Meeting of:  Equality Conference LGBT+ Members

Location:  Manchester Conference Centre, Sackville Street, Manchester, M1 3BB

Date:  Saturday 1 December 2018

Unconfirmed minutes

Present  Andy Bannister  Central Group London & South East
Mark Bendall  University of Chester
Sherleen Benjamin  University of Edinburgh
Catherine Booth  University of Manchester
Steve Boyce  People Plus Prison Branch (Chair)
Simon Bruce-Jones  Telford College
Peta Bulmer  University of Liverpool
David Calderwood  University of Strathclyde
Carl-Ludwig Campbell  London School of Economics
Martin Chivers  City University of London
Rachel Cowgill  University of Huddersfield
Rohit Dasgupta  Loughborough University
Steve Davis  University of Westminster
Stephen Desmond  Southampton Solent University
Helen Dodds  University of Birmingham
Jennifer Dods  Leeds Beckett University
Anthony Drummond  Leeds Beckett University
Kathryn Dutton  York St John University
Jill Eades  Salford University
Amanda Egbe  University of Bedfordshire
Claire English  Queen Mary University of London
Peter Evans  South Thames College
Deej Fabyc  City University of London
JeffersonFrank  Royal Holloway, University of London
Craig Gent  University of Warwick
Razan Ghazzawi  University of Sussex
Louise Goddy  Accrington and Rossendale College
Harriet Hamilton  University of Sussex
Tamsyn Hawkins  Suffolk New College
Gabriel Hawkins-Pottier  University of Manchester
Philip Inglesant  University of Oxford
Mary Jennings  University of Cambridge
Phevos Kallitsis  University of Portsmouth
Mariam Kauser  University of West London
Iftikhar Malik  Bath Spa University
David Murphy  University of Cumbria
Mark Pendleton  University of Sheffield
Megan Povey  University of Leeds
1 Welcome and housekeeping

1.1 Steve Boyce, the Chair, welcomed the delegates to the LGBT+ members annual conference. Following Congress the standing orders have been amended and now the committee is LGBT+ instead of LGBT, to make it more inclusive.

1.2 Steve Boyce introduced himself as the Co-Chair of LGBT+ Committee. Ryan Prout who is the other co-chair had sent his apologies, as he was chairing another conference overseas. Steve Boyce is the FE LGBT+ Members’ rep on NEC and Ryan Prout is the HE LGBT+ Members’ Rep on NEC.

2 Role and function of the conference

2.1 Steve Boyce explained the role and function of the conference.

2.2 LGBT+ Members Standing Committee (LGBT+MSC) advises the National Executive Committee (NEC) through the Equality Committee on matters pertaining to LGBT+ issues. The Equality Committee consults LGBT+MSC on LGBT+ policy issues such as motions passed at Congress which need to be actioned.

2.3 LGBT+MSC members are elected at this conference.

2.4 Motions are considered from members. However no motions have been submitted this year or the past couple of years. Steve Boyce urged members to think about matters pertaining to LGBT+ members and to submit a motion at next year’s conference.

2.5 The function of the conference is also to scrutinise the work done by LGBT+MSC and to guide the work for next year.

3 Introductory address

3.1 Steve Boyce has been chairing this conference for the last three years but will be retiring next year. He will be making representation on behalf of older LGBT+ members who are often overlooked as a retired member.

3.2 The conference is a safe place to address LGBT+ issues. LGBT+MSC have produced several guides over the course of the year which are well received by TUC and other unions.
3.3 Steve Boyce thanked Seth Atkin, Helen Carr, Swati Patel, Sue Bajwa and all the other staff of UCU.

4 Conference Business

4.1 Adoption of standing orders

4.2 It was agreed to run the business of the conference in accordance to the standing orders which were in the delegation packs.

4.3 Steve Boyce explained the code of conduct reiterating that members should respect each other when speaking, as language is a powerful tool and can offend or seriously damage someone’s life. However it was important to have an honest and open debate.

4.4 Motions to LGBT+ Members’ Conference

4.5 No motions were submitted to the LGBT+ conference.

4.6 Elections for the LGBT+ Members Standing Committee (LGBT+MSC)

4.7 Jennie Appleyard, Louise Goody and Lee Williscroft-Ferries were elected to the LGBT+MSC.

4.8 There were still three places for co-option for one year. If any member present wanted to be co-opted, they were advised to contact Sue Bajwa. If more than three members apply to be co-opted, then the existing LGBT+MSC would decide, as to who will be co-opted taking into consideration the balance of the committee.

