EQUALITY NETWORK AND SCOTTISH TRANSGENDER ALLIANCE

MANIFESTO

EQUALITY at HOLYROOD

How the Scottish Government and Parliament can deliver equality for Scotland's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Scottish Parliament Session 2011-2016

The Equality Network and Scottish Transgender Alliance work for equality on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity / gender reassignment in Scotland.

There has been a huge improvement in the legal situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people over the past decade, and a big improvement in public attitudes. But we are still discriminated against by the law in ways other minorities are not. And a minority of the public still hold prejudiced views about us, leading to real discrimination, and in too many cases, to bullying, harassment and hate crime.

This document sets out how these issues can be addressed, to create a genuinely inclusive Scotland at ease with diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity / gender reassignment.

THE KEY LGBT EQUALITY ISSUES ARE...

LEGISLATION

Equal Marriage

LGBT people are the only group who are banned from marrying. The introduction of civil partnership was a very important step forward, but it is not equality. The law should be changed to make the same choices, marriage or civil partnership, available to couples regardless of their gender, and to remove the requirement for transsexual people to divorce before a full gender recognition certificate can be issued.

NON-LEGISLATIVE POLICY

Schools

Homophobic and transphobic bullying is common in Scotland's schools. Isolation and lack of support for young people who may be LGBT can have a devastating effect on their self-esteem and development. The new Equality Act 2010 requires education authorities to advance equality for LGBT pupils and to eliminate discrimination and harassment. The challenge now is the effective implementation of the Act, through leadership from national and local authorities and head teachers, and guidance and support for teachers.

Hate Crime

Transphobic and homophobic hate crime remain common. Two-thirds of LGBT people have experienced verbal attacks and one-third physical violence. Scotland's new hate crime legislation provides a framework to address this. National leadership is needed against these and other hate crimes, as well as continued work by police and communities to encourage reporting.

Public Prejudice

There has been a big change in public attitudes towards LGBT people in the past two decades. But the 2006 Social Attitudes Survey revealed that 50% of Scots still hold negative social views about transgender people, and 33% about LGB people. The 2008 Scottish Government publication "Challenging Prejudice" is a good blueprint for work to encourage understanding and discourage prejudice, but it needs to be effectively implemented. For example, there is still a lack of public leadership by senior politicians in support of LGBT equality.

NON-LEGISLATIVE POLICY continued

Equality Act 2010

The new Equality Act will require public bodies to promote equality by setting equality objectives and assessing policies for impact on different groups, including on grounds of gender reassignment and sexual orientation. The law will require public bodies to engage with LGBT groups to do this. Leadership and oversight from the Scottish Government and Parliament will be needed to ensure that this happens, and support is also needed to help LGBT communities develop effective engagement around the country.

TRANSGENDER SPECIFIC

NHS Gender Reassignment Services

Providing assessment, hormones and surgeries to help people undergo gender reassignment costs NHS Scotland very little and has a massive positive impact on people's lives. There are major inconsistencies in access to NHS gender reassignment services in different parts of Scotland. This results in extreme distress and even self-harm and suicide for those unable to access the healthcare they need.

Funding of NHS gender reassignment services is also threatened by public prejudice and ignorance. Scottish Government and Parliament leadership is needed to protect NHS gender reassignment services in Scotland and to improve equality of access across Scotland.

Protecting All Transgender People

The UK Equality Act covers gender reassignment, but not gender identity. It protects transsexual people but not other transgender people. Intersex people, people who do not identify clearly as male or female, and people whose appearance is not consistently masculine or feminine need protection from gender identity discrimination and harassment.

Scotland's new hate crime legislation is an international example of best practice because it protects all transgender people. Further leadership from the Scottish Government and Parliament is needed to encourage public bodies in Scotland to promote equality on grounds of gender identity as well as the narrower ground of gender reassignment.

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Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights in Scotland

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This document is available in large print, on our website at **www.equality-network.org**.

If you need it in large print on paper, or in any other format or language, please contact the Equality Network by phone on **0131 467 6039**, or by emailing **en@equality-network.org**.

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