

Gender Proposal; Equality Commission

Very positive experience, lots of free debate and mixed groups so that workshops were held with people from different sectors which promoted discussion.

Issues I contributed to the discussion on our behalf:

- First proposed priority was the issue of “stereotyping”. There was some dissent over whether should actually constitute a distinct section or whether it feeds directly into all the other proposed priority sections. I felt as though the focus on stereotyping at the beginning of the paper gave good context and exposition before moving to the more specific priorities. Regardless, the content of the section, it was agreed, was mostly spot on.
- **Education:** Sensitivity “lessons” regarding the LGBTQ+ spectrum should be compulsory within schools. Whilst some argued that acceptance won’t happen without having political leaders setting a good example I, and some other group members, managed to argue that this is a deeply flawed statement. If we wait on Stormont we’ll have evolved into machines before acceptance flourishes.
- I also stressed that dealing with bullies should not be the main focus of schools but that prevention of bullying should be the primary focus. Whilst bullying should obviously be dealt with, our aim should be to prevent it from ever getting that far.
- **Employment:** I put forward Michael’s point that whilst there may be less discrimination within work places (due to the laws in place designed to prevent this) there is still a lot of ignorance. I described Michael’s experience of being told to provide a birth certificate despite it not matching his gender identity. This was taken on board and it was suggested that whilst there was been some progress against discrimination more thorough education needs to go on within the employment sector.
- **Political and Public Life:** I noted that more trans people might be able to break into politics if their own politics were given some support. I noted that the transforum is fracturing and that the political sphere should provide, not just resources, but people willing to spend the time making sure that the forum can run. I suggested that once this occurs more people from the trans spectrum may be confident enough to run for more prominent position.
- I also said that making trans people more visible in the “public community” might actually be counter intuitive to the movement. Whilst some trans people want to be visible, others would rather drop the “trans” from

transwoman and simply be known as their true gender. Therefore, visibility may not be the main focus of what we should aim for. Perhaps, acceptance and tolerance are more important than knowing someone's previous legal gender status.

- When asked how to make trans issues more public without making the trans individuals open to public ridicule I suggested the media. Since there has been an explosion of trans documentaries and series recently I suggested that a system for editing these so that they are promoted in a sensitive way is a useful awareness tool.
- **Hate Crime:** I noted that many people had poor experiences with the police in the past and that this has discouraged other people from reporting crime, perpetuating the idea that the police won't be of any help. I suggested that sensitivity training in specific areas was needed within the police, possibly followed by an awareness campaign before hate crime is reported more often.
- **Health and Social Care:** Again I highlighted that whilst there is discrimination within the healthcare system this could be tackled by tackling the ignorance leading to discrimination. I gave the example of Adrienne's experience with the fertility clinic. I explained that, if the staff were made more aware and sensitive, Adrienne would feel far more comfortable going. I also added that the system and structure of the health care system needs to be addressed. For example, when giving your name at the check-in desk and accompanying this with important notes (e.g transfemale) then this would prevent the need to ask questions which could potentially embarrass someone.
- **Sport:** I told the commission that there are some issues with recreational sport centres. I outlined Michael and Adrienne's objections about swimming pools and the confusion going to a swimming pool causes. I, again, emphasised that there has been a lack of thought about accommodating trans people and that should change. I suggested that simply having rules somewhere, suggestions of guidelines, this would make trans people more relaxed in attending these places. I also emphasised that these rules should be weighed in on by the trans community and not enforced by anyone else.

Should we wish to add anything else to this list of recommendations we should simply email Simon Hookham at: shookham@equalityni.org

I'll bring the full proposal to the next meeting!

I hope that I represented the Butterfly Club and its members' opinions well!

Charley.