United Kingdom

Asylum

NGO UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group’s report “Still Falling Short” was published in July and found that asylum officers subject LGBTI asylum seekers to humiliating questioning and often rely on stereotypes.

Bias-motivated violence

In January, the University of Sussex reported on the rise of hate crimes against LGBT and Muslim communities in the UK, finding that 7 out of 10 people had been directly victimised in the past 3 years.

Published on 3 July, the National LGBT Survey report (see under Equality and non-discrimination) found that at least 2 in 5 LGBT people had experienced verbal or physical abuse, but 9 in 10 did not report it. In October, the government launched the Hate Crime Action Plan Refresh, including the need to review hate crime laws in England and Wales and provide training for the police. The Plan is inclusive of all five hate crime strands, including those based on “sexual orientation” and “transgender identity”.

Diversity

NGO Stonewall’s June-dated “LGBT in Britain: Home and Communities” report uncovered alarming rates of discrimination within the LGBT community, including racism against BAME LGBT people.

Education

Stonewall’s “LGBT in Britain: Trans Report” found that over a third of trans students in higher education have experienced negative comments or behaviour from staff in the last year.

On 8 November, the Scottish government announced its intention to embed LGBTI inclusive education in the curricula and inspection regime of all state schools, and provide teacher training. The announcement came in the wake of 33 recommendations by the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group, all accepted by the government.

In November, the Government finished consultation on a new draft guidance for the teaching of compulsory Relationships Education in all of England’s primary schools, and Relationships and Sex Education in all secondary schools. The draft guidance specifically mentioned LGBT young people, but gaps remain.

Employment

In LGBT NGO Stonewall’s annual workplace ranking of inclusive employers, announced on 31 January, the Welsh Assembly was named the 2018 best place to work for LGBT staff. For the first time, the top trans inclusive employers were also listed.

Equality and non-discrimination

On 3 July, the government published the findings of the “National LGBT Survey” that collected responses from 108,000 LGBT people in the UK. As a response, the government launched a 75-point “LGBT Equality Plan on Improving the Lives of LGBT People in Britain”. Labour MP Ged Killen condemned the Government not including NI in the action plan.

“No one should ever have to hide who they are or who they love. This LGBT action plan will set out concrete steps to deliver real and lasting change across society, from health and education to tackling discrimination and addressing the burning injustices that LGBT people face.”

Theresa May, Prime Minister

Earlier in the year, Stonewall released “LGBT in Britain: Trans Report”, revealing that almost half of trans people do not feel comfortable using public toilets due to fear and a third have been discriminated against because of their gender identity when visiting a café, restaurant, bar or nightclub in the last year.

On 10 October, the UK’s highest court unanimously ruled that Ashers bakery’s refusal to bake a cake with a slogan “Support Gay Marriage”, was not discriminatory. There is now concern over how the UK’s equality legislation will be applied by businesses.

On 8 June, the Presbyterian Church in NI voted in favour of a policy preventing anyone in a same-sex relationship from becoming a full member of the church and their children baptised.
Family
In January, the UK Court of Appeal allowed the appeal of a trans woman who had not been permitted to have direct contact with her five children following a previous High Court decision. The Court held that the best interests of the child must be the paramount consideration where contact is disputed by the parents. NI remains the only part of the UK where same-sex marriage is not legal. The Secretary of State for NI, Karen Bradley has said that she will not impose same-sex marriage on the region. A Private Members bill has been proposed in both houses, but without government support it is unlikely either will be passed. Stella Creasy MP and Conor McGinn MP secured cross-party support for an amendment to the NI bill, and NI will now have to address same-sex marriage.

Foreign policy
The LGBT Action Plan includes commitments regarding Commonwealth countries, including on discriminatory legislation. In November, the UK joined 15 other countries in launching an independent investigation into the abuses against LGBT people in Chechnya.

Freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment
The UK has been opposing “conversion therapies” for years, but on 2 July, the UK government announced that it will ban them as part of the Action Plan.

Health
Stonewall’s "LGBT in Britain: Health Report" was published in November, covering experiences of mental health and accessing health services.

A few days ahead of World AIDS Day, MP Lloyd Russell-Moyle announced to the House of Commons that he was HIV positive. Russell-Moyle later tweeted about the severe cuts in the NHS budget that affect access to PrEP.

Gender affirming healthcare services within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, the monopoly provider in NI, are at risk of collapse within the next 3 months pending staff changes and funding problems within the wider health and social care sector.

Human rights defenders
On 18 July, a week before Pride, the office of the Belfast based Rainbow Project was broken into and laptops and other property of staff was stolen.

Legal gender recognition
Following the positive example of Ireland, both England/Wales and Scotland are in the process of LGR law reform. The Scottish government proposed the new process to be based on statutory declaration, and available to people under 18. Scottish trans and LGBTI organisations called also for legal recognition of non-binary genders. In November, the Scottish Government released analysis of their public consultation, with 65% of respondents supporting the proposals.

The consultation for how best to reform the Gender Recognition Act 2004 in England and Wales ran from July until October. The UK Government are now analysing responses and will report back. Many called for a process of LGR based on self-determination with a simple statutory declaration, the legal recognition of non-binary identities, and for the minimum age to be lowered from 18 to 16.

The debate around the LGR reform process has further escalated anti-trans sentiments in the UK, and transphobic media portrayals.

The Gender Recognition Act reviews in England, Wales and Scotland have excluded NI, and the local Gender Identity Service, the monopoly provider of psychiatric reports to the Gender Recognition Panel in HM Courts and Tribunals Service, has stopped providing reports in 2018, effectively removing access to LGR in NI.

Participation in public, cultural and political life
The Labour Party announced that they are working on a policy on the inclusion of trans women on all-women shortlists for parliamentary seats, without a gender recognition certificate. This step follows heated debates in media about Lily Madigan, a trans teenager who was elected women’s officer at her constituency Labour party in Kent. In January, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn stated “self-identifying transgender women are women”. 
In January, the Scottish Parliament passed legislation to require public bodies to move to at least 50% women on their boards, including trans women.

In June, John Blair became the first openly gay member of the NI Assembly.

The UK Government Equalities Office has moved to recruit a representative LGBT Advisory Panel from the UK population, with interviews being held in March 2019.

**Public opinion**

The Equality Commission for NI published their “2016 Equality Impact Awareness Survey” results showing that attitudes towards both LGB people and trans people have improved significantly across NI in all age groups and demographics.

**Sexual and reproductive rights**

Wales became one of the few countries in the world that made LGBT-inclusive sex education mandatory. In May, the Welsh Government announced that primary and secondary schools will be required to teach Relationships and Sexuality Education from 2022, in a way that fully includes LGBTQI+ learners.

Campaigns continue in NI to decriminalise and legalise abortion. Currently abortion is illegal in NI in most circumstances. In June, a Supreme Court ruling stated that the current law surrounding abortion in NI was in breach of human rights legislation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT RAINBOW-EUROPE.ORG