

# LGBTQ+ Action Plan - Consultation

Response from the British Association  
of Social Workers – Cymru



**BASW**  
Cymru

The professional association for  
social work and social workers

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) is the UK's professional membership organisation for social work. We are the independent voice of social work. We champion social work and help members achieve the highest professional standards.

**Our key organisational aims are:**

- Improved professional support, recognition, and rights at work for social workers.
- Better social work for the benefit of people who need our services.
- A fairer society

## A note on terminology

The LGBTQ+ Action Plan acknowledges the use of language (see below). For the purposes of this report, we continue to use the term LGBTQ+ as an umbrella term to capture all identities. The plan uses this acronym to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning people (LGBTQ+) (with the + representing other identities including non-binary).

**Language:** *The Expert Panel has recommended that we should use the acronym LGBTQ+ in relation to this work. Both the panel and the Welsh Government recognise that there are different views and usages across our communities, and that practice is likely to change again in future.*





## Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation on a very optimistic and ambitious LGBTQ+ action plan which will need to translate into tangible and sustained change if Wales is to become truly inclusive of all.

The Welsh LGBTQ+ Action Plan has six main themes: Human Rights and Recognition; Safety; Home and Communities; Health and Social Care; Education; and Workplace.

None of the priority areas can sit as stand-alone and understanding and responding to intersectionality in a holistic way, is required. In our response, we have focused in the main, on social care, although the priorities are cross cuttings.

We also welcome the Welsh government to be proactive rather than reactive.

BASW Cymru is also an active member and signatory to the response of the **Supported Loving Cymru LGBTQ Group** to the Welsh Government's LGBTQ+ Action Plan. The function of this group is to better understand and challenge the dominant narrative within society that deny adults with a learning disability access to any sexual identity or expression. This response will be made available to our members and supporters shortly. The response was formulated following a collection of reflections from a series of conversations the group had about the LGBTQ+ action plan.

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

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. The plan is the beginning of the journey and with the consultation responses, we hope it can become more focussed and make services more accountable so we can achieve 'real world' change in Wales.

BASW consider **allyship to be a priority**, and the action plan does not incorporate the importance of this, which is concerning. Authentic allyship is a fundamental element in educating, raising awareness, supporting, and empowering people who identify as LGBTQ+. BASW oppose any attempts to roll back on LGBTQ+ rights unduly via legislation or a result of Brexit.

Priorities must also include clear funding, co-collaboration, and robust leadership.

- We hope funding is not going to hinder progress as these actions and goals require financial backing or they often remain unfulfilled. Economic support should be plentiful and not the bare minimum or any change will not be long term or sustainable.
- Poor leadership, lack of understanding and a lack of clear accountability mechanisms will hinder any action plan and its progress.
- 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. This includes considering minoritised ethnic communities including a clear focus on Gypsy, Roma Traveller LGBTQ+, Asian LGBTQ+ and Jewish LGBTQ+ communities.
- In addition to the above, there must be a clear pathway for supporting people with specific needs. For example, people with learning disabilities require specific and structured support, people with neurodevelopment conditions require specific and structured support etc. This should be considered when planning services, regardless of a clinical diagnosis individuals should have access to services and clinical diagnosis should not be used as a method of gatekeeping such services.
- There must be a robust review of existing services. This is likely to lead to more effective and separate clear pathways for assessment and treatment for those who come under neurodevelopmental conditions as the wait for CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) is too long and such delays are detrimental to a young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing. Sadly, these waiting times are often deadly too. CAHMS is a poorly funded service which is well used by LGBTQ+ young people as they struggle with mental health difficulties (often from the impact of discrimination and bullying), eating disorders, neurodevelopmental conditions etc. This leads to these young people being more likely to be excluded from their education compared to their heteronormative, cisnormative counterparts.
- The use of inclusive language must be considered. A clear example is ensuring we are using terminology that is understood by those we are supporting, the acronym LGBTQ+ is often not fully understood by individuals with learning disabilities and we should be empowering and supporting people to express their identities.
- BASW continue to support the view that people who have experienced being oppressed and excluded often have the solutions – accessible safe psychological spaces and grassroots level co-production is vital. We also support that authentic collaboration and co-production with citizens is required at all levels not just at 'pinch points' of the action plan.
- Improve existing and create new LGBTQ+ services for older people and those with mental health difficulties should be a vital part of the post covid recovery plan to build trust and community cohesion.

Further consideration for social isolation also requires immediate attention.

