

WELSH GOVERNMENT: UNKIND, OPAQUE, HOMOPHOBIC AND WRONG

Yesterday, 21 June 2022, Hannah Blythyn, the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership, gave an [update on the Welsh Government's proposed 'LGBTQ+ Action Plan'](#).

The so-called 'LGBTQ+ Action Plan' came in for plenty of criticism. We [published our response](#), setting out both what we welcomed and our many concerns. Welsh government has not published replies to the consultation. Nor have they bothered to acknowledge the issues we raised. Even the most basic definitions have not been provided, a guarantee of bad law to follow.

Indeed just a few days ago the Deputy Minister refused to meet with us, without even the courtesy of suggesting her officers give time to our worried and angry members. The idea that this 'Action Plan' represents genuine concern or understanding of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in Wales is laughable.

The claims of transparency are obviously ridiculous. The Plan was based on the unsupported words of a self-selecting 'Expert Panel', all of whom obediently follow the lines given by Stonewall and similar lobby groups. We asked repeatedly to be included, to have a seat at the table but we were ignored. We are obviously the wrong sort of gay.

Senedd needs to protect our rights to free assembly and free speech. Even since the Plan was published for consultation we have seen escalating attacks on the right to debate these matters. A disabled woman arrested in Newport for stickering statistics on male violence against women. People being doxxed and harassed for meeting in pubs. The disgraceful scenes in Bristol just last Sunday. Women trying to meet to discuss issues relating to their biological sex are being targeted by increasingly violent mobs of trans activists, apparently without condemnation from any government including our own. Why does Welsh Government so disregard our basic rights that it accepts the abuse, threats and intimidation we see daily both online and on the streets?

The Minister set out the value she attaches to fifty years of Pride. We are proud too: proud of the campaigns won before even that milestone, including decriminalisation of male homosexuality in Wales in 1967, sponsored by a Welsh peer among others. We are proud that a founder of the UK LGB Alliance was on in the first Gay Liberation Front march in 1970. We are proud that our members stood up against section 28 and the horrors of the HIV epidemic, that we stood with the miners of the Valleys. We are proud that we fought and continue to fight for justice in immigration, employment, motherhood and marriage, and fair services such as housing, education, libraries and policing. We have members who made that history, and members who are just reaching confident adulthood as same-sex attracted people. All of us are here and demanding to have our rights recognised and respected.

Our activism and commitment are not to be colonised by people who cannot even look us in the face.

When the Welsh Government denies the basic reality of sex, it denies the reality of sexual orientation. The Action Plan damages women and girls, as [Merched Cymru has said](#) so clearly. It is directly homophobic, for it denies the existence, boundaries and dignity of those of us who know that sex is real, immutable and important. Whether we like it or not, whether Welsh Government can accept it, there is a fundamental conflict between sex-based rights and an imposed ideology based on the supremacy of the undefined, ever-changing notion of gender identity.

Welsh Government should follow [its own guidance](#) and undertake a public, evidenced impact assessment of its proposals, including the potential harms to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, women and children.

Sport has been much in the news this week. We think both Welsh Labour and Plaid Cymru have lost the plot. Sport is not about compassion or inclusivity. It's about fair competition. We urge the Deputy Minister to look at both the [science](#) and the [philosophy](#) on this issue rather than exposing athletes to risks. Alongside Emily Bridges, perhaps Senedd should hear some other voices, such as Sharron Davis or our own Nicole Cooke. To suggest that Lord Coe, the World Rugby Union, FINA and many others are simply 'using sport as a cover for transphobia', as Sioned Williams put it, is an insult.

Members of Senedd need to recognise that transmen and female nonbinary people have, are, and will continue to compete in women's sport at all levels. However, If trans women are women, even on the rugby field and in the boxing ring, then of course transmen are men, and they will need to be removed from female sports. The simple truth is that trans women are free to compete on the men's team or in open categories. Trans athletes are not being barred from anything but competing outside the class to which they belong by virtue of biology, age, weight and other relevant physical characteristics.

The Deputy Minister talked up the education work and the new curriculum on Relationship & Sexuality Education. We have always supported the requirement for evidence-based, age appropriate education on these issues. Nonetheless, Welsh Government has ignored the pleas of parents, students, teachers and others to consider the safeguarding implications of the imposed genderism, which means even the words 'boys' and 'girls' are omitted. Ms Blythyn claims that the Government has not endorsed any third party material, a statement best described as disingenuous: the Welsh Government logo features on AGENDA's materials for a start. We have found no evidence of efforts to broaden the approach beyond their specific ideological furrow.

Despite her own life as a lesbian, the Deputy Minister seems unable to recognise that gender non-conforming children suffer in schools and are very likely to grow up to be gay. In the fantasy Wales of 2022, they are at risk of being told, with no questions allowed, that they are trans. We would like to know who will be asked to draw up these promised guidelines, and what their expertise with gender non-conforming, lesbian and gay youngsters will be. Will the Deputy Minister give guarantees that any guidelines will ensure robust safeguarding of young people and comply with the law? Either way, they should be supported and discrimination against gender non-conformity should be banned. Leave our kids alone, we say!

The Deputy Minister also made great play on the importance of the health pathways for transgender young people. We would welcome such concern but we know that she means more unquestioning 'affirmation'. Her so-called review of the evidence must include recognising the growing chorus of concern from clinicians – from Finland to the United States – where professionals with decades of experience are stepping back from puberty blockers and binders. We know that watchful waiting, that talking therapy, are never 'conversion', but that demanding immediate transition does indeed risk transing away the gay. We urge the Government to ensure that specialists such as Dr Az Hakeem and detransitioners' voices are heard in developing such services. Most of all, we want to see a properly funded and local CAMHS service which can address the full spectrum of needs presented by unhappy and disturbed young people.

In Refugee Week we welcome Welsh Government's ongoing commitment to being a nation of sanctuary and opposition to deporting people to a country unfriendly to lesbians and gay men. Has the Minister listened to FiLiA's excellent [webinar](#) on life as a lesbian refugee? Will she recognise that lumping sexual orientation and gender identity together is a direct danger to lesbians as it identifies them to other refugees in camps, and they suffer ongoing violence and abuse, including sexual assault.

We again remind Welsh Government that [far more countries](#) criminalise same sex activity than cross-gender presentation, not least Qatar as the Minister recognised. We must repeat the point we made in our response that the explicit questioning proposed by the so-called 'Expert Panel' is an appalling idea. Applicants are legitimately scared that such information will be used against them if their claim is denied. The Minister's failure to address these real issues, rather than offer warm but ultimately meaningless words about what her Government can do, demonstrates the basic lack of evidence, consultation or awareness in her statement.

Have Welsh Government, Labour and Plaid Cymru been living in a fantasy world the last few months? The escalating harassment by activists, increasing concerns from clinicians, the clear evidence accepted by sports' governing bodies, the growing concerns of parents and teachers are all ignored. Hannah Blythyn needs to stop blithering and recognise reality, before it is too late.