

# SCOTTISH LGBTQIA+ MANIFESTO 2026- 2031



Equality  
Network



Scottish  
Trans



LGBT  
Health and  
Wellbeing



# CONTENTS

**FOREWORD** 3

**LEADING FOR EVERYONE** 4

**1. HEALTHIER SOCIETY** 5

1.1 - Fix our broken trans healthcare system 6

1.2 - Improve health outcomes for LGBTQIA+ people through a population health approach 7

1.3 - Ensure healthcare services and staff can meet the needs of LGBTQIA+ people 8

1.4 - Improve mental health outcomes for LGBTQIA+ people 9

**2. EQUAL SOCIETY** 10

2.1 - Incorporate international human rights treaties into Scots Law 11

2.2 - End conversion practices in Scotland 13

2.3 - Adopt the most inclusive and human rights compliant approach to policy and practice following the UK Supreme Court judgment in *For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers* 15

2.4 - Ensure all rights within the UNCRC are realised for children and young people in Scotland 16

2.5 - Ensure a human rights focus within Scotland's equality in sport work at Scottish, UK and international levels 17

2.6 - Implement the Council of Europe Recommendation 'Equal Rights for Intersex Persons' 18

**3. FAIRER SOCIETY** 19

3.1 - Consider LGBTQIA+ people as a key group of consideration in all policy and developing practice related to living standards and to improving life in Scotland 20

3.2 - Create and support the development of affordable social housing across Scotland, including more accessible housing 21

3.3 - Ensure that asylum seekers and refugees have fair access to employment and travel 22

## **4. SHARED SOCIETY** **23**

- 4.1** - Create a national scheme to support local authorities working on social isolation and community cohesion 24
- 4.2** - Ensure LGBTQIA+ people seeking asylum and refugees have equitable access to appropriate services 25
- 4.3** - Widen access and participation of LGBTQIA+ people in sport by reducing barriers 26
- 4.4** - Ensure LGBTQIA+ older people receive dignified, informed and affirming care across all health and social care settings 27
- 4.5** - Recognise and respond to the experiences and needs of LGBTQIA+ neurodivergent people, including through legislation 28

## **Resources and further reading** **29**

## **End Notes References** **30**

# FOREWORD

This election falls at a time of great uncertainty for LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual) people and our human rights. For the last few years, we have been forced to adjust to a rapidly changing world. Today, rather than working together in the hope of positive change, we instead must pour our collective energies into trying to hold on to what we have already achieved and into looking after one another in the face of significant setbacks to our equalities and rights.

We believe that the next Scottish Parliament is an opportunity for a reset: for a future Scottish Government, and for MSPs across parties, to show leadership and make changes that will improve the lives of everyone in Scotland, including those of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Everyone in Scotland, regardless of who they are, who they love, their background or identity, deserves to have their human rights realised and to be treated with dignity. As a country, we are at a crossroads. We need strong political leadership on the importance of human rights and our shared values of equality, dignity and respect to maintain trust in public institutions, to combat dehumanising narratives and to tackle concerted and strategic anti-equality and anti-human rights movements.

We want to see a Scotland in which LGBTQIA+ people are happier, healthier, treated equally, valued as a part of our shared society, and where our rights are upheld.

We want to trust that people in positions of power are willing to make the bold choices needed to address the inequality, discrimination and exclusion that far too many continue to face. We want to trust that they will take concrete action to make people's lives better, not worse. We want to see communities who face discrimination and inequality meaningfully included in decision-making about what those actions should be.

In the sections below, our manifesto sets out exactly what the next Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament can do to improve LGBTQIA+ people's lives in Scotland.



**Dr Rebecca  
Don Kennedy**  
  
**Chief Executive  
Equality  
Network**



**Vic Valentine**  
  
**Manager  
Scottish  
Trans**



**Mark Kelvin**  
  
**Chief  
Executive  
LGBT Health  
& Wellbeing**



**Hugh  
Torrance**  
  
**Executive  
Director  
LEAP Sports  
Scotland**



**Dr Mhairi  
Crawford**  
  
**Chief  
Executive  
LGBT Youth  
Scotland**

# LEADING FOR EVERYONE

Since the last election, we have experienced a rising and toxic anti-LGBTQIA+ climate in Scotland. This is particularly in relation to trans and non-binary people. As a community, we continue to bear the brunt of an increasingly polarised world where our existence is repeatedly called into question, and our identities are used for political point scoring. This has been propelled by the media, harnessed by politicians, and perpetuated in public life.

Misinformation and disinformation leave LGBTQIA+ people exposed to increasing levels of discrimination, hate crime and other rights violations. Coupled with the Covid-19 pandemic, Cost-of-Living crisis and UK Supreme Court judgment on the Equality Act 2010, our rights are at serious risk of regression.

The responsibility for tackling these challenges sits with all of our elected representatives. MSPs from every party, representing every constituency and every region, will have LGBTQIA+ constituents - and indeed, constituents from all of Scotland's diverse communities. While Parliament and politics should be a setting for forthright and frank debate, this should not come at the expense of the humanity of the people that find themselves at the heart of the issues.