- We must consider neurodiversity and neurotypical approaches when implementing any LGBTQ+ services for children and adults e.g., mental health services, education, health, housing, workplace, criminal justice etc.
- Gender identity pathways must be more person centred and funded adequately to deal with the capacity for high level demand hence avoid the long waiting lists. At present, it is an outdated service delivery with limited capacity to fulfil community need.
- Proactive sharing of knowledge, evidence-based practice and good practice when delivering public services. For example, research shows that the use of pronouns can reduce self-harm and suicidal ideation in LGBTQ+ young people, the National LGBT+ Traveller & Roma Action Group recently launched a professional guide about coming out to support LGBTQ+ communities across the United Kingdom.
- We believe that social workers must be provided with opportunities to work in partnership with NHS clinical mental health practitioners, educators and policy makers and adopt a holistic approach; without this, intervention is often ineffective. This leaves young people from certain communities subjected to further isolation from society including exclusion from education, employment and training.
- At the core of the profession of social work lie respect, a duty to challenge discrimination, recognise diversity, and to treat people with compassion, empathy, and care. We all agree that all forms of discrimination and inequality has no place amongst these values of human rights and social justice. However, could it be that the assumption that all social workers have this value base as a foundation, creates a situation where racism is potentially invisible and/or ignored? Discrimination can be embedded in the systems we all work in, and we cannot assume that social workers are immune to the impacts of this.
- In addition, social care has access to people who reside in deprived areas. How are public services actioning this LGBTQ+ action plan going to approach homeless people who identify as LGBTQ+ and those who reside in rural areas?
- We should be considering tailored services to meet the cultural needs and create a deeper understanding of difficulties in collaboration with LGBTQ+ people who are from minoritised ethnic communities. For example, LGBTQIA+ services should include an understanding of culture and religious beliefs to increase effectiveness and a sense of belonging. Many adults and young people from certain communities still believe that being dead is better than being gay and will take their own lives rather than reach out for support.
- We would recommend further consideration to the role of volunteering. These are significant roles and should be remunerated appropriately. Organisations who rely on individuals with lived experience must reward them adequately for their time and contribution. There are many barriers for individuals who wish to volunteer not being able to do so and yet these are the people that need a seat at the table when planning and implementing such an action plan. We only feed oppression further when we do not fully consider an individual's circumstances. We should seek to make these roles more accessible to all. Building mutual trust and respect is key and it about time we evolved our volunteering process to capture voices and have genuine co-production which is needed for such an action plan.
- Quality data collection in social care – particularly disaggregated data, is central to deeply knowing the needs of LGBTQ+ people in Wales. LGBTQ+ people experience many layers of marginalisation. This is especially an issue when it comes to understanding the most basic information about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people. Gypsy and Traveller people who were only able to self-identify in the census in 2011 - Roma for the first time in 2021. Many Gypsy, Traveller and Roma people do not feel confident to self-identify due to persecution, both current and historic, with the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill providing a particularly challenging environment at this time, in which to self-identify. It is not clear from this action what measures Welsh Government will take to increase confidence in self-identifying. The statement issued by Jane Hutt in March 2021 <https://gov.wales/written-statement->

## [police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill](#)

on the impact of the Policing Bill and intention to lay down a legislative consent motion, demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting Gypsies and Travellers in an anti-racist and inclusive Wales. It is important for Gypsies and Travellers to hear the Welsh Government standing up for their legal rights.

The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Social Work Association (GRTSW Association) was set up in June 2020 and one of its aims is to improve understanding between social workers and Gypsy, Traveller and Roma people. They are deeply concerned about Part 4 of the Policing Bill and how it will act as a significant barrier to this happening, as social workers are at risk of being involved in enforcement action and not support.

- Visibility is key. The GRTSW Association was set up to provide an opportunity for social workers from these diverse ethnic backgrounds to be **visible**, to find peer support and to act as role models and mentors for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers to enter the profession. Visibility is key when creating a sense of belonging for marginalised individuals. Gypsy, Roma and Travellers who identify as LGBTQ+ share lived experiences how they struggled in their personal journeys due to having nobody to relate to positively from their community as media and other platforms do not fully support and share positive experiences of LGBTQ+ people from minoritised ethnicities.
- Governmental data must be interrogated further. For example, suicide data recorded should include sexuality (if when asked they volunteer this information). Individuals commit suicide and sexuality, culture, identity plays a part. Accurate information would support a better understanding of harm and suicide prevention action/programmes.
- Partnership working must be a priority. Social care is seen as a key vehicle for delivering anti-racist, anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive, intersectional, culturally sensitive services without which there will never be dignity for those who use social care services, unpaid carers or the workforce. It is right and proper that in this action plan, Welsh Government works in partnership with key social care organisations including key voluntary organisations to achieve its ambitions.
- Services must work together; without clear partnerships we are missing significant opportunities to interrogate crucial data. For example, The Home Office publishes the statistics for forced marriages and yet they do not capture sexuality – they do not ask and therefore very few therefore volunteer, however, this is vital information that would help make this service more effective. We do not have a true picture of how sexuality and forced marriage plays out and this is impacting on minoritised communities. Existing services must integrate their data and improve it to support this action plan and create even more meaningful goals that prevent significant harm to young people and adults. The same will apply in other areas such as female genital mutilation.
- We need clear ongoing diversity and inclusion training that includes intersectionality and not one-off sessions that happen periodically. Those with lived experience delivering the training makes it more authentic and impactful.
- Robust diversity and inclusion education is needed for all the students in Wales. Particularly within Higher Education, for example health and social care curricula should all have LGBTQ+ informed learning to create a deeper understanding from the offset and to build on this. After all, graduates are the leaders of our tomorrow. This should support practitioners to offer safe and effective intervention.
- Within services and the workplace, organisations who do not comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty should be named and shamed, fined etc. There must be clear consequences to promote good practice and deter unlawfulness in this area. Having a 'Public Body Duty of Candour' in this area would work well and produce the accountability we are all seeking with this plan.

