

Working for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equality

June 2010

The Coalition's 'Programme for Government' made clear our determination to take concerted action to tear down barriers to equal opportunities and to build a fairer society. The UK is a world leader for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB and T) equality, but we must not be complacent. That is why we are setting out an ambitious programme of work to tackle outdated prejudices and ensure equal chances for everyone, whatever their sexual orientation or gender identity. We will build on this programme by publishing an action plan later this year which will set out our detailed plans for delivery.

Schools

We will help schools tackle bullying, especially homophobic and transphobic bullying. As part of our drive to promote good behaviour in schools, we will ensure schools can effectively tackle bad behaviour and bullying with a particular focus on identifying and tackling homophobic and transphobic bullying. The new public sector Equality Duty included in the Equality Act 2010 would require schools to consider how to focus on this issue.

Workplaces

We will take a range of measures to end discrimination in the workplace. The Government has commissioned research to look at the barriers employers face in developing LGB and T friendly workplaces, which will report late in summer 2010. In the light of the findings of the research, we will consider what further steps we can take to support both large and small employers to embed LGB and T equality in their workplaces.

Family life

We are committed to supporting loving and stable families of all shapes and sizes and to protecting the rights of same-sex parents.

We will therefore continue to support the rights of gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals and same-sex couples to adopt and we will continue to ensure same-sex couples can both be recognised as the legal parents of their children.

Supporting same-sex relationships

Since the implementation of the Civil Partnership Act in December 2005, over 35,000 couples have formally registered their partnership, gaining vital legal protections where previously they had none. An amendment made to the Equality Act 2010 makes it possible to remove the express prohibition on civil partnerships taking place in religious premises. **We want to talk to those with a key interest in this issue about what the next stage should be for civil partnerships**, including how some religious organisations can allow same-sex couples the opportunity to register their relationship in a religious setting if they wish to do so.

Civil society

The Government has commissioned research to understand the barriers faced by LGB and T people participating in civil society. This is looking at a broad range of ways to participate, ranging from becoming a school governor to standing for Parliament. In light of the findings of the research, which will be published later in 2010, we will consider what further steps we can take to support LGB and T people to participate visibly, including developing tools to support those who want to participate but are unsure how to. This will ensure our communities and institutions can benefit from their skills and experience.

Sport

We will work with the Mayor of London and others to ensure a safe and successful Olympic and Paralympic Games in London 2012, that delivers a lasting legacy. **The Government will work with governing bodies of different sports to tackle homophobia and transphobia in sports**, so that people participating in and watching sport feel safe and unacceptable behaviour is challenged.

Public services

The Equality Act 2010 includes a new **public sector Equality Duty which places new duties on public bodies to actively tackle discrimination and harassment against LGB and T people and to consider their needs when designing and delivering services.** This would mean that public bodies such as hospitals and local councils would need to involve the LGB and T communities when planning their work and priorities. This will help them tackle barriers and promote participation. We will consult widely later this year on putting the new duty into effect.

Crime and justice

Hate crime

We will promote better recording of hate crimes against homosexual and transgender people, which are frequently not centrally recorded. We will improve access to, and the quality of, support and reporting services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender victims of hate crime.

We will also continue to review the progress made across Government and **consider what further steps could be taken to tackle homophobic and transphobic hate crime**. This will include raising awareness of transgender issues and increasing training for Crown Prosecution Service staff in dealing with transphobic hate crime cases.

Criminal convictions

We will change the law so that historical convictions for gay sex with over 16s will be treated as spent and will not show up on criminal record checks. Our society has changed and come a long way over the last few decades. Not only do these decriminalised convictions affect individuals' lives and their ability to participate fully in society, but they also send the wrong message about how we view gay and bisexual men in today's society. We have already begun work on this and hope to amend legislation by the end of 2011.

Promoting rights internationally

We will use our relationship with other countries to push for unequivocal support for gay rights and for UK civil partnerships to be recognised internationally.

Civil partnerships

We will update the list of overseas same-sex partnerships automatically recognised by the UK as equivalent to UK civil partnerships (Schedule 20 to the Civil Partnership Act 2004). We will also work bilaterally with other European countries to overcome the legislative or policy barriers which prevent UK civil partnerships being recognised abroad.

Asylum

We will stop the deportation of asylum seekers who have had to leave particular countries because their sexual orientation or gender identification puts them at proven risk of imprisonment, torture or execution.

The UK is recognised as a world leader on LGB and T rights. While we will use our international status to influence other countries, encourage them to repeal anti-homosexuality laws and show further understanding of LGB and T issues, we are also aware that this will not happen overnight.

In Europe

The UK will proactively work with and influence both the current and future holders of the EU Presidency to include a focus on LGB and T issues. We will continue to support a unified EU position on the rights of LGB and T people, including promoting LGB and T rights around the world as part of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Starting this year, **we will ensure that LGB and T issues are covered fully in the human rights fact sheets and reports** which EU Heads of Missions submit regularly to Brussels.

We will ensure implementation in the UK of the Council of Europe's recommendations – '*Measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity*'.

Worldwide

We will use our influence to encourage more countries to support the UN statement which calls on states to ensure that sexual orientation or gender identity may under no circumstances be the basis for criminal penalties.

We will support future UN statements on LGB and T rights, wherever possible. We will robustly examine the human rights records of other UN Member States towards LGB and T people, including through the UN led Universal Periodic Review.

We will proactively question the 42 Commonwealth countries which retain homophobic legislation, with a particular focus on those countries which have the death penalty for homosexual acts. We will also use the various Commonwealth meetings, including the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings in October 2011, to raise the profile of LGB and T equality.

We will continue to support overseas posts and Embassies in celebrating Pride events and the International Day against Homophobia in their locality.

Additional action for transgender equality

While work on LGB equality and T equality is often dealt with together due to the similar experiences of discrimination and prejudice LGB and T people may face, the issues for the transgender community are often distinct and it is therefore right that we also focus on these separately where necessary.

We will therefore work with transgender groups to develop a programme of specific action the Government will take to improve the lives of transgender people and **we will publish the first Government Action Plan on transgender equality** next year.

We will also commission a research project which will help us better understand the nature and size of the transgender population and provide greater clarity on the definition of various labels used (e.g. transsexual, transgender). This will help public bodies meet their duties to tackle discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

We will work to support the delivery of appropriate refuge support for transgender people in need of safe and secure accommodation in partnership with the transgender community and the third sector domestic violence service providers.



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