

Brexit and Beyond: Our Future & Our Rights

Event Summary, Thursday 10th November
Hosted by LGBT Health and Wellbeing



About the event

As part of our ongoing series of community discussions, this November we invited the community to join special guests **MSP Michael Russell**, Minister for Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe and **Hannah Pearson**, Policy Coordinator at The Equality Network. Our focus for discussion was the outcome of the 2016 EU Referendum and the consequent impact on LGBTQI communities.



Chaired by LGBT Health's Jules Stapleton Barnes, the event included both a Q&A session with Brexit Minister, Michael Russell and the less formal opportunity for group discussions.

Questions were submitted by participants via the online booking form and formed the agenda for the Q&A, with time also to ask spontaneous questions in person.

30 people attended, bringing together people representing a diverse range of ages, LGBTQI identities and backgrounds.

Summary of Q & A with Michael Russell and Hannah Pearson

What have the Scottish Government been doing since June 24th 2016? (MR)

Mr Russell began by sharing that he has been a positive pro-Europe supporter since 1974. The UK government does not know what they want yet in regards to Brexit, which make negotiations for Scotland, complicated. There have been positive messages from Holyrood since the Brexit vote, including a commitment from the Scottish Government to ensure that the 'Remain' majority are represented in Brexit negotiations.

Has Scotland become more prejudice? What are the communities concerns in regards to safety in light of the vote to leave the UK? (HP)

Hannah explained that although an English based (Gallup) survey revealed recently, that LGBT hate crime has increased 140% since the Brexit vote, this survey was conducted with a very small sample size (100 respondents) from London and does not necessarily reflect the experiences of people across the UK.

Hannah explained that the EN have just completed a Scotland-wide Hate Crime survey of 1500 respondents.

This survey shows that 64% of respondents said they *had* experienced an LGBT hate crime over the last year and significantly, 80% of trans people had experienced

a hate crime over the last year. Worrying, 70% of people have not reported to the police.

Hannah reflected that whilst there isn't any evidence to suggest recorded hate crime has increased in Scotland, it is evident that concerning numbers of LGBTQI people are experiencing hate crime, and crucially, are not reporting it

Hannah invited the community to contact her should they wish to chat about the survey results.

Can our rights be taken away? (MR)

The Scottish Government will wish to ensure there is no regression but instead, continue to progress. Mr Russell believes we are able to do even better and take things further. He warned however, that politics is fluid and it is important that the Scottish Government continue to assert their values, but that people in Scotland also assert their values at every opportunity, particularly when voting.

Mr Russell provided the following suggestions for playing your part in protecting the progress and equality legislation we have in place:

1. Share your hopes and values with your friends and others you communicate with
2. Challenge prejudice and hate when you can
3. Be a witness; talk about what you have seen and heard
4. Sign petitions and educate yourself on political parties
5. Talk to the Equality Network
6. Speak, act, campaign and stand up for what you believe in

For LGBTQI people who are looking for work, how will the economy post-Brexit effect employment rates? (MR)

Mr Russell began by reminding the community that we are pre-Brexit, and we still don't know what kind of 'Brexit' it will be i.e. soft or hard. He explained that the fall in the value of the pound is inevitably going to make things more expensive, having a serious impact on those out of work or in lower paid jobs

What is going to happen to LGBTQI immigrants in Scotland, who have fled dangerous situations in their own countries? (MR)

Mr Russell began by stating that immigration is the lifeblood of Scotland, providing examples that 12% of the social care workforce are migrants, along with 60% of workers in Scottish abattoirs. The Scottish Government's position on immigration is that it is a very important issue and that migrants are wholly welcomed into Scotland and will not be asked to leave.

Going forward the Scottish Government wishes to ensure that migrants who settle in Scotland are fully supported to become happy, contributing members of society and that diversity is vital. He also stated "free movement of labour is crucial for a single market".

How will Minister Russell ensure the needs of LGBTQI people are represented in negotiations? (MR)

By attending events like these and listening to LGBTQI voices. By campaigning with you! (Mr Russell invited the community to invite him to do so).

Part two: Small group discussions

Three groups of participants were formed and Jules asked each group to consider one particular question for discussion, including:

What are your fears?

What are your aspirations?

What can we do as a community?

Inspired by the Q&A with Michael Russell earlier, each group spent time informally discussing their responses and then a representative fed back to the whole group.

Here is a summary of these discussions:

What are your fears?

