English. We would therefore like [to] suggest that a terminology group be established which would agree terms for Wales relating to LGBTQ+ identity in Welsh and English and engage with representatives from the field in a similar way to the group set up to discuss race equality.

Welsh Language Commissioner, translated from original

I think if [...] LGBTQ+ support groups were formed, it would also give children and young people a chance to practise their Welsh as well as make new LGBTQ+ friends.

Individual response

It will be necessary to involve Welsh language networks (press, the Commissioner's office, Cymdeithas Yr Iaith, and so on) to ensure that they publicise all messages in relation to any actions arising from this work. Early engagement is strongly advised here.

PRISM

8 The Term LGBTQ+

Respondents were finally asked for their views on the language used within the Action Plan, including the initialism 'LGBTQ+'.⁹

8.1 Terminology throughout the Action Plan

Similar to what has been previously mentioned, there is a call for more clear definitions of terms included in the initialism. Consideration of the development of terms in Welsh was also raised in the analysis and it was suggested that a terminology group be established:

Many of the terms used in this acronym have no meaningful definition. What does 'queer' mean in this context? What are these other identities? You cannot support people unless you have a clear idea of who they are.

Individual response

We are aware that there is uncertainty about the terms suitable for use in Welsh in the LGBTQ+ field, and this question in itself underlines that uncertainty in both Welsh and English. We would therefore like [to] suggest that a terminology group be established which would agree terms for Wales relating to LGBTQ+ identity in Welsh and English and engage with representatives from the field in a similar way to the group set up to discuss race equality.

Welsh Language Commissioner

We believe that the terminology used in the [Action] Plan should be guided by expert opinion and the lived experience of individuals and communities. We acknowledge that this terminology may change over time. We want the Welsh language to thrive and we see no negative impact from the implementation of the [Action] Plan on the Welsh language. We are also supportive of work that is complementary and aligns to that of the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Sport Wales

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

8.2 LGBTQ+ is Inclusive

Many groups welcome the use of the 'LGBTQ+' initialism and feel that it is sufficiently inclusive, with '+' allowing for changing and evolving terminology. Many in this sense felt that it was not appropriate to choose a 'definitive' initialism and that the initialism, like policy, should be constantly reviewed and consulted upon as society evolves. Some felt that the initialism is sufficient but that other identities incorporated under '+' should be specifically referenced and defined when it is explained:

This term appears to be the most appropriate to capture the diversity of the majority of the community; it seems that the + is now generally understood to cover everything else. With this in mind, referring to 'queer/questioning people' as one in this way gives the impression that they are interchangeable, when in fact they are very different identities. 'Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning people' might be more appropriate if the Q is to be used for both, and not covered by the +.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB

'LGBTQ+' is fine as an acronym - providing additional terms to include non-binary, asexual, intersex are also specified in more detailed documents.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU2) Coalition against Conversion Therapy

Other responses suggested the use of 'gender, sexual and relationship diversity' (GSRD) as a possible alternative. From these perspectives, 'GSRD' highlighted diversity without necessarily excluding certain people:

'GSRD' is useful. Even though this consultation, and most people, uses the term 'LGBTQ+', I favour [...] the position outlined in Meg-John Barker's BACP Good Practice resource, which promotes the more helpful but less known term 'gender, sexual and relationship diversity' (GSRD).

Calan Domestic Violence Shelter

8.3 Intersex and Asexual Exclusion

Many were concerned about the exclusion of intersex and asexual identities from the initialism and from the Action Plan more generally:

We recognise that 'LGBTQ+' is the most appropriate term in current wide usage. However, we feel that this acronym misses intersex people and asexual and aromantic people, who should be included, as referenced previously in this response. In this case, 'LGBTQIA+' is the wider acronym being used by organisations that include intersex, asexual and aromantic people in their work.

Newport Council

We found it telling that “I” wasn’t included in the acronym, as this was reflected in the fact that intersex people were not referenced anywhere in the [Action] Plan. The term itself and the variations in human biology that together fall under the umbrella of “intersex” are not widely understood, so it would be good to see more of a focus on further research and education both for health professionals and the general public.

Public Health Wales

8.4 Use of the Term ‘Queer’

Many were uncomfortable with the inclusion of the term ‘queer’. Many older individuals view the term as an offensive slur and, thus, would not like it included in the initialism.

Conversely, many individuals positively identify as queer and recognise it as an umbrella term which allows for evolving and changing identities and removes the need for giving specific details of an individual’s personal life in settings in which this is not appropriate. In this sense, many who identified with the term did not always use it exclusively, but often alongside other identities:

It may be worth noting that many people, both LGBT+ and heterosexual, are uncomfortable with the word ‘queer’, as until relatively recently it was used almost exclusively as a slur.