4.9 LGBT+MSC meets three times a year on a Friday in Carlow Street. Also committee members have the option of attending TUC LGBT+ Workers Conference.

4.10 Report of the LGBT+ MSC, Steve Boyce, Chair of the LGBT+MSC

4.11 A lot of work has been done in the last year. A basic guide on raising awareness on intersectionality has been produced.

4.12 More work is being done on bi-sexuality and trans issues. In the prison service there is better provision for trans people but more work still needs to be done.

4.13 LGBT+MSC is working closely with external organisations such as Amnesty International (AI) to promote LGBT+ rights. There is still homophobia in a lot of countries. AI is still continuing to work in Chechnya. In countries like America the rights gained are going backwards so it is important not to be complacent.

4.14 It is vital to continue to struggle or fight to ensure that LGBT+ lifestyles are fully accepted and tolerated.

4.15 The list of priorities include:

- Promoting LGBT+ equality
- Challenging lack of LGBT+ presence and heteronormativity
• Action against anti-LGBT+ bullying  
• Campaign for inclusive collection of data.

4.16 Everyone in the room was thanked for their support and work, to achieve and enshrine rights of LGBT+ people.

4.17 All the members of the standing committee were thanked for their work over the course of the last year.

4.18 Comments included:

• Are we comfortable with the corporatisation of Pride? In some Prides, like London, the people who have struggled for LGBT+ rights are being pushed to the back of the march.

• In Leeds the trans block was at the front of the Pride march.

• Why is there no presence of UCU at local Prides in Scotland such as Edinburgh and Glasgow, even in terms of resources at stalls?

• How is the equality banner booked for Pride or any other march?

4.19 Steve Boyce responded:

• LGBT+ has had long discussion about the commercialisation of Prides, but feel that it is important to still have presence, as it would be a disservice to members and community if UCU did not have a presence.

• This year UCU did not have a stall at London Pride. UCU is part of the TUC block in the Pride but unfortunately there is no say in where the TUC section is placed in the march.

• UCU now has a stall at the Black Pride which takes place the following day and it is deemed good to put the resources into this Pride as it is well received by the community.

• At the last TUC LGBT+ Workers meeting, Pride was discussed and unions wanted ethical sponsorship guidelines. It was a contentious issue. Unions who are the biggest donors to the TUC lead on the issue and did not want to have too stringent ethical guidelines, as they have many members who work for corporate organisations. The discussion is going to continue but it is going to be difficult to have stringent guidelines.

• How to resource Prides in Scotland and ways of ensuring UCU presence will be discussed at LGBT+ committee meetings. There are more local Prides taking place. UCU has to urge members to take part in these stalls with Seth Atkin, the Equality Support Official putting out information to members on the resources available and how they can be requested.

• In order to book the banner, one needs to write or email the equality team who are based at Carlow Street.

4.20 Steve Boyce then introduced Martin Chivers who is the UCU rep on the TUC
LGBT+ Workers Committee. Martin Chivers gave an outline of the issues raised over the last year at this committee.

4.21 Gender Recognition Act (GRA)

- GRA was a main focus for over a year. In November 2017 both the TUC LGBT+ Committee and Women’s Committee had an open dialogue, on the joint working for self-declaration administrative process. It was part of the TUC Equality Strategy. In February it changed with a trans inclusion motion going to TUC Women’s conference which was discussed and passed. A couple of unions had internal issues over trans issues.

- In May the GRA consultation was due to take place, but the committees were unable to go forward with a joint position. In July the issue became extremely toxic even within the TUC LGBT+ committee. A clear motion regarding GRA based on self-identification passed without controversy at TUC LGBT+ conference, and went on to TUC Congress, where there was a passionate and respectful debate with the motion clearly passing. In September there was an emergency committee meeting and a response to the consultation was submitted.

4.22 Decriminalisation of Sex Work

- Women’s Committee had a motion on sex workers that went to TUC Congress (2017) that did not reference the LGBT+ motion and there was tension between the two committees which has had the effect of stalling any joint work on decriminalising sex work.

4.23 Commonwealth LGBT+ Campaign

- TUC is lobbying for a Commonwealth Equality Unit. A joint statement has already been decided for next year and this cannot be influenced.