- *Brexit will decrease diversity and tolerance*
- *Brexit will negatively impact the job market*
- *There is a threat to independence i.e. to investments into Scotland*
- *An acknowledgement that most were more concerned about the US election result and its effect on Scotland i.e. through DT's business links and right-wing influence on Scottish / UK politics*
- *The group discussed their concerns for the impact of the US election on LGBTQI people in the US and LGBTQI visitors to the US. Is it safe?*
- *The rise of right-wing movements across Europe and the effect it could have on LGBTQI rights*
- *An agreement that Scotland needs to continue to be progressive on the issue of rights*

What are you aspirations?

- *That people will stop taking things for granted and stand up and defend what we have (the progress we have made here in Scotland)*
- *Keep being active! That LGBTQI people will actively engage in politics; locally and more widely*
- *That our community becomes more inclusive and that we learn new ways to do this e.g. ask questions and find out what barriers there may be for some people getting involved in events or asking for support*
- *That we still feel hopeful and enthused and do not become complacent*
- *That the Scottish Govt continue to work together involving all parties, whilst maintaining a strong commitment to the values of equality and inclusion*
- *That people take an active interest in their local politicians, to ensure that fascist or far-right politicians are not being embedded at a local level*

What can we do as a community?

- *Design strategies for inclusion to reach new communities of people e.g. LGBTQI Muslims*
- *Stay together as an LGBTQI community and encourage unifying activities*
- *Participate! Increase the visibility of LGBTQI people as well as represent inclusive values of equality and inclusion in our daily lives*
- *Integrate with general population*
- *Challenge safe space issues every time they occur, ensuring we stand up for inclusive values and create safe spaces for all to participate in*
- *Educate ourselves but ask organisations to educate themselves too. IF we don't know how to communicate to certain people, learn how! If we don't know how to reach certain LGBTQI people, find out and ask for help from others who do*
- *Work hard to increase accessibility of community activities*

Closing reflections from Chair, Jules Stapleton Barnes

Hosted at an extremely challenging time during 2016, two days after the US election result was announced and only 5 months after the EU Referendum result, this event provided a safe space for reflection and self-expression. Bringing together people of

“The safe space feeling of being able to talk about those feelings and worries about the effect of Brexit. The presence of a representation of Equality Network is also very reassuring.”

different ages, backgrounds and identities it was hugely encouraging to hear people share opinions and hopes for the future. Where there were differences, they were addressed openly together in a respectful way.

It was a time for recognising the impact of these major events, naming the hurt in some cases, but standing together as a community and lifting our voices above it all.

Our thanks to guest speakers Michael Russell and Hannah Pearson, and importantly to all those who took time to come together. For listening and contributing thoughts and ideas for positive action to care for the health and wellbeing of our entire community both in the moment and far beyond.

Community reflections from the event

“I feel like I've been heard”

“I enjoyed hearing opinions of people from across the LGBTQI community and widening my own views and opinions on the topics.”

Insightful

“Hopefully you will continue to have funding to pay BSL interpreters in order that the deaf LGBTIQ community have access to information on various health topics.”

“Thank you hugely for the ability to be in a safe space to talk about these topics.”

“More of the same please! More presence from the parliament and organisations such as Equality Network.”

Useful contacts & links

The Equality Network

The Equality Network is a national charity working for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) equality and human rights in Scotland.

E: en@equality-network.org T: 0131 467 6039

Hannah Pearson, Policy Coordinator

E: hannah@equality-network.org

The Holyrood manifestos 2016

<http://www.equality-network.org/manifestos2016/>

The Referendum Result and LGBTI Equality

<http://www.equality-network.org/the-referendum-result-and-lgbti-equality/>

Scottish Transgender Alliance

The Scottish Transgender Alliance works to improve gender identity and gender reassignment equality, rights and inclusion in Scotland. The Scottish Transgender Alliance is based within the Equality Network. E: <http://www.scottishtrans.org/>

E: sta@equality-network.org T: 0131 467 6039

Police Scotland

E: <http://www.scotland.police.uk/your-community/edinburgh/>

Contact: In an emergency call 999 / For non-emergencies call 101

No place for any form of hate crime, says Chief Constable

<http://www.scotland.police.uk/whats-happening/news/2016/october/no-lace-in-scotland-for-any-form-of-hate-crime-says-chief-constable>

Report a hate crime

<http://www.scotland.police.uk/contact-us/hate-crime-and-third-party-reporting/>

LGBT Helpline Scotland

Information and support for LGBTQI people, those questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity and their families, friends and supporters.

Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 12-9pm:

Telephone support: **0300 123 2523**

Email support: helpline@lgbthealth.org.uk

Michael Russell, Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe

E: michael.russell.msp@scottish.parliament.uk T: 0131 348 5738