



WEN Café: Impact of Covid-19 on LGBT+ Rights

29th May 2020

Summary of discussion

Speakers:

Shon Faye, Stonewall Cymru

Michelle Pooley, CEO of West Wales Domestic Abuse Service

Michelle Delaney, LGBT Sports Wales

Speakers discussed health concerns for LGBT+ members, both physical and mental, arising out of the Covid-19 crisis and the ways in which access to care have changed. The panel also explored potential strategies for change.

Issues Discussed

- The Covid-19 pandemic has been a significant challenge for LGBT+ people who are locked in with people who are hostile to their identities. This has a significant impact on mental health, threatens physical safety, and brings with it the risk of homelessness.
- Cases of domestic violence and abuse have increased during Covid. Statistically, trans people are more at risk of domestic abuse and/or violence.
- Where LGBT+ members have left supportive communities, such as university, and returned home to a less supportive peer group, their mental health has suffered. However, some LGBT+ members, whose identities were not respected at school, have experienced an increase in their mental wellbeing.
- 'Non-urgent' health needs, such as sexual health, have been delayed as a result of Covid. This has meant that there is an increased backlog in specialist healthcare for trans people.
- Weight loss is often necessary prior to some medical surgeries in the trans community but fear of doing sport has made this difficult. Covid has exacerbated this issue as some groups are doing less physical activity, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- Domestic violence services are working with more trans women than previously. They have seen an increase in women accessing the service through social media.

- Although there are still psychological support appointments for trans women going on in the Welsh services, diagnostic appointments have stopped for the time being. Trans adults in Wales can access their initial appointments in Wales but the under 18 service is centralised in London and requires travel. This is difficult in light of travel restrictions.
- Access to safe spaces have been hugely restricted.

Strategies for Change

- Trans women need allies in the community. Important to encourage this in sport, healthcare, and within the curriculum.
- The women's sector needs to be LGBT allies and continue to encourage support for trans women. WEN will update 2018 statement on supporting trans rights.
- Discussion about housing and UC as an LGBT issue. Lack of housing provision for young people who are not safe at home.
- Important that already-gained rights are not lost and that progression is not put on hold as a result of Covid. LGBT policy should be threaded throughout all policy and practice.