- There is concern that the statement will come at the cost of workers’ rights and suppress wages. The committee also wants to look at Law Reform. There are a few unions which are keen on getting LGBT+ issues linked into participation in the commonwealth, to try and undo the legacy of colonialism, Britain exported to these countries.

4.24 TUC LGBT+ Conference

- Motions were discussed within themes, item by item. Brexit had implications on all motions. TUC LGBT+ Brexit Briefing is still being updated. TUC were proposing amendments to the EU Withdrawal Bill.

- There was a call to all members for strategies to increase BAME and Women participation at the conference.

4.25 Mental Health

- Mental Health and Older LGBT+ people was a big focus of discussion. Issues discussed included Opening Doors and outreach work they did for older LGBT+ people.
• The widening social care facing elderly LGBT+ people. Safe to be me campaign, and related information from Age UK that was focused on LGBT+ older people. Welsh TUC has had a sustained focus and campaigning on Social Care now it is devolved.

4.26 London Pride

• Community Groups were excluded at early stages of planning and organising, which was corrected with heavy involvement from February.

4.27 Funding of Prides

• Following the February meeting a decision was made to reduce the corporate sponsors and increase charity status groups. The limit on numbers marching was capped at 30,000. This has caused budgeting issues with either a 20% increased cost or 20% reduction on all groups marching. Larger unions will manage the 20% increased cost, smaller unions will be considered on a case by case basis. TUC are still working with GLA for more funding.

• It was agreed at the TUC LGBT+ committee that it was easier to stay in the London Pride organisation and to discuss and campaign to make the changes by being inside the organisation.

4.28 Comment/Questions from the floor and responses:

• What is the timeline for GRA reform and what roles can unions be playing?

  • A: The GRA consultation is now closed and preliminary findings and action plan has been published.

• Is there going to be more links between all the TUC equality groups so that there is less working in silos.

  • A: At UCU there is informal working between the different equality groups and in NEC papers all the equality standing committees minutes are included to ensure intersectional working. There is constant discussion and debate as not all the equality groups are going to agree on all policy positions.

• Labour Party produces resources on trans myth busters which unions can request.

• Does UCU have representatives on the TUC regional committees?

  • A: UCU LGBT+ members can put themselves forward through UCU regional committee on the TUC regional committee if there is a vacancy.

• Scotland TUC have done a lot of work around providing LGBT+ inclusive training in all schools to tackle homophobic bullying.

• Can UCU provide more support to LGBT+ members in universities, to raise concerns and issues either through network groups or some other forums. Some universities have staff LGBT+ networks set up, but no mechanism to feed the concerns raised in these networks.
• **A:** UCU is trying to put equality into every issue by ensuring that every campaign or negotiation has an element of equality.

• UCU has structures at national level in terms of seats for black, disabled, LGBT+ and women but at branch level equality is not always inclusive.

• Some branches and regions have newsletters with information which is pertinent to the locality and includes relevant national information. There is a template on the UCU website for creating a newsletter.

• Communication with members is important but activists in this union like all unions tend to be older. In order to attract and keep younger members, it is important to communicate differently, and use the technological communication they use. There could be some form of training for older activists on using electronic forums which would be good to use, to attract and communicate with younger activists.

5 **Surya Munro** who is Professor in Sociology and Social Policy based at the University of Huddersfield outlined that the presentation was going to be based on two mini reports. One on bisexual, pansexual and other identities and another on intersex.

5.1 **Bisexual, pansexual and other identities**

5.2 Figures of how many people are bisexual are estimated, as it is based on desire rather than behaviour. In a recent survey over 50% of young people say they are not 100% heterosexual (YouGov 2016).

5.3 Bisexual people’s identities vary widely and their sexualities and relationship forms are also diverse. A lot of bisexual people are not promiscuous as the stereotyped image portrayed of them.

5.4 Bisexual and pansexual people have higher rates of negative incidents in terms of physical and verbal harassment. Pansexual women faced the highest declared rates of verbal harassment, insults or comments.

5.5 Life satisfaction for bisexuals and transsexuals was considerably lower than the general population.

5.6 47% of bisexual women and 36% men felt they had been discriminated against or harassed on the grounds of their sexual orientation in the last 12 months. Being out as bisexual or transsexual increased the likelihood of discrimination by healthcare providers and in the workplace.

