

COMMITTEE ON EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY EOC 06-02(p2)

Date: Thursday 17 October 2002
Time: 9.00am
Venue: Committee Rooms, National Assembly Building
Title: **LGB Forum Cymru**

Outline

Business Plan

2002 to 2005

Draft September 2002

1. Introduction

The LGB Forum Cymru is a new organisation working towards equality and social justice for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Wales.

The Forum is the only all Wales organisation of its type. It acts as a voice for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Wales at the National Assembly, in local authorities and in the Welsh media. The Forum acts as an expert advisor to the Assembly's Equality of Opportunity Committee and works with organisations across the country for a fairer Wales.

The Forum is unique in being the only government sponsored forum for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the UK. The National Assembly helps to finance the Forum through its Promoting Equality in Wales Project Development Fund.

Stonewall, the UK wide gay and lesbian rights organisation, works in partnership with the Forum in Wales. The partnership enables the Forum to bring a strong Welsh dimension to Stonewall's work. The Forum benefits from Stonewall's experience and successful record in promoting gay, lesbian and bisexual equality at the UK level.

Consultation is a key part of the Forum's work. Since its launch in 2001 the Forum has been committed to involving LGB individuals and organisations across Wales in all aspects of its work. The Forum will continue to ensure its actions are relevant to the lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Wales.

The Forum is well placed to contribute to the process of promoting equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Wales. Through lobbying, the promotion of best practice and by helping to change public attitudes, the Forum believes it can make a difference.

On the basis of these strengths, this business plan sets out the Forum's proposed development over the next three years, 2002 to 2005.

2. LGB Forum Cymru Current position

- LGB Forum Cymru works to secure legal equality and social justice for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Wales.
- The Forum works in partnership with Stonewall, which provides personnel, finance and management support to the Forum, as well as expertise in the field.
- The Forum is part-financed by the Welsh Assembly Government to provide advice and information about issues of concern to LGB people.
- The Forum seeks to represent lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Wales through consultation with Forum members, LGB organisations, individuals and community groups.
- The Forum is committed to working in partnership with relevant bodies to further its objectives.
- The Forum is a membership organisation. Its members elect the governing body, the Executive

Committee, at an Annual General Meeting.

- The Forum currently employs 2 staff based in Cardiff and Bangor.

3. Context of business plan 2002 to 2005

There has been significant progress towards equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in recent years. We now have an equal age of consent; Gay, lesbian and bisexual people can serve in the armed forces; and there will be protection against discrimination in employment for lesbian, gay and bisexual people for the first time from December 2003. We have come a long way.

However, lesbians and gay men across the UK do not yet have full equality. There is no legal recognition for lesbian and gay partnerships. Same-sex partners are not recognised by hospitals as next of kin and do not qualify for pension scheme partner benefits. Section 28 is still in place in England and Wales. The new employment legislation will not provide protection to lesbian, gay and bisexual people against discrimination in the provision of goods and services.

In terms of social justice we are perhaps more behind in Wales than in other parts of the UK. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Wales lack support services and commonly face multiple discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation combined with geographical, cultural and first language isolation. A significant proportion of lesbian and gay people who grow up in Wales feel forced to leave for the more cosmopolitan cities of England where they can live more openly and honestly.

In Wales it is not difficult to find examples of homophobia in schools, in the media and on the street.

Fortunately devolution has given us the opportunity to start to change the situation of lesbian, gay and bisexual people for the better and to find solutions appropriate to Wales. The Assembly has already revised several key policies to recognise Wales' LGB population as a result of consultation with the Forum and its members.

There is a substantial amount of need in Wales, but there is also an opportunity for

change. In this context the Forum has developed a business plan that concentrates on areas of greatest need with priority given to areas where we believe we can make a difference.

4. Proposed programme of work

Our aim

The LGB Forum Cymru aims to achieve legal equality and social justice for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Wales. The Forum believes in a society that celebrates diversity and where discrimination and prejudice are always challenged. The Forum works towards equality through political persuasion, legal argument and by encouraging social and institutional change. We work in partnership with Wales's lesbian, gay and bisexual communities as well as other minority communities and wider society.