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

- If key stakeholders, contributors, wider society etc. do not buy in to the action plan and actively seek and promote change. This will lead to tokenistic measures with no long lasting and beneficial change.
- Deeply embedded bureaucracy in key services – for example, this plan is clear about health inequalities however, some services with health are deeply embedded with systemic LGBTQ+ discrimination including and not limited to homophobia and transphobia. In addition, the workforce must represent the people they serve, or strategies quickly become stagnant.
- Power and leadership remaining within the dominant culture, characterised by White Privilege. (We exclude white ethnic minorities from this term)
- Intersectionality including class not being considered when considering inequalities and social injustice experience by LGBTQ+ people in Wales.
- No adequate funding and/or resources will prevent any meaningful sustainable change.
- A legal system and unfair social policies that do not acknowledge oppression and marginalisation but widens them.
- A lack of positive supportive media representation regarding LGBTQ+ communities and the progress of the action plan and its purpose. There is a clear lack of media representation of LGBTQ+ people from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and other minoritised ethnic communities, this causes confusion and isolation for those who identify as LGBTQ+ and a lack of allyship.
- No focus or lack of focus on the benefits to the wider society as a whole in Wales – more education is required in this area to expel the ongoing myths about certain communities.
- Not adopting a clear and robust intersectional approach to racism which considers all aspects of identity will not produce sustainable long-term change and achieve the desired goals.
- Avoidance of tokenistic measures which do more harm than good and will create lack of trust at every stage.
- An over-reliance on data or lack of it. Data should not hinder or prevent action in key areas – trust the stories of these with lived experience and do not wait for data to justify action.
- Seeking change without working in partnership and co-producing the specific action plan points will affect the quality of outcome. This requires more than consultation at the planning stage – it requires close collaboration throughout the entire period and thereafter when reviewing each goal and action. This must become a way of life as there is a high chance of relapse.
- There must be clear due process to deal with matters when they do not go as planned. Being able to make mistakes and learn from these and make the appropriate changes and improvements to action points.
- Without creative freedom and some flexibility for wiggle room when implementing the action plan, the process is likely to become rigid and not evolve with societal changes which is fundamental for the long-term impact and its sustainability.
- Social care must be adequately funded and resourced. Social Workers must be based within those communities they serve to build trust, greater understanding, and meaningful relationships with those they serve. This worked well before the centralised systems were introduced. Furthermore, we should not be relying on charities to undertake what the State should be providing to all citizens.
- Social workers must be given more recognition and positive publicity as we understand communities and are trained to build alliances with people from all background. This should be seen as a valuable bridge to the success of this plan. Social workers and social care workers play a significant role in supporting individuals in their right to self-discovery, self-determination and this must be positively acknowledged and well resourced.

**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?**

### **Workforce**

We strongly suggest that protected time be provided for those advancing this action plan, it should not be seen as an 'add on' to existing role responsibilities as is often the case within many organisations across the United Kingdom.

Specialist training must be provided; understanding intersectionality and local communities and cultural competence is key. It should be mandatory and effective. Learning and hearing from those with lived experiences is a significant part of this work. There is no room for toxic debate about LGBTQ+ identities.

Ensuring that the workforce receives cultural competence training, which is updated throughout their careers, is required. This training should be quality assured, co-designed and co-delivered by LGBTQ+ people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds to achieve a better shared experience, knowledge and skill set. Clear evaluation mechanisms must be designed to evidence impact of such training on those receiving care and support and unpaid carers.

Cultural competence should be seen as gateway training and continuing education and learning, which deepens knowledge and understanding in anti-discriminatory/intersectionality must be made **mandatory** on all social work programmes and in post qualifying education and training.

Evidencing having undertaken cultural competence and anti-discriminatory education (to include the difference it makes to practice) could be made a mandatory requirement for social work registration, in order to have the greatest impact. For too long the teaching of LGBQIA+ on a social work curriculum has been ad hoc at best and non-existent at worst. The Welsh Government must change this.