5.7 Biphobia which is prejudice against bisexuality includes:

- Seeing bisexuals as indecisive
- Hypocritical
- Promiscuous
- Or not existing
• Includes not mentioning bisexuality when in a public setting even whilst doing equalities related work.

5.8 Bisexual people face:
• Double discrimination
• Minority stress
• Changes in the UK towards more inclusive lesbian, gay and trans communities but does not apply to bisexual people.

5.9 In UK there are progressive policies for LGBT+ people. UK society is relatively progressive at present where discussion about non-normative identities is more possible than other countries in Europe and other places in the world. The main issue is how to maintain the policies and extend them.

5.10 Heterosexism and gender binarism remain very structuring and effect the way people live out their lives eg in schools pupils will face transphobic or homophobic bullying or the structures people face in workplaces which are discriminatory.

5.11 Policy makers and practitioners need to take on pansexual and omnisexual in a meaningful way and tackle the prejudice towards bi and pansexual people in the workplace. Bisexual people also need to be supported internationally including those coming into the UK to escape persecution.

5.12 Comments/questions and responses included:
• Research has shown that bisexual people do badly in terms of earning
  • A: This is likely because of mental health, prejudice and lack of community
• How can bisexual visibility be made to be prominent?
  • A: Political change can lead to conflict but is necessary to change prejudice and stereotypes, by activism and resources. It is also important to build institutional mechanisms to counter biphobia.
• UCU has only binary choices on some forms and a lot of forms has male/female and no other. Society needs to have wider understanding and acceptance that there needs to be more than binary options.
  • A: Bisexuality is about desire whereas gender is about identity but there is cross over and a lot of people in the bi-community are gender diverse.

5.13 Intersex, DSD and Variation of Sex Characteristics

5.14 A qualitative research project was carried out in UK, Italy and Switzerland with the aim of the project being to understand the agendas of diverse intersex and disorder of sex development (DSD) activists, and to include the views of clinicians and policy makers working in the intersex and DSD area.

5.15 In the UK at present babies born with intersex and variations of sex characteristics (IVSC) are heavily pathologised. When a baby is born with
intersex characteristics, parents are advised for early intervention with genital surgeries, hormone replacement and vaginal dilation.

5.16 Literature provides substantial evidence of the damaging effects of surgical procedures on IVSC children in terms of mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder due to not being able to enjoy healthy sexual life and many health issues including incontinence.

5.17 The 2006 Consensus Statement Guidelines recommends postponing surgical procedures until children are older but this has not been implemented. This is due to the importance of informed consent as at present the surgical procedures are carried out on babies, younger or older children.

5.18 Sometimes IVSC children may want surgery but they need to be old enough to give informed consent which is not happening at present. In some circumstances people do need to have surgery in order to be able to lead healthy lives.

5.19 A quote from Dr Jay Hayes-Light who is Director of UK Intersex Association ... “so many very healthy intersex children are not allowed to develop without some medical intervention. Also this decision that is made on their behalf, shortly after birth, possibly as soon as just a few weeks old, is that somebody else gets to decide their gender identity”. Once the gender identity has been confirmed it is very difficult to change it but the government is now looking into the issue. Intersex babies are also often sterilised when they are very young and have their gonads removed which can cause various health problems and ties people into a life of medical dependency.

5.20 40% of intersex babies are terminated in this country. Some babies are given prenatal treatment which can lead to cognitive problems. IVSC is only recently coming onto the equality agenda.

5.21 The reasons why medically unnecessary surgical procedures for IVSC taking place include:

- Pressure from anxious parents
- Outdated attitudes amongst medical staff
- Social pressure.

5.22 There is lack of legal protection for IVSC children. The Equality Act 2010 does not cover IVSC and therefore there is a legal deficit.

5.23 Three themes were raised as part of the research:

- Framing current practices of IVSC as child abuse
- Framing current practices as intersex genital mutilation
- Framing current practices as torture.

5.24 Female genital mutilation is outlawed but essentially the same thing is being done to intersex children without it being outlawed.
5.25 IVSC people do need to be supported in workplaces as at present they have no protection. There are some IVSC groups but they are under resourced and lack the capacity to provide support.

5.26 If the union did add the I to LGBT+, it needs to know about the implications and ensure that IVSC people have a voice within the union rather than speaking on their behalf.