We call on all MSPs to:

- Emphasise the importance of universal human rights and respect the fundamental dignity of all members of society, even those we disagree with or who live different lives to us

And to:

- Integrate these principles into all areas of their parliamentary, portfolio and constituency work
- Champion these values when debating and discussing policy, when voting on legislation and making public statements
- Demonstrate how it is in Scotland's best interests to ensure everyone feels invested in their own rights and the rights of others
- Ensure these principles are held even in difficult times, or when human rights are framed as contentious
- Treat all colleagues and constituents with respect, dignity and courtesy



# 1. HEALTHIER SOCIETY

***Everyone in Scotland deserves to have positive health outcomes and have their human right to health fully realised, including LGBTQIA+ people.***

***We are asking all parties to take concrete action towards removing the specific barriers to positive health outcomes that LGBTQIA+ people continue to face.***

**1.1 - Fix our broken trans healthcare system**

**1.2 - Improve health outcomes for LGBTQIA+ people through a population health approach**

**1.3 - Ensure healthcare services and staff can meet the needs of LGBTQIA+ people**

**1.4 - Improve mental health outcomes for LGBTQIA+ people**

# 1.1 Fix our broken trans healthcare system

Despite almost five years of centralised funding from the Scottish Government<sup>1</sup>, gender identity healthcare continues to be totally out of reach for a huge number of trans and non-binary people across Scotland.

The Sandyford Gender Identity Clinic sees adult patients from half of Scotland's Health Boards. It is only now seeing people (for first appointments) who joined its waiting list almost 7 years ago.<sup>2</sup> If joining the waiting list today, you can expect to wait at best (as projected), 80 years. Sandyford has the longest waiting list in the whole of the UK.<sup>3</sup>

Trans and non-binary children and young people are stuck in limbo as new services are developed. Decisions about their healthcare have been highly politicised and are not being informed by the totality of evidence from around the world.<sup>4</sup>

The UN Committee on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended in March 2025 that Scotland remove barriers to gender identity healthcare to meet its human rights obligations.<sup>5</sup>

Without significant investment, and a change in approach, huge numbers of trans and non-binary people will simply never access the healthcare they need to live happy and healthy lives.

We're calling on parties to:

- Increase the availability of gender identity healthcare by engaging with (and providing funding to) Health Boards that do not currently provide gender identity healthcare to start doing so, urgently
- Provide immediate short-term support for people who are currently impacted by long waiting lists on a harm reduction basis, and to do this by funding Health Boards to enable people to access blood monitoring locally
- Ensure that no child or young person goes without the healthcare they need
- Show leadership on the importance of evidence-based decisions on the development of fit for purpose Children and Young People's services and the availability of treatment

# 1.2 Improve health outcomes for LGBTQIA+ people through a population health approach

LGBTQIA+ people face a range of poorer health outcomes than the general population.<sup>6</sup> This includes being at higher risk of certain cancers at younger ages and of cardiovascular disease.<sup>7</sup> LGB+ women are more likely to have neurological conditions, dementia and back problems than heterosexual women.<sup>8</sup> GB+ men are more likely to have neurological conditions or kidney or liver disease than heterosexual men.<sup>9</sup> Bisexual adults face the greatest health inequalities.<sup>10</sup> Many of these poorer health outcomes can be explained by barriers to accessing healthcare and to minority stress.<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, many LGBTQIA+ people (especially trans and non-binary people) struggle to access inclusive sports groups and physical leisure facilities, further impacting health outcomes by limiting options for exercise.

We are calling on parties to:

- Work with NHS boards, including Public Health Scotland, to address LGBTQIA+ health inequalities through a population health approach
- Increase the collection of data relating to sexual orientation and gender identity, and related health outcomes, to inform evidence-based public health actions
- Ensure that NHS Health Boards recognise that LGBTQIA+ people have a right to the highest attainable standard of health, as do all people - and that they develop services that realise this right
- Commit to the actions identified in the 2022 'LGBT+ Health Needs Assessment'<sup>12</sup>
- Ask that within NHS services LBT+ women's experiences of health inequity are researched and understood - and that their needs are fully considered in wider women's health policy development and practice
- Work with local authorities and LGBTQIA+ sports groups across Scotland to ensure access to physical activity including ensuring equal and safe access to physical activity for LGBTQIA+ children and young people

# 1.3 Ensure healthcare services and staff can meet the needs of LGBTQIA+ people

Many LGBTQIA+ people encounter a lack of understanding from healthcare professionals about their needs when accessing NHS care. This can lead to delays to receiving appropriate healthcare, distractions from the issue which a person is seeking support for, and feelings of exclusion and alienation from services. Poor experiences are often further exacerbated for those who are multiply marginalised.

Barriers exist across the NHS, from GP practices to specialist services. For example, only 40% of trans and non-binary people rated the care provided by their GP as 'excellent or good'<sup>13</sup>, compared to 69% of the general population.<sup>14</sup>

In reproductive and fertility services there remains the assumption that those using them will be cisgender and/or heterosexual. This can lead to potential negative health impacts on both individuals receiving care and in some cases on their children. For some this leads to people disengaging from the prospect of parenting journeys altogether.<sup>15</sup>

It is the case that LGB+ women and trans men and non-binary people currently avoid necessary screening, such as cervical screening, placing them at greater risk of cancer.<sup>16</sup>

It is crucial that all NHS services expect that LGBTQIA+ patients will use them, and that NHS staff understand the needs of this community.

