



Young People's Rights Review

John Walker MSYP - LGBT Bullying in Schools

Good Afternoon, I am John Walker and I am one of the MSYPs for Almond Valley in West Lothian. In my consultations I received 84 online responses and managed to speak with around 20 young people face to face. In light of that, today I will be speaking about LGBT inclusiveness and bullying in Scottish Schools. Article 2 of the UNCRC states that: *'No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.'* Young people also have rights to be safe, healthy and heard in school.

Now, there is no doubt in my mind that Scotland is a hugely inclusive and equal nation and that we, in this country, continue to strive for a truly equal society. This can be seen through public gatherings such as the Pride events which take part every year in our cities, and the legislation passed through our Parliament, and the apology issued by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon MSP to Gay and Bisexual men who were convicted for having consensual sexual relations. But my constituents say lot more can be done to make sure that we are making our nation a place where young people are not afraid to be themselves.

In Stonewall's School Report Scotland 2017, 402 young people between the ages of 11 and 19 inclusive were asked to fill in an online survey about their experiences of being LGBT in Schools. Of those 402 young people:

- Half of them - including 71% of transsexual young people said that they had been the subject of bullying because they are LGBT
- Nine in Ten LGBT young people regularly hear phrases like 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay' in school
- 44% of LGBT young people who experience homophobic, Biphobic, or Transphobic bullying never tell anyone about it

I think we can all agree that these figures are unacceptable in this day and age, and that something needs to be done about it.

I welcome the actions in the draft Children and Young People's Rights National Action Plan on the PSE review, support for the delivery of the refreshed National Approach to Anti-Bullying, and updating the toolkit to dealing with homophobia and homophobic bullying in schools. These developments are fantastic.

However, through my consultations with West Lothian young people, they have some further ideas on how we can work to ensure that no young person feels scared to be themselves.

- **Schools and local authorities should give teachers comprehensive training on how to combat all bullying, including LGBTI+ bullying, in schools.**
- **The Relationships education delivered in PSHE classes from Primary 6 to 6th Year should cover same sex relationships in the same depth as it covers mixed sex ones.**

So, to reiterate, Scotland is a great country to live in, but a lot more can be done to make sure that young people can grow up being themselves.