5.27 Key equalities issues include:
   - Need for legislation in terms of protection of children but also employment rights and gender recognition
   - Implementation and mainstreaming mechanisms
   - Establishment and resourcing of consultation and engagement mechanisms which fully include and acknowledge IVSC people
   - Increasing public awareness
   - Development of sector-specific interventions e.g. university curricula.

5.28 A national review of IVSC policy and practice is urgently required. Since the report from the research came out the Government Equalities Office has set up a call for evidence which anyone can respond to.

5.29 Equality Act 2010 needs to be updated and other areas of legislation including birth registration is needed. This will remedy the legal deficit that currently exists regarding IVSC people.

5.30 IVSC people must be properly consulted, included, acknowledged and remunerated in any policy work and practice interventions that are carried out.

5.31 Questions/comments and responses:
   - Medical intervention has taken time to reform in various procedures and therefore the same can apply to IVSC people in the present circumstances.
   - Should the medical profession be allowed to make decisions on gender identity? Young people are much more fluid around gender identity and sexual orientation and perhaps we as activists are lagging behind in terms of how we can frame the law, policies and procedures to reflect the changes.
   - **A:** For IVSC children there are medical interventions taking place and they need to stop happening. Non binary identity could be applied for IVSC people in terms of gender identification. The focus needs to be on getting legal reform and protection.
   - When do children find out about their gender identity?
   - Historically IVSC people do not find out unless they a medical examination. This is changing in that parents and the team of support workers do inform the child.

5.32 Surya Munro was thanked for the presentation.
Steve Boyce introduced Dr Senthorun Raj who is a Law Lecturer at Keele University and serves on the board of Amnesty International UK. Dr Sen spoke about LGBT+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers

6.1 LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers face specific challenges but this is within the broader context of migration policing which is happening around the world. There is a relationship between anxiety and compassion and the way it manifests itself in terms of policy. In the media migration is portrayed as a crisis around borders and migration. There is a polarising message with on the one hand the fear of being swamped and on the other hand the compassion of protecting the vulnerable.

6.2 The Refugee Convention was drafted after the Second World War and it provides a legal framework for people to claim asylum owing to their political opinion, race, nationality, their religion or whether they are a member of a particular social group.

6.3 The last category has been used in the last couple of decades as a means by which LGBTI people seek asylum in various parts of the world such as UK, various parts of Europe, Australia and Canada. These countries have recognised that specific forms of homophobic, transphobic and bi-phobic violence which people face and the need for them to have protection.

6.4 It is good to see such progressive policies and mechanisms to provide protection for LGBTI people but at the same time these people have to face legal, bureaucratic, political and social challenges in order to seek asylum.

6.5 It was only in 1999 that the UK officially recognised sexual orientation as a valid ground within the particular social group category for seeking asylum. In comparison to other countries this was very late. However, despite this recognition, there was the idea that people fleeing persecution on grounds of sexual orientation could avoid being persecuted if they changed their social behaviour in public. Only 2010 was this requirement dispensed with.

6.6 Two cases were brought to the Supreme Court in 2010 to show that LGBTI people should not have to hide who they were and the purpose of International refugee law and the regional directives from the European Union recognises that people should not have to hide part of who they were in order to claim refuge.

6.7 The point of the Refugee Convention was to recognise people’s character which were so fundamental that they should not have to change or hide, in order not to be persecuted. An unanimous judgement was passed in 2010 which was progressive. However an insidious part of the judgement was that while it recognised that people should not have to hide a particular aspect of who they are but there was still an anxiety as to what it meant to be lesbian or gay. The judgment did not address issues facing bisexual, transsexual or intersex people.

6.8 Following this judgement there was a heightened bureaucratic attention to whether or not people were really gay or lesbian or whether or not they faced persecution or they faced embarrassment or social issues of a lower threshold.
For a lot of people claiming asylum following this decision, they have struggled enormously within the Home Office bureaucracy in order to prove who they are. This has become an increasingly difficult challenge for advocates and lawyers to support people going through this process because it is difficult to prove what counts as relevant evidence and what counts as legitimate form of sexuality.

6.9 People who have been in a relationship with the opposite sex are classified as heterosexual and have had their cases dismissed on the pretext that they are not really gay or lesbian. There are cases whereby people are compelled to give evidence of their sexual activities in terms of videos and photos of them having sex, in order to prove their sexual orientation.