We are calling on parties to:

- Work with NHS Health Boards to identify and resolve barriers faced by LGBTQIA+ people when accessing healthcare
- Work with NHS Health Boards to ensure that all NHS services include staff trained in the needs of LGBTQIA+ patients, and include LGBTQIA+ people (including children and young people) in service development where possible
- Continue work to ensure that reproductive health services are accessible and welcoming to LGBTQIA+ people
- Fund third sector and community groups that support LGBTQIA+ people's health and wellbeing

# 1.4 Improve mental health outcomes for LGBTQIA+ people

As a marginalised group, many LGBTQIA+ people experience minority stress and other mental health issues because of how we are treated both as individuals and as a community.<sup>17</sup> This is especially prevalent for trans and non-binary people in the wake of the current demonisation of trans people in the media and by some politicians. This can lead to intense feelings of loneliness and social isolation as we feel detached and rejected from our wider communities.

LGBTQIA+ people struggle to access sparsely available mainstream mental health services on the NHS, with waiting lists often being prohibitive. When they do access these mainstream services, they often receive inadequate care from services who do not understand the needs and experiences of the community.

Many LGBTQIA+ people use specialist services such as LGBT Health and Wellbeing's support and counselling services. However, limited funding reduces the capacities of these services. In-person support is also often limited to the central belt. Those who live in rural areas are less likely to be able to access specialist services and subsequently face increased risk of isolation.<sup>18</sup>

LGBTQIA+ people should be able to access high-quality, appropriate, and timely mental health services across Scotland.

We are calling on parties to:

- Provide funding for specialist support services for LGBTQIA+ people (including children and young people)
- Work with NHS Health Boards to ensure that mental health services are welcoming and inclusive of LGBTQIA+ people, and that staff have training on risk factors and how best to support our community
- Work with NHS Education for Scotland and LGBTQIA+ third sector organisations to develop resources around how to seek mental health support, about poor mental health prevention services, and services that promote mental wellbeing for LGBTQIA+ people
- Include LGBTQIA+ people (especially older people and those living rurally) as a targeted group in work developing to tackle loneliness and social isolation



## 2. EQUAL SOCIETY

**All people in Scotland deserve to be treated with dignity, fairness and to have their human rights realised, regardless of their identity or lived experience.**

**We are seeking all parties to take concrete action towards respecting, protecting and fulfilling LGBTQIA+ people's rights, and removing barriers to their full realisation.**

**2.1 - Incorporate international human rights treaties into Scots Law**

**2.2 - End conversion practices in Scotland**

**2.3 - Adopt the most inclusive and human rights compliant approach to policy and practice following the UK Supreme Court judgment in *For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers***

**2.4 - Ensure all rights within the UNCRC are realised for children and young people in Scotland**

**2.5 - Ensure a human rights focus within Scotland's equality in sport work at Scottish, UK and international levels**

**2.6 - Implement the Council of Europe Recommendation 'Equal Rights for Intersex Persons'**

# 2.1 Incorporate international human rights treaties into Scots Law

LGBTQIA+ people are currently not having their economic, social and cultural human rights realised in Scotland. Systemic discrimination and under-resourced services mean that LGBTQIA+ people - particularly trans people, young people and those who are multiply marginalised - continue to face disproportionately negative impacts on their life outcomes.

Our research and recent submission to the United Nations Committee on ICESCR highlighted that LGBTQIA+ people still face barriers to secure employment, social security, safe housing, affirming healthcare, inclusive education and participation in sport.<sup>19</sup> These rights are not a luxury but are essential for us to live a life of dignity.

Currently we cannot enforce these rights or seek remedy in court where they have been breached because they have not been incorporated into Scots Law. Public bodies are also not currently required to take these rights into account when delivering services or making decisions on policy and practice that affect LGBTQIA+ people's lives.

This is why in March 2025, the UN Committee on ICESCR urged Scotland to make progress on incorporating ICESCR into domestic law<sup>20</sup> which will benefit everyone in our society.

We are calling on parties to:

- Incorporate the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) into Scots Law as far as possible within devolution in line with the UN Committee on ICESCR's Concluding Observations to the UK from 2025
- Incorporate the following treaties into Scots Law as far as possible within devolution: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- List sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex people / people with variations in sex characteristics as protected groups on the face of an incorporation Bill to ensure LGBTQIA+ people are named as rights-holders at risk

- Adopt a multi-institutional approach to access to justice to ensure that rights are accessible, justiciable and can be realised, including expanding the powers of the Scottish Human Rights Commission to investigate individual rights violations, initiate legal proceedings and take enforcement action where necessary
- Raise awareness of incorporated rights with a broad range of rights-holders and build the capacity of duty-bearers to engage with new duties under a Bill



## 2.2 End conversion practices in Scotland

Conversion practices are harmful acts which deliberately try to change, suppress or inhibit a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, or expression of sexual orientation or gender identity. They are based on the belief that it is better to be heterosexual and/or cisgender, and that other sexual orientations and gender identities are somehow flawed, wrong or 'broken' and in need of 'fixing'.

While some conduct that may be incorporated in such practices is already illegal (such as in the case of physical or sexual assault), there is not currently legislation that adequately recognises these acts as being carried out with the intent of conversion. It is important that this aggravating factor is recognised in legislation. For example, when 'corrective rape' is used in conversion practices, or when assault is carried out in a bid to convert or suppress.

Additionally, many conversion practices are not criminalised in any way and/or operate in grey areas of the law. This is why it is vital to introduce comprehensive legislation to criminalise all practices.

Importantly we recognise that we will not truly see an end to conversion practices in all forms unless a range of civil and educational measures are brought in alongside prospective legislation to aid in raising awareness within communities as to why conversion practices are deeply harmful, and how to spot risks of harm.