National Secular Society

I’m old enough to still view the word ‘queer’ as an insult. That said, it’s now an inclusive umbrella term WITHIN the community. Hearing heterosexual people use it is still deeply problematic, as it’s still a common slur. On balance, I prefer ‘LGBT+’, as it already encompasses all identities under the ‘+’ sign.

Individual response

Appendix 1: Consultation Questions

Question 1

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

Question 2

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

Question 3

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

Question 4

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

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?

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?

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?

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.

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.

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:

Appendix 2: List of Organisational Respondents

Together, 151 stakeholders kindly took the time to respond to the consultation. These included a diverse range of organisations, including those in the third, private and public sectors:

Local Government

Prif Swyddog Ieuenctid Cyngor Sir Ynys Mon
Bridgend County Borough Council
Pembrokeshire County Council
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Denbighshire County Council
Penarth Town Council
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Rhondda Cynon Taf Council
Newport City Council
Vale of Glamorgan Council
Flintshire County Council
Ceredigion County Council
Swansea Council
Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)
Carmarthenshire County Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Newport Council
Gwynedd Council

UHBs or NHS-Affiliated Groups

Hywel Dda Health Board
Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB
Velindre University NHS Trust
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
Psychology and Psychological Therapy Service within Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
Swansea Bay University Health Board
NHS Welsh Gender Team (Cardiff)
Public Health Wales (PHW)
Social Care Wales
Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)
Board of Community Health Councils in Wales

Governmental Organisations

Children's Commissioner for Wales
Welsh Language Commissioner
Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Estyn
Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)
Sport Wales
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

Professional Associations

Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE) Wales Cymru
Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB)
Nursing and Midwifery Council
Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists in Wales
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Royal College of Psychiatrists Wales
British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
British Association of Social Workers Cymru
Royal College of Physicians Cymru Wales
Royal College of Nursing Wales
Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru

Third Sector Organisations

National Secular Society
Safespace Bridgend
Trans Aid Cymru
United Welsh
Klinefelter's Syndrome Association UK
British Red Cross
Victim Support
Fast Track Cardiff & Vale
Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
Memorandum of Understanding (MoU2) Coalition against Conversion Therapy
Pobl
Wales Principal Youth Officers' Group (PYOG)
Psychologists for Social Change (PSC) Cymru
Equality and Human Rights Coalition (EHRCo)
Llamau
NSPCC Cymru
Equality and Human Rights Commission
Platform
Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)
ColegauCymru
Learning Disability Wales

Age Cymru
GoodVibes @YMCA Swansea
End Youth Homelessness Cymru
Samaritans Cymru
National Trust Cymru
Citizens Advice in Wales
All Wales People First
Mencap Cymru
Supported Loving Cymru Network
Shelter Cymru
Barnardo's Cymru
Library and information profession in Wales
Tai Pawb
Wales Safer Communities Network
Children in Wales
National AIDS Trust (NAT)
National Library of Wales
Age Connects Morgannwg
Alzheimer's Society Cymru
Terrence Higgins Trust
Carers Wales

Unions

National Education Union Cymru
NASUWT Cymru – The Teachers' Union
UNISON
University and College Union (UCU Wales)
Unite Wales
Wales TUC

LGBTQ+ Groups

Glitter
LGBA Cymru
Queer Writers Cardiff
Rustic Rainbow
LGB Alliance
Viva LGBTQ+
Paned o Gê
Pride Cymru
The Queer Emporium
Unique Transgender Network
PRISM
Principality Building Society's LGBT+ & Friends Network
Members of Viva LGBTQ+ youth group
Calon, Swansea Bay UHB's LGBT+ & Allies Staff Network

Stonewall Cymru
Informal LGBTQ+ student and staff group at Cardiff University School of Medicine
Diverse Cymru
Bi Cymru, Bi Swansea, and Bi Cardiff

Women's Groups

Irish Women's Foundation
Ludlow Women's Rights Group
Merched Cymru
Fair Play For Women
Swansea and Gower ReSisters
Welsh Women's Aid
Welsh Women Speak Out
Calan DVS
Chwarae Teg

Religious Groups

Strong Support
Emmaus Christian Fellowship
Highfields Church
St Mary Magdalene's
New Hope Community Church Swansea
Family Education Trust
Evangelical Alliance Wales
The Christian Institute
Christian Doctrine
Interfaith Council for Wales
Christian Concern
Catholic Education Service

Political Affiliations

Member of Parliament
Lesbian Labour
Plaid Ifanc
Delyn CLP
Labour Women's Declaration Working Group
Local Councillor
Cyngorydd
Local Councillors

Other

SpokesPerson CIC
Capital Law

Academic at Bristol University
Cardiff University
Coedcae School
Safe Schools Alliance

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