Strategic objectives

The Forum will work to:

1. enable LGB people to play a full part in their communities and to access support in their local areas;
2. make Wales a safer place for LGB people to live free from harassment, discrimination, bullying or hate crime and the fear of these: in education, in the work place, and in our daily lives;
3. promote the health and well-being of LGB people in Wales and ensure equitable access to health services;
4. achieve equality of rights for LGB people in Wales;
5. raise awareness in Wales of the issues facing LGB people and promote the positive contribution LGB people make.

This section outlines the proposed work programme for the LGB Forum Cymru for the three years 2002 to 2005. Some areas will contribute to the ongoing work of partner organisations. Other areas are new work instigated by the Forum. Within the five strategic objectives set out, the Forum has identified key priorities for year one. These are set out in

The Forum will work to:

1. enable LGB people to play a full part in their communities and to access support in their local areas. The Forum will:

- map existing service provision across Wales and identifying need in consultation with local people;
- use this information to develop a plan for a comprehensive network of services;
- work in partnership to ensure appropriate and good quality services,
- enable LGB groups to provide these services through facilitating a training programme to build skills;
- work with statutory, charitable and corporate funders to ensure investment in the LGB voluntary sector.

4.2 make Wales a safer place for LGB people to live free from harassment, discrimination, bullying or hate crime and the fear of these: in education, in the work place, and in our daily lives. The Forum will,

in education:

- review current policies and practices that seek to make Welsh schools, colleges and universities a safer place for LGB people;
- build on this review to identify good and bad practice, and to develop an action plan;
- work in partnership with the Welsh Assembly to ensure education policies meet the needs of LGB people;
- work in partnership with other agencies in the education sector to develop appropriate actions;
- provide information and advice to education institutions.

in the work place:

- identify good and bad practice in employment policies;
- work in partnership with public, private and voluntary sector, employers and employee organisations to promote equality in the workplace;
- work with other equality organisations in Wales to ensure the provision of advice and information to employers and employees;

- work closely with Stonewall to influence employment legislation at the UK level.

in our daily lives:

- work with local authorities across Wales to ensure their Crime and Disorder Strategies include action to tackle hate crime against LGB people;
- work in partnership with the police, community safety organisations and LGB groups to raise awareness of homophobic hate crime and to develop effective steps to tackle these crimes;
- work with the Home Office and Welsh Assembly Government's Crime Director to secure funding for tackling hate crime at a national level in Wales.

4.3 promote the health and well-being of LGB people in Wales and ensure equitable access to health services. The Forum will:

- undertake research into the extent of discrimination faced by LGB employees of the health service and health service users;
- develop a strategy for tackling this discrimination;
- work with health sector organisations to improve standards of care and appropriate health promotion campaigns;
- facilitate the development of support and advice services to lesbian, gay and bisexual people working in the health sector.

4. achieve equality of rights for LGB people in Wales. The Forum will:

- gather evidence of current inequalities faced by LGB people in Wales;
- work in partnership with Stonewall to lobby for legal equality at UK Government level;
- work with Welsh Assembly Government to ensure all new Welsh legislation is inclusive of LGB people and promotes equality;
- promote equal rights for LGB people in all aspects of Welsh society.

4.5 raise awareness in Wales of the issues facing LGB people and promote the

positive contribution LGB people make. The Forum will:

- undertake research into the experiences of gay, lesbian and bi-sexual people in Wales in order to quantify levels of social exclusion, prejudice and discrimination and to establish a benchmark against which to measure progress;
- develop high profile awareness campaigns on particular issues facing LGB people;
- build relationships with the Welsh media in order to promote positive images of LGB people in the media;
- develop an events programme to include Forum representation at key events, as well as a series of self organised conferences, road shows, briefings etc.;
- challenge publicly discrimination and prejudice whenever it occurs.