This year, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe passed a resolution calling on all member states to adopt comprehensive legislation on conversion practices as a public health imperative and in respect for human rights.<sup>21</sup> Both the UK and Scottish Governments have pledged to introduce legislation, but at the time of publication, there is little movement from either.

Public polling shows that 2 in 3 Scots support a ban.<sup>22</sup>

The longer we wait the longer some of the most vulnerable members of our community will be exposed to these harmful practices.

## We are calling on parties to:

- Introduce legislation to end conversion practices that:
  - covers conversion practices in relation to both sexual orientation and gender identity, and expression thereof
  - covers asexuality
  - has no loophole for supposed 'consent'
  - covers a variety of settings including domestic/ familial, health based, religious, public and private
- Ensure legislation adopts a dual approach to sanctions using both criminal and civil law measures
- Adopt a suite of non-legislative measures to increase awareness of, and build capacity against, conversion practices across society. It is important this work is developed alongside seldom heard groups and professionals such as teachers and health care professionals. This will enable recognising the signs of people at risk. These measures should also provide person-centred, trauma informed, culturally appropriate, support for survivors
- Develop age appropriate and targeted measures for young people to aid recognition of conversion practices and provide adequate support for young survivors



# 2.3 **Adopt the most inclusive and human rights compliant approach to all policy and practice following the UK Supreme Court judgment in For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers**

The Supreme Court ruling in April 2025 on the meaning of ‘sex’ in the Equality Act 2010 has seriously affected trans people’s sense of safety and belonging across all aspects of daily life. This is far from imagined. Research shows that trans people are facing significantly more discrimination, harassment and exclusion when using services and in their places of work.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the Equality Act being reserved, there is still a huge amount of power in a future Scottish Government’s hands to protect and promote the rights of trans people.

Treating trans people as the sex recorded on our original birth certificates in all circumstances causes us serious harm and distress, and places our human rights at significant risk. Treating trans people in line with who we truly are in the law, policy and practice is how to ensure that our needs are met, our rights are upheld, and we do not face discrimination and abuse.

We are calling on parties to:

- Promote the safety and wellbeing of trans people by choosing the most inclusive lawful option in all national policies and to encourage other public bodies and duty-bearers to do the same
- Conduct a human-rights based audit of all existing areas of law and policy that this judgment may affect in order to mitigate the risk of rights regression. This is in line with the Scottish Human Rights Commission’s recommendations to the Scottish Government<sup>24</sup>
- Ensure all new policies and practice following the judgment remain compliant with both domestic and international human rights obligations

# 2.4 Ensure all rights within the UNCRC are realised for children and young people in Scotland

Scotland has made significant progress through the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. This presents a real opportunity through a legal framework to ensure that these rights are taken seriously and fully implemented within our country. At a time when LGBTQIA+ rights are seeing regression, this is even more important for LGBTQIA+ young people.

In particular, LGBTQIA+ young people are noting increasing difficulties within education, including high rates of prejudice-based bullying, lack of support from teaching and support staff, challenges accessing inclusive facilities, and insufficient education about LGBTQIA+ lives and relationships.<sup>25</sup> These directly link to UNCRC Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 6 (life survival and development) and Article 28 (access to education). A whole school approach supported by LGBTQIA+ inclusion measures and the legal right to youth work provision will actively support a reduction in exclusions and raise attainment.

Young people are also particularly noting LGBTQIA+ health inequalities across all aspects of healthcare provision in contravention of Article 24 UNCRC, the highest attainable standards of health. A key driver is a broad lack of awareness and understanding around LGBTQIA+ issues which actively prevents them accessing meaningful health provision in a timely and supported manner.<sup>26</sup>

We are calling on parties to:

- Provide equitable access to formal and non-formal education for all LGBTQIA+ children and young people to support them to remain in education, including targeted measures for trans young people in Scotland
- Support the holistic development, well-being and social inclusion of LGBTQIA+ young people by enshrining a legal right to accessible and well-funded youth work
- Strengthen access to the highest standards of health for LGBTQIA+ children and young people. This includes educating and supporting practitioners in both local and national services, and ensuring an inclusive, informed and well-funded healthcare system in Scotland

## 2.5 Ensure a human rights focus within Scotland's equality in sport work at Scottish, UK and international levels

Scotland has an opportunity to lead the way in embedding human rights principles at the heart of sport. Whilst significant progress has been made in recent years, the global landscape shows that the rights of LGBTQIA+ people in sport remain under consistent pressure, from discriminatory regulations and restrictions on participation to the lack of robust international mechanisms that safeguard equality.

Although the right to sport is recognised under international human rights law<sup>27</sup>, Scotland's current equality-in-sport frameworks still operate in a separate continuum from those global rights protections, and we believe that must change.<sup>28</sup>

A clearly articulated human rights approach ensures that Scotland's equality in sport work is rooted in internationally recognised standards, and that policy decisions actively protect the dignity, inclusion and wellbeing of all participants.

Domestically, continued collaboration with partners through the National LGBTQIA+ Sports Group is essential to turning human rights commitments into meaningful practice. Reinforcing these partnerships and pushing for stronger engagement at UK and international levels will help ensure that Scotland's approach to equality in sport is coherent, credible, and capable of realising and driving real change.

