

Consultation questions

The Action Plan has six main themes: Human Rights and Recognition; Safety; Home and Communities; Health and Social Care; Education; and the Workplace. We would like your thoughts on the proposed actions within each theme. You may want to comment on one or all of these areas.

Please use the following questions as the basis of your response. You are welcome to add additional comments or information if you wish.

Question 1

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

This plan has the potential to increase equality for LGBTQ+ children and young people in Wales. Barnardo's Cymru is pleased to see the approach that Welsh Government has taken in relation to a number of measures within the plan and look forward to seeing how this translates into positive action. For example, we were pleased to see commitments to co-production between government agencies and LGBTQ+ children and young people, although feel that this could go further to ensure that the voice of these young people runs throughout the work done to support them.

We believe that the action plan should go further in supporting children and young people and have discussed some examples and opportunities to do so below.

One opportunity to do so would be to provide more clarity on some action points. For example, action point 7 states a commitment from Welsh Government to "continue to vocally defend and promote the rights and

dignity of trans and non-binary people in Wales to take a full and equal role in Welsh society at all levels.” Whilst this is a sentiment that we would fully support, there is little to explain what this means in practice.

Alternatively, the commitment to “work with other public bodies to support bi people with shows of support, such as flying the bi pride flag” is a clear example of how bi visibility will be prioritised and taken forwards by Welsh Government and public bodies. Having this level of detail will ensure that there is buy-in from LGBTQ+ communities and that confidence in the action plan is built. We would suggest that revisiting the plan and looking for opportunities to create more certainty in other action points, which would increase confidence and awareness of action that Welsh Government intends to take.

Question 2

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

We agree with the overarching aims.

However, with the exception of the commitments regarding education, the action plan feels very focused on the needs and experiences of adults. Young LGBTQ+ people are not one homogeneous group; they have different needs and experiences and this action plan needs to go further in order to set out both how these needs are understood and how they will be put into practice through the action plan.

Question 3

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

Barnardo's Cymru would like to see more clarity and emphasis on support for LGBTQ+ children and young people, particularly in the context of the pandemic.

Lockdown had mixed implications for children and young people in Wales depending on their circumstances. For some LGBTQ+ children and young people with supportive families, school closures removed them from the school environment and gave them some time and space away from potentially damaging circumstances in school such as bullying. For others, lockdown meant the removal of external support networks that, for many children and young people, are vital, particularly if that support is not available at home. School and other external places offer safe spaces for children and young people and for this to have been removed for an extended period of time would have caused considerable distress and anxiety to many. *Lessons from Lockdown: Supporting vulnerable children and young people back to school and to learning* – a report published by Action for Children and Barnardo's Cymru, found that 92% of Barnardo's practitioners were supporting someone with their mental health in April 2020, and this trend has continued.¹

Barnardo's Cymru *See, Hear, Respond* service also found that the LGBTQ+ community was more affected by isolation during lockdown which could have long-term, negative consequences.²

We note the action point included under the section titled *Covid-19 Response* which states that Welsh Government will 'consider undertaking a thorough investigation into how LGBTQ+ people in Wales have been impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic'. We would urge Welsh Government to commit to this review and to ensure that there is a dedicated space for understanding the impact of the pandemic specifically

¹ <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/lessons-from-lockdown-supporting-vulnerable-children-young-people-returning-school-learning-english.pdf>

² See, Hear, Respond was a direct response to the challenges of Covid-19 which provided therapeutic support including counselling and practical advice. Any family could self-refer for the scheme and be provided with support over the phone or online.

on LGBTQ+ children and young people, and what support that they may need in future as a result. This should include creating clear opportunities for children and young people to feed directly in to the review. This could be via engagement with a survey or other data collection, or by using other existing networks to engage with LGBTQ+ Youth Groups.

We would also like to see better recognition of children and young people for whom support is more difficult to access because of their circumstances. Children who are educated outside of school settings or young people who do not readily access existing structures still need access to good quality, trauma-informed support and they should be able to access this with ease. Ensuring that this is a reality should be a core priority for Welsh Government.

We welcome the specific support for trans children and young people under improving health outcomes and would welcome a move that would ensure that this support is co-produced with trans children and young people. This is especially important in relation to mental health support. The voices of children and young people are vital in the development of these services.

We would also urge Welsh Government to consider how support for the entire family can be provided.

Finally, we welcome the commitments made in the action plan for Welsh Government to continue to support Pride Cymru and to establish a Wales-wide fund and Wales co-ordinator. We would suggest that there be consideration about how Pride Cymru can further be embedded within communities across Wales by taking opportunities in schools and specifically through the new curriculum to engage children and young people in Pride. This could inspire more grassroots events which will promote better visibility of Pride across Wales and provide more opportunities for children and young people to take part.

Question 4

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

Some areas of the action plan do not have enough regard for the specific needs and experiences of children and young people, and we would urge Welsh Government to address this. Not every child and young person has the same ability to access support and Welsh Government must find a way to bridge this so that support can be provided equally across the board.

One example of how to rectify this would be to ensure that the LGBTQ+ Action Plan is embedded in the Welsh Government's commitment to a radical reform of social care for looked after children and care leavers in the Programme for Government. Care-experienced LGBTQ+ children and young people may face additional barriers. For example, those in foster care may have more anxiety about the impact of moving foster placements and the level of acceptance that would be shown to them and their sexuality or identity in a different placement. This would need to be reflected in the mental health support available to LGBTQ+ children in these circumstances.

We note that Welsh Government has committed to legislating to provide personal advisors for all care leavers up to the age of 25 by the end of this Senedd term. We would encourage Welsh Government to consider how the action plan can be embedded within any ensuing scheme (which should include appropriate practitioner training) to ensure that LGBTQ+ care leavers can be supported with any issues that they face by their personal advisor, and that this support mechanism is tailored to the experiences of those care leavers.

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?

It is our belief that Welsh Government should clarify the role of the voluntary sector within this action plan and how these organisations with their extensive networks and expertise can be used to further the aims of the LGBTQ+ Action Plan and support children and young people in Wales.

Barnardo's services working with LGBTQ+ children and young people advocate for a whole-school / organisation approach to tackle 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 Positive Identities service³ is an example of this work in England, and we would urge Welsh Government to ensure that a similar approach to teacher and practitioner training is applied in schools in Wales.

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?

Whilst we welcome the ambition of the plan and attempts to ensure that it covers all parts of Welsh life, we are concerned that it does not go far enough to recognise and understand the needs of LGBTQ+ young people. We would urge Welsh Government to consider how to re-engage stakeholder groups that work directly with children and young people on how the action plan can speak directly to them and have a positive impact on their lives.

We note the point that the LGBTQ+ Action Plan should be read alongside the Race Equality Action Plan, Framework for Action on Disability, Gender

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https://www.schoolwellbeing.co.uk/uploads/chronicler/document/document/699/Barnardo's_Positive_Identities_Commissioned_Services_Offer_Document_-_version_for_emails.pdf

Equality Plan and Strategic Equality Plan. We hope to see more detail in due course on how these plans will interrelate and overlap as they are put into practice.

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:

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Responses to consultations may be made public. To keep your response anonymous (including email addresses) tick the box.

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