**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?**

No, it does not. Tackling discrimination without focussing on other aspects of identity only brings only short-lived surface level change and this has been tried time and time again. Deep level learning and growth mindset is required for the change you seek, and this cannot be done without considering intersectionality from the offset – not adding it in as an afterthought. You could achieve this by co-creating with those with lived experiences across Wales. Working with key partners such as social workers, voluntary sector, health practitioners and other relevant partners who understand human development, trauma, life cycle, culture, marginalisation etc. This part of the action plan requires more focussed and clear action points which can be achieved to strengthen its accountability for implementation.

### **Leadership**

Leadership will be key in realising the huge ambition as set out in the race Equality Action Plan. Modelling anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive thinking and behaviours within the current structures of White heteronormative, cisnormative privilege will not result in fast or meaningful change, it will simply reinforce the oppression, disadvantage and trauma experienced by the LGBTQ+ workforce and those in society needing care and support. There needs to be clearly defined timeframes and processes in place for recruiting LGBTQ+ people into leadership roles and clear procedures for ensuring accountability if this doesn't happen.

There must be clear pathways to report and challenge any heteronormative and cisnormative assumptions encountered when using public services.



## Governance

We make the following suggestion in regard to measuring success in creating an anti-discriminatory Wales and for strengthening the accountability for implementation of the LGBTQ+ action plan.

- Measurable outcomes such as an increased employability, student attainment at all levels of education, more diverse and cultural celebrations being held in Wales, better health outcomes for those from minoritised communities, less disparities in services including health and social care, housing and education, criminal justice system etc.
- Talking to those with lived experience – e.g. have local communities been able to understand their GP services better (e.g. due to leaflets being provided in different languages etc), explore data from social care. Use of SAIL data base to integrate health and social care data.
- Gather intelligence about the attitudes of people prior to the action plan and then periodically to explore changes in mindsets etc.
- Celebrating success.
- Reviewing outcomes honestly and transparently; what went well and what not so well.
- Transparency in all decision making.

Some of the success of this plan in certain areas shall rely on some systems being completed overhauled and re-invented. Working within existing discriminatory systems and trying to adapt them will go right against the ethos of this action plan and what Welsh Government seems to be promising – paradigmatic shift. Is Welsh Government prepared to do this and how do they seek to do this? How will priorities in this action plan be decided and by whom? The action plan refers frequently to accountability and mechanisms to ensure this must be clear, transparent, and open to challenge.

**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?**

**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.**

There is no reason to suppose these proposals would not have any detrimental effect on the Welsh language however, Welsh Government should also support other minority Welsh dialects such as the Romani Welsh Kale dialect which is unique to Wales and saved by the determination of two Welsh Gypsy families who have preserved what remains of the dialect, for future generations with no recognition or support from Welsh Government. This dialect should be taught on the school curriculum as part of the commitment to teaching Black, Asian and minority ethnic history and taught to Welsh Gypsy children, as a fundamental human right in accessing one's indigenous language.

<https://shikawaromanus.thinkific.com>  
[www.travellerstimes.org.uk/news/2019/06/heritage-fund-keeping-alive-welsh-romany-language-future-generations](http://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/news/2019/06/heritage-fund-keeping-alive-welsh-romany-language-future-generations)

We believe that Welsh should be the more favourable language in Wales with a clear provision for those who prefer to use English. In India there are many languages spoken and English is one of those and often not the most favourable. In our view, there is no need to overthink as the question appears to. To some people Welsh will be more favourable, to some English will be more favourable – we believe thinking about it this way creates hostility – people are accepting of languages – we communicate in many ways other than using words.

Welsh services must be inclusive to all, whatever language they communicate in and not centred on those who only speak Welsh and English as explained above.

Translation is worth considering and we would welcome a working task force to explore language with consideration to both Welsh and English LGBTQ+ terms etc.

Language is also important when considering understanding and expression of individuals with learning disabilities and cognitive difficulties who often feel safe expressing their identify in ways they feel comfortable with; this must be taken into consideration when exploring the acronyms used.

### **Additional information:**

- BASW Cymru support the banning of conversion therapy, ending harmful practice of sexual orientation and gender conversion therapy by introducing a legal ban.
- We also request a reform of the Gender Recognition Act, in line with international best practice. Improved laws on gender recognition to allow trans people to change the sex on their birth certificate with a simple administration process and without intrusive medical diagnosis requirements. This process should include the recognition of non-binary people.
- BASW Cymru welcome working with the UK Government to introduce 'X' gender markers to official documents to enable non-binary people to be legally recognised and included in public life. We also welcome working with the government to update reserved surrogacy law to reflect societal change and meet needs of prospective parents who identify as LGBTQ+.

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member GRTSW Association.

\*BASW Cymru consents to parts, or all of this  
consultation response being made public.

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