We are calling on parties to:

- Take a clear position that the UK should join the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) and advocate for this at UK level
- Reaffirm Scottish Government commitment to collaborating with partners on the National LGBTQIA+ Sports Group to drive change
- Use the platform of Cardiff 2027 EuroGames to show a strong commitment from Scotland to LGBTQIA+ participation and equality in sport

## 2.6 Implement the Council of Europe Recommendation 'Equal Rights for Intersex Persons'

Currently, intersex persons / people with variations in sex characteristics still face barriers to having their human rights realised. This includes harmful, unnecessary, non-consensual medical interventions, discrimination, stigmatisation and exclusion from public life.

To combat this, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers recently adopted a 'Recommendation on Equal Rights for Intersex Persons'.<sup>29</sup> It offers a comprehensive approach to addressing the various challenges faced by intersex people / people with variations in sex characteristics and includes provisions on safeguarding bodily autonomy, ending harmful non-essential non-consensual medical practices, substantive equality and non-discrimination, access to justice, sport, education, work, health and social care, private and family life, and on hate crime.

Scotland has already implemented an inclusive definition of intersex persons / people with variations in sex characteristics in the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021, but many of the other recommendations remain to be implemented in Scotland.

We call on political parties to:

- Ensure all provisions in the Recommendation are fully implemented across all relevant policy areas and practice
- Ensure intersex people / people with variations in sex characteristics are considered in, and consulted on, all relevant legislation, policy and practice that affects their human rights





## 3. FAIRER SOCIETY

***An adequate standard of living is essential for everyone in Scotland, including LGBTQIA+ people, to thrive and positively contribute to society. This includes accessible and safe public transport.***

***We are asking all parties to take steps to remove barriers that LGBTQIA+ people still face in everyday life to good living standards.***

**3.1 - Consider LGBTQIA+ people as a key group of consideration in all policy and developing practice related to living standards and to improving life in Scotland**

**3.2 - Create and support the development of affordable social housing across Scotland, including more accessible housing**

**3.3 - Ensure that asylum seekers and refugees have fair access to employment and travel**

# 3.1 Consider LGBTQIA+ people as a key group of consideration in all policy and developing practice related to living standards and to improving life in Scotland

Like all people in Scotland, our experiences in society are broader than those linked specifically to our identity. As a community, we have the same needs as the general population when it comes to having adequate living standards, including safe and affordable housing, fair treatment at work, nutritious food and access to benefits if we need them. That is not a luxury, it is our human right.

It is important to recognise though that we may face additional barriers to having those needs met or face broader systemic inequalities. For example, our research shows that trans people are less likely to own their own homes or be in work, and face barriers to accessing food and benefits.<sup>30</sup>

The UN Committee on ICESCR recommended in March 2025 that Scotland develop or enhance measures to address poverty, including for LGBTI people as a group disproportionately impacted.<sup>31</sup>

Barriers such as these are often exacerbated for those with intersectional identities. For example, when there is a lack of training and understanding of cultural nuance, or the refugee and asylum system, and/ or the needs of disabled people, there can be additional minority stress, isolation and poorer living standards. Any national efforts to improve living standards must recognise the diversity of our experience and the need for targeted services and support.

We call on all parties to:

- Ensure that LGBTQIA+ people's needs are identified when developing legislation, policy and practice on housing, benefits, work, and poverty, including through an intersectional lens
- Involve LGBTQIA+ people in designing changes to meet those identified needs in legislation, policy and practice
- Include better demographic data monitoring in this work where possible, especially on the outcomes for LGBTQIA+ people's lives and wellbeing in order to inform ongoing actions intended to address inequality
- Support local authorities to improve public transport networks and safety on public transport and in public spaces, especially at night, as a key area where hate crime is experienced<sup>32</sup>

## 3.2 Create and support the development of affordable social housing across Scotland, including more accessible housing

Those who need it should be able to access affordable, accessible and fit-for-purpose social housing in Scotland, including LGBTQIA+ people. However, that is currently not a reality. A disproportionately high number of LGBTQIA+ people are relying on expensive private sector housing, where some have faced discrimination and poor living conditions.<sup>33</sup> Many experience a 'double struggle' of trying to find housing which is both accessible and affordable, but also that is close to their community and / or chosen family.

Having affordable and accessible housing is essential for physical and mental health and wellbeing. It can also benefit community cohesion. When LGBTQIA+ people feel safe and welcome where they live, they are more likely to access community resources, especially during hard times.

Our research also shows that trans and non-binary people have substantial issues with housing, including affordability of housing, and homelessness<sup>34</sup>, with 1 in 3 young trans people having experienced hidden homelessness.<sup>35</sup>

We call on parties to commit to:

- Create more affordable, accessible social housing across Scotland
- Ensure that all social housing (including older people's housing) is a safe and welcoming place for LGBTQIA+ people to live
- Ensure social housing operators take issues around safety seriously and understand the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community
- Support local authorities to provide appropriate support and accommodation for LGBTQIA+ homeless people
- Recognise the impact that familial rejection can have on LGBTQIA+ people and the associated risks around homelessness and poverty, especially for LGBTQIA young people; and work with local authorities to ensure that familial rejection is understood as a significant risk factor for homelessness

# 3.3 Ensure that asylum seekers and refugees have fair access to employment and travel

LGBTQIA+ people seeking sanctuary here in Scotland experience the same financial precarity as all asylum seekers elsewhere in the UK. Yet, the vast majority of asylum seekers are unable to work while their claim is being assessed. During this time, they are reliant on UK Government financial support which is inadequate for allowing them to live full and happy lives. They are also more likely to be isolated due to being shut out of employment.