4.6 Organisational commitments

The Forum will:

- develop an action planning process for each strategic objective during the three year

period;

- produce actions plans that are outcome focused, time limited and task specific;
- develop outcome measures and performance targets;
- evaluate performance against the stated measures on a regular basis;
- undertake a review of its objectives in three years.

4.7 Core work

In addition to pursuing the organisation's strategic objectives, the Forum will continue its work in other core areas.

Policy advice

As part of the funding agreement with the Assembly, the Forum will continue to provide policy advice and information to the Assembly and other organisations on matters affecting lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Wales. The work will include:

- acting as advisor to the National Assembly's Equality of Opportunity Committee;
- developing responses to Government consultations that concern lesbian, gay and bisexual people;
- regular liaison with local government policy officers.

Partnership and networking development

The Forum is committed to working in partnership. The Forum will continue to work in partnership with other agencies and to facilitate networking between LGB groups and individuals. The Forum will:

- keep partner organisations informed about the work of the Forum through its biannual newsletter as well as information on the Forum website;
- build partnerships with key organisations including local and national Government, other equality organisations, the business and voluntary sectors;
- facilitate networking between LGB groups and individuals through the Forum website;
- incorporate time around Executive Committee meetings for local groups and individuals to exchange ideas and information with Committee members.

Profile of Forum

The Forum will seek to promote the work of the Forum and publicise issues of concern to lesbian, gay and bisexual people through the media. The Forum will:

- develop an annual publicity programme setting out the events the Forum will attend across Wales;
- develop a press protocol to guide the Forum's media work and maximise its effectiveness;
- respond to issues of concern to LGB people in the Welsh media;
- build a database of contacts in the Welsh media.

Membership

The Forum is committed to keeping members informed about its work. The Forum will:

- produce and distribute a biannual newsletter to Forum members;
- develop and maintain a Forum website to provide information about the Forum and facilitate contact between the Forum and its members;
- consult members regularly on the work of the Forum;
- organise an Annual General Meeting at which Forum members elect the Executive Committee.

5. Priorities for year one (2002-03)

It is important that the Forum has a clear focus and effectively delivers on all five of the strategic objectives over the three year period of the business plan.

The Forum has limited resources with a staff team of just two people and will need to focus annually on specific priorities within the five strategic objectives. Over the course of

the three years the work of the Forum will build incrementally as some areas of work are completed and others start.

The following are proposed as priority areas for action during year one:

- accessing local services/community development?
- education
- employment
- public awareness

Accessing local services/ community development

The lack of LGB services across Wales and the need to provide support to existing projects came out strongly during consultation. This is an area where we believe we can add value in the short term and help provide a strategic approach to community development in Wales.

Education

During our consultation exercises, education was identified to be the major priority area for Welsh lesbian, gay men and bisexual people. Section 28 and homophobic bullying were particular issues of concern. As a result the Forum will develop an action plan of work on the theme of education.

Employment

Next year will see the introduction of new legislation to provide some protection for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the workplace. The Forum believes it is vital to plan now in order that legislation is implemented effectively and that employees and employers are aware of their rights and responsibilities from the outset.

Public awareness

Major barriers to achieving equality are ignorance and prejudice. Raising public awareness about the positive contribution LGB people make as well as the issues facing LGB people are crucial. Awareness raising is often the first step to reform. It underpins all of the other strategic objectives and therefore is a priority area of work that needs to be scheduled at the start of the Forum's work.

It is proposed that multi-agency task groups are established to develop an annual action plan for each of this years priority areas.

6. Consultation

The Forum would value your feedback on the Business Plan 2002-05. We would be grateful if you would submit a written response to each of the following questions, and send them to the Forum in the prepaid envelope provided.

The Forum would like feedback on the following issues.

1. Do you agree with the Forum's strategic objectives. If not, how would you change them and why?

2. Do you agree with the Forum's priorities for year one? If not what would be your priority areas? (Note that areas not prioritised for year one will be scheduled later in the three-year work programme).

3. Please provide any further comments you have about the proposed business plan?