

To: Council

On: 13 December 2018

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Promoting LGBTQIA Equality in Schools

1. Summary

- 1.1 In September 2016, Council agreed a motion in relation to working with other organisations to promote equality and inclusivity and ensure that homophobic bullying is effectively tackled in Renfrewshire schools. This report summarises some of the approaches taken in Renfrewshire's schools to support those with LGBTQIA identities and to promote positive relationships and inclusivity.
- 1.2 Throughout this report, the term LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual) is used, to reflect the fact that policies and activities to support inclusion are focused not only on sexual orientation but on gender identity too.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that elected members note:
- the ongoing work in Renfrewshire schools to promote and celebrate inclusivity in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity; and
 - the announcement by the Scottish Government with regard to LGBTQIA in education.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the meeting of 29 September 2016, Council approved a motion agreeing that Renfrewshire Council would work closely with the Time for Inclusive Education campaign, the Scottish Government, and equalities organisations to ensure that homophobic bullying in Renfrewshire schools is effectively tackled and that Renfrewshire's classrooms actively promote equality and inclusivity for young people with LGBTI identities.
- 3.2 The number of reported homophobic bullying incidents in Renfrewshire schools has historically been very low – two incidents reported in 2016/17 and three in 2017/18. Since August 2017, Renfrewshire schools have been recording all bullying incidents on SEEMIS (the information system used in schools across Scotland) rather than relying on paper-based recording for bullying incidents. The scope which an electronic system provides schools with means that more information can be reported on centrally. Consequently, the number of reported incidents may increase but this provides greater assurance that all incidents are being captured. The system also allows for distinct reporting on specific prejudice-based bullying (e.g. homophobic bullying).
- 3.3 The delivery of positive messages about inclusivity and celebrating diversity, including but not restricted to LGBTIQ identities, is not new in Renfrewshire schools. Section 4 of this report provides some examples on ongoing work in individual schools.
- 3.4 In November 2018, the Deputy First Minister announced that all 33 recommendations of the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group will be implemented. The Scottish Government will support all state schools to teach LGBTI inclusion and equality across different age groups and subjects. The Working Group will now be re-established as an Implementation Group and Children's Services will monitor guidance as it emerges.

4. Promoting LGBTQIA Equality and Inclusion in Renfrewshire's Schools

- 4.1 In August 2018, the Education and Children's Services Policy Board approved a revised anti-bullying policy which is being implemented in all Renfrewshire Council schools. This policy states that the aim in Renfrewshire's schools is to create environments where bullying cannot thrive. The approach to tackling bullying is one where children's rights are promoted and respected, and where diversity is celebrated. The policy sets out explanations of prejudice-based bullying and protected characteristics as defined by the Equalities Act 2010.

- 4.2 Renfrewshire Council has a Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) Programme which schools can use to support the curriculum in Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE). The way in which the curriculum is delivered is set by the Head Teacher and the school's Senior Leadership Team, and schools may choose to work with a number of different organisations.
- 4.3 In relation to specifically LGBTIQA, schools in Renfrewshire have worked variously with organisations such as Time for Inclusive Education, Stonewall Scotland, LGBT Scotland, and LGBT Youth Scotland, to promote and support the wellbeing of LGBT+ young people. As well as these, schools also make use of resources from organisations including the NHS, Respectme, and the Scottish Catholic Education Service.
- 4.4 Equality and inclusivity in relation to LGBTQIA communities are in evidence in Renfrewshire schools. Nursery and primary schools use age-appropriate resources such as class stories and topics within PSHE to discuss relationships and LGBT issues. Some have used LGBT History Month as an opportunity to cover LGBT in more depth at assemblies.
- 4.5 Several secondary schools have LGBT groups for pupils, and in one school the group has developed PSE lessons for other pupils. Teachers reported that this had a positive impact on pupil relationships across the school. Another school is establishing an LGBT working group which will be made up of staff and pupils and will look at ways in which the school can make positive changes and celebrate diversity in Renfrewshire schools. In November 2018, teachers from each secondary establishment, including ASN schools, have been invited to attend training provided by LGBT Youth Scotland, in conjunction with Renfrewshire Health Improvement Team and Children's Services.
- 4.6 One secondary school developed an "Attitudes to Language" survey for use during anti-bullying week in the session 2017/18. The survey looked at the use of homophobic language in the school and in the wider community. Others have done particular work on homophobic bullying as part of the wider approach to tackling bullying behaviour.
- 4.7 All of Renfrewshire's schools are refreshing their anti-bullying policies to reflect both the new corporate policy and national guidance. These policies will have a clear focus on tackling prejudice-based bullying.
- 4.8 The Acting Director recently met with Renfrewshire Youth Voice regarding pupil input into secondary school PSHE programmes, including on LGBTIQA issues. The young people have committed to developing a presentation to take to a future Secondary Heads meeting. This will be supported by the Acting Director.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - none
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - none
3. **Community/Council Planning**

Our Renfrewshire is fair – the work outlined in this report demonstrates a commitment in schools to tackling discrimination and promoting equality and diversity.
4. **Legal** – none
5. **Property/Assets** – none
6. **Information Technology** – none
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report, as it is for noting only.
8. **Health & Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** – none
11. **Privacy Impact** - none
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – none

List of Background Papers

None

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