Scottish Refugee Council polling shows that the majority of Scots (62%) are in favour of asylum seekers having the right to work.<sup>36</sup>

We are calling on parties to:

- Support LGBTQIA+ people seeking asylum who have permission to work to do so and to take up employment
- Lobby the UK Government to lift the ban on asylum seekers working while their asylum claim is being processed
- Provide free public transport for people seeking asylum, including by prioritising additional funding to extend the current scheme of free bus travel for asylum seekers





## 4. SHARED SOCIETY

***Everyone in Scotland deserves to live in a society where their needs are met and they are able to participate in the local community. This includes LGBTQIA+ people.***

***We are asking all parties to remove barriers to participation and access to services for all LGBTQIA+ people.***

**4.1 - Create a national scheme to support local authorities working on social isolation and community cohesion**

**4.2 - Ensure LGBTQIA+ people seeking asylum and refugees have equitable access to appropriate services**

**4.3 - Widen access and participation of LGBTQIA+ people in sport by reducing barriers**

**4.4 - Ensure LGBTQIA+ older people receive dignified, informed and affirming care across all health and social care settings**

**4.5 - Recognise and respond to the experiences and needs of LGBTQIA+ neurodivergent people, including through legislation**

# 4.1 Create a national scheme to support local authorities working on social isolation and community cohesion

Many current political and media narratives across Scotland, and indeed the UK and the wider world, often paint a picture of division and difference, rather than focusing on the things we have in common. LGBTQIA+ people are communities of experience, rather than specifically communities of place or 'geographical communities.' This means that, often, actions that Government take to build community cohesion in geographic locations can negate thinking about how to make sure we are included in initiatives designed to bring communities together in local areas.

These initiatives reduce social isolation, increase community cohesion, and address the attitudes that can eventually lead to hate crime. For that reason, it is important that the LGBTQIA+ community is considered here too.

We know from research with trans and non-binary people that many do not feel as welcome in local communities as the general population. Only 41% of trans people said they felt as though they belonged in their local community, compared to 83% of the general population.<sup>37</sup>

The next Scottish Government and Parliament need to bring communities together and to think seriously about how to tackle these issues. This includes taking an inclusive place-based approach and learning from good practice<sup>38</sup>, to create a society where we understand, respect and include everyone and where both our differences and our commonalities are celebrated.

Local communities and physical spaces are an important way to break down barriers between individuals. They are also the settings where we can make people feel a part of the place they live, support one another, and become more resilient to misinformation and divisive rhetoric.

We're calling on parties to:

- Through the Public Sector Equality Duty, foster good relations and to build a shared sense of belonging to tackle division and misinformation by helping people to understand their neighbours, provide education and fund community cohesion work
- Ensure adequate resources for community centres and activities, and to support existing services to ensure new diverse users are welcomed
- Focus on tackling the root causes of hate crime, by bringing communities together
- Create a centralised scheme to support community cohesion, especially in the integration of marginalised groups, to counter misinformation and division and fight isolation
- Commit to tackle prejudice based bullying for children and young people, both in and out of the classroom

## 4.2 Ensure LGBTQIA+ people seeking asylum and refugees have equitable access to appropriate services

LGBTQIA+ people seeking sanctuary here in Scotland experience profound health and wellbeing inequality. Many have fled violence, persecution and criminalisation in their countries of origin, only to face further risks, violence and re-traumatisation whilst here in Scotland. The UK asylum system inflicts preventable harms on LGBTQIA+ people, harms that require mitigation within devolved competency.

LGBT Health and Wellbeing's 2024 Community Survey found that 90% of people seeking asylum who accessed their services reported self-harm and suicidal ideation were issues which impacted them. Extensive sectoral consultation with LGBTQIA+ New Scots has found experiences of racism and homo/trans/queerphobia in statutory and mainstream services, lack of LGBTQIA+ informed and experienced legal support, limited access to education opportunities and barriers to cultural integration which further compound isolation, distress and mental ill health.

Scotland must act to ensure all LGBTQIA+ people seeking asylum, and those with refugee status, can access inclusive healthcare, informed legal support and opportunities to live full lives as valued members of our communities.

We are calling on parties to:

- Ensure LGBTQIA+ people seeking asylum can access appropriate and timely healthcare, including improving pathways to LGBTQIA+ and trauma-informed mental health and wellbeing support (via primary care) to support recovery and self-acceptance
- Work with Police Scotland, Local Authorities and accommodation providers to ensure that the unique needs (and trauma) of LGBTQIA+ people seeking asylum are understood on arrival and that they are adequately signposted to inclusive services
- Ensure LGBTQIA+ people seeking asylum are not subject to discrimination in accommodation
- Improve access to legal aid, and availability of solicitors who are experienced and knowledgeable about LGBTQIA+ asylum claims. This is to ensure that LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers have equal access to legal support
- Lobby the UK Government to end the detention of LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers in recognition of the significant additional risks that they face, and place a 28-day limit on all immigration detention in line with the 'No Pride in Detention' campaign<sup>39</sup>
- Support and fund projects and services that support LGBTQIA+ people seeking asylum
- Take steps to improve safety of LGBTQIA+ people seeking asylum internationally

## 4.3 Widen access and participation of LGBTQIA+ people in sport by reducing barriers

LGBTQIA+ people continue to face significant structural and cultural barriers within sport and physical activity. Experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and a lack of visible commitment to inclusion have long limited participation and shaped negative associations with sport for many in our communities.<sup>40</sup>

This remains true across all areas of sport, including within youth settings, where many LGBTQIA+ young people continue to encounter barriers in P.E. and school sport. Recent research from SportScotland shows that despite positive shifts overall in Scottish sport, there is still insufficient progress evident when it comes to LGBTQIA+ equality and inclusion, and that it is the equalities area requiring most attention.<sup>41</sup>

The UN Committee on ICESCR recommended in March 2025 that Scotland ensure non-discrimination in cultural participation and sport, particularly based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and ensure those groups are included in sports participation.<sup>42</sup>

As Scotland works toward a fairer and more inclusive society, sport can be an influential reflection of our communities, as well as a powerful vehicle to help shape the society we aspire to be.

With major sporting moments and ambitions on Scotland's horizon, now is the time for a renewed commitment to inclusive sport that addresses barriers, supports participation, and increases visibility of role models which will ensure that everyone can experience the joy and benefits of being active.

We are calling on parties to:

- Ensure Scottish sport prioritises work on LGBTQIA+ inclusion as it implements the Moving to Inclusion framework
- Use opportunities like the Commonwealth Games 2026 to champion LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sport
- Reduce barriers to participation for LGBTQIA+ people under 18 and young people in school P.E.
- Commit to the Manifesto for Inclusive Physical Education<sup>43</sup>

## 4.4 Ensure LGBTQIA+ older people receive dignified, informed and affirming care across all health and social care settings

Older LGBTQIA+ people have lived through decades of discrimination, criminalisation of their identities and persistent stigma, all of which significantly impact the confidence with, and trust in, how they engage with public services and health and social care provision today.

Older LGBTQIA+ people also experience higher levels of isolation and loneliness, as well as poorer physical health outcomes. This includes higher rates of chronic health conditions, disabilities and worsened overall health in comparison to the wider population.<sup>44</sup> These interconnected, deep-rooted inequalities are socially driven and stem from long-term exposure to discrimination, marginalisation and minority stress.

Our research found that 86% of LGBTQIA+ people surveyed felt it was ‘very important or important’ for their care home or sheltered housing to be an inclusive space, whilst 81% felt it was ‘very important or important’ to be cared for by someone who recognised and affirmed their LGBTQIA+ identity.<sup>45</sup>

As Scotland works to build a shared society where everyone can age well and with dignity, ensuring inclusive and affirming health and social care support for older LGBTQIA+ people must be a priority.

We’re calling on parties to:

- Ensure all health and social care services, care home provision and assisted living facilities are LGBTQIA+ affirming by introducing mandatory LGBTQIA+, trauma informed, training to all statutory health and social care providers
- Commit to strengthening inspection and regulatory frameworks to ensure that all services (including at home care, care homes, assisted living) provide respectful, affirming and discrimination-free care
- Improve mental health, dementia and long-term condition pathways to reflect the needs and experiences of LGBTQIA+ older people
- Adopt a cross-governmental approach to addressing and dismantling health inequity for older LGBTQIA+ people

## 4.5 Recognise and respond to the experiences and needs of LGBTQIA+ neurodivergent people, including through legislation

LGBTQIA+ neurodivergent people face significant and often overlooked barriers across public services. This includes inaccessible communication systems and fragmented advocacy when it comes to discrimination in housing, employment and justice settings.

LGBT Health and Wellbeing's research found that 33% of people who accessed their services in 2024 were neurodivergent. Consultation with LGBT Health and Wellbeing's LGBT Autism Group reinforces the need for legislation on learning disabilities, autism and neurodivergence to be co-produced with people with lived experience and to take an intersectional approach that recognises how LGBTQIA+ identity and neurodivergence shape people's experiences.

Mandatory training, inclusive communication, LGBTQIA+ informed advocacy and strong accountability measures are essential to ensuring that public services understand and meet the needs of LGBTQIA+ neurodivergent people. The asks below were co-developed with LGBTQIA+ neurodivergent people accessing our services.

We're calling on parties to:

- Introduce mandatory, person-centred and intersectional training across public services on the intersection of learning disabilities, autism and neurodivergence, and LGBTQIA+ identities
- Adopt inclusive communication approaches across public bodies and services exploring communication options including email, phone, face-to-face, and video calls
- Enact legislation on learning disabilities, autism and neurodivergence that provides for continuous, wraparound independent advocacy that is LGBTQIA+ informed and able to support people across interconnected issues
- Strengthen adherence to Additional Support for Learning duties and ensure school and college staff receive intersectional training so that LGBTQIA+ neurodivergent children and young people receive appropriate support, including during transitions to adulthood
- Ensure employability and employment services are accessible and informed by affirming practice, recognising the harms of 'masking' and adapting processes so that LGBTQIA+ neurodivergent people can safely apply for and sustain work without discrimination

# Resources and further reading

- [Equality Network, LGBTI+ Glossary](#)
- [Equality Network, Further Out: The Scottish LGBT Rural Equality Report](#)
- [Scottish Trans, Trans and Non-binary Experiences Report](#)
- [Scottish Trans, Trans and Non-binary Experience Report: Housing Factsheet](#)
- [Equality Network, Trans / Lesbian and Bi+ Women's Experiences of Reproductive Health and Fertility Services in Scotland Reports](#)
- [Equality Network and Scottish Trans, Erosion of Trans Rights in UK Report](#)
- [LGBTQIA+ Sector ICESCR Coalition Shadow Report](#)
- [Equality Network, Conversion Practices webpage](#)
- [LGBT Health and Wellbeing, Examining the Social Determinants of LGBT Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [LEAP Sports, Manifesto for Inclusive Physical Education](#)
- [LEAP Sports, Outsport Scotland Report](#)
- [LGBT Health and Wellbeing, Conversion Practices: Scotland's Guide](#)
- [LGBT Health and Wellbeing, Birth Support for Queer Families Report](#)
- [LGBT Youth Scotland, Life in Scotland Report](#)
- [LGBT Youth Scotland, Life in Scotland Health Report](#)
- [NHS Lothian, 2022 LGBT+ Health Needs Assessment](#)
- [Shelter, Housing Delivery Plan](#)
- [Volunteer Health Scotland, Manifesto](#)

# End Notes References

- 1 - [Scottish Government, NHS gender identity services: strategic action framework 2022-2024](#)
- 2 - [Public Health Scotland, NHS Gender Identity Clinics: Waiting Times for First Outpatient Consultation](#)
- 3 - [What The Trans, Why is the Sandyford wait time so long?](#)
- 4 - [Sax Institute, Evidence for effective interventions for children and young people with gender dysphoria - update](#)
- 5 - [United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#)
- 6 - [LGBT Health And Wellbeing and Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Examining the social Determinants of LGBT+ health and wellbeing](#)
- 7 - [LGBT Health And Wellbeing and Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Examining the social Determinants of LGBT+ health and wellbeing](#)
- 8 - [LGBT Health And Wellbeing and Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Examining the social Determinants of LGBT+ health and wellbeing](#)
- 9 - [LGBT Health And Wellbeing and Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Examining the social Determinants of LGBT+ health and wellbeing](#)
- 10 - [LGBT Health And Wellbeing and Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Examining the social Determinants of LGBT+ health and wellbeing](#)
- 11 - *'Minority stress' recognises that LGBTQIA+ people's experiences of stigma, prejudice, the expectation of rejection, experiences of discrimination, and the pressure felt by some to 'conceal' their identities creates a hostile and stressful social environment that causes health problems. Being LGBTQIA+ does not cause poor mental health, but we may develop poor mental health because of how we are treated in society.*  
  
See: [Equality Network: Supporting people, What Is Minority Stress?](#)
- 12 - [NHS Lothian, LGBT+ Health Needs Assessment](#)
- 13 - [Scottish Trans, Scottish Trans and Non-binary Experiences: Research Report](#)
- 14 - [Scottish Government Health and Care Experience Survey 2023/24: National Results](#)

- 15 - [Equality Network, Lesbian and Bi+ Women's Experiences of Reproductive Health and Fertility Services in Scotland](#)
- 16 - [LGBT Health And Wellbeing and Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Examining the social Determinants of LGBT+ health and wellbeing](#)
- 17 - [LGBT Health And Wellbeing and Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Examining the social Determinants of LGBT+ health and wellbeing](#)
- 18 - [Equality Network, Further Out: The Scottish LGBT Rural Equality Report](#)
- 19 - [LGBTQIA+ Sector ICESCR Coalition Shadow Report](#)
- 20 - [United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#)
- 21 - [Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Resolution 2643 For a ban on conversion practices](#)
- 22 - [Equality Network webpage, 2 in 3 Scots support banning conversion therapy](#)
- 23 - [TransActual: Trans segregation in practice report](#)
- 24 - [Scottish Human Rights Commission, Statement in response to the Supreme Court judgment in For Women Scotland vs The Scottish Ministers](#)
- 25 - [LGBT Youth Scotland, Education Report 2023](#)
- 26 - [LGBT Youth Scotland, Health Report 2023](#)
- 27 - Including Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- 28 - [LEAP Sports, The time for Human Rights in Scottish sport is now](#)
- 29 - [Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers Recommendation on Equal Rights for Intersex Persons](#)
- 30 - [Scottish Trans, Scottish Trans and Non-binary Experiences: Research Report](#)
- 31 - [United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#)
- 32 - [Equality Network, Scottish LGBTI hate crime report 2017](#)
- 33 - [Equality Network, A Human Rights Bill for Scotland consultation response](#)

- 34 - [Scottish Trans, Scottish Trans and Non-binary Experiences: Research Report](#)
- 35 - [AKT, There's No Place Like Home: The Reality of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness](#)
- 36 - [Scottish Refugee Council: Right to Work: Poll](#)
- 37 - [Scottish Trans, Scottish Trans and Non-binary Experiences: Research Report](#)
- 38 - [Our Place, Place Standard Tool](#)
- 39 - [Rainbow Migration, No pride in detention](#)
- 40 - [LEAP Sports, Outsport Scotland Report](#)
- 41 - [Sportscotland, Equality sport research 2024](#)
- 42 - [United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#)
- 43 - [LEAP Sports: Manifesto for Inclusive Physical Education](#)
- 44 - [LGBT Health And Wellbeing and Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Examining the social Determinants of LGBT+ health and wellbeing](#)
- 45 - [LGBT Health and Wellbeing, Fit for Purpose: Inclusive Housing and Social Care for Older LGBT+ people](#)



Equality  
Network



Scottish  
Trans



LGBT  
Health and  
Wellbeing

Equality Network – <https://www.equality-network.org/>

Scottish Trans – <https://www.scottishtrans.org/>

LGBT Health and Wellbeing – <https://www.lgbthealth.org.uk/>

LGBT Youth Scotland – <https://lgbtyouth.org.uk/>

LEAP Sports Scotland - <https://leapsports.org/>