6.10 In 2014 there was a decision in the European Court of Justice (ECJ) which basically stated that it was unlawful to require people to produce photos or videos in order to verify their accuracy or evidence. ECJ also ruled that any kind of psychological testing should be prohibited as being gay or lesbian is not a medicalised issue.

6.11 LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers have continued to face these bureaucratic challenges, even in these times of heightened compassion in terms of protecting LGBTI rights.

6.12 Detention can be problematic as people may not be put in the detention according to their gender, or they cannot come out about their sexual orientation for fear of violence, harassment or intimidation. These make for further challenges for LGBTI asylum seekers or refugees who want to make claims on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

6.13 A lot of people who come in groups, seek asylum in various protections, so they will lodge a claim on basis of nationality, race or political opinion because of the community they are in and also because they are unsure and distressed whether they should disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to get their asylum. Subsequently when they do make these disclosures they are disbelieved.

6.14 Compassion is then used to only allow certain kinds of people into the country and it creates a hierarchy of refugee status in terms of people who arrive properly and those who do not arrive properly, those who are deserving and not deserving.

6.15 Some of the largest LGBTI refugees are in places like Pakistan and Kenya who are host to some of the largest refugee populations. It is therefore important to create safe spaces for LGBTI migrants throughout the world.

6.16 Comments/Questions and responses:

- Is there a distinction between the public and private space especially in terms of religion for LGBTI people.
- **A:** Public/private law is important for refugee law as it is state persecution which is important. However a lot of case law recognises the relationship
between public and private space, in terms of state persecution of LGBTI people. It is the government’s failure to protect LGBTI people in the private space in terms of violence and harassment.

- People may come out in this country but not in their country of origin due to fear of persecution.
- **A:** A lot of people claiming asylum not only face homophobia but racism, economic marginalisation, language barriers and so for a LGBTI person to come out will not be easy.
- What is impact of outsourcing to countries like Libya on LGBTI people?
- **A:** A lot of European countries are bringing in punitive legislation for refugees and asylum seekers.
- A lot of institutions which members work in have the logic of compassion but do not put processes in place to support refugees or asylum seekers. Also universities and colleges view asylum as a personal rather than an institutional issue. As a union need to think of migration as a core issue as a percentage of staff in HE are international.
- Academic staff are being drawn in to policing international students.
- What is Amnesty International’s record in highlighting LGBTI’s plight against the background of unscrupulous politicians hijacking the migration issue.
- **A:** Earlier this year the Home Office released some statistics on refugees with protected characteristics. The statistics on sexual orientation had 77% rejection rate. In 2010/2011 the lesbian and gay groups produced their own statistics and found 98% rejection rate. Need to challenge the institutional processes which work on the basis of disbelief for LGBTI asylum claims.

6.17 Dr Raj was thanked.

7 **Steve Boyce introduced Laura Miles who is a UCU trustee and a trans activist.**

7.1 Laura Miles thanked UCU and LGBT+ MSC for a robust submission to the GRA consultation.

7.2 There were numerous submissions to the consultation which was extended partly from people who were in favour of changes but there was also major mobilisation by people who are trans critical.

7.3 Stonewall was also thanked by Laura Miles as since 2014 they have done some good work around trans people. They carried out a survey in January 2018 which highlighted:

- Almost half of trans people commit suicide or attempt suicide
- Almost half of trans employees hide their status at work
- 1 in 8 reported being physically attacked by customers or colleagues during
Transgender day of remembrance is marked on 20 November. 369 trans people were murdered last year and there has been a gradual increase in numbers murdered on a yearly basis. Most of the people murdered were trans women who were either black or Hispanic. A lot of trans women work in the sex industry with all the risks in terms of health and safety which entails in that industry.

Trans women are a high risk category of HIV+ people. A high percentage of trans women are HIV positive and in a lot of countries they are too poor to go for tests and therefore do not have medications.

It is 30 years since Section 28, which came after a decade of homophobic physical and mental attacks. No one was convicted under section 28 and it operated because schools and local authorities felt policed. The same principles are being applied to Prevent, with lecturers and teachers being asked to police their students and curtailing the freedom of expression in campuses.

Trans people are linked to being paedophiles and at present some of the arguments attacking trans people and extension of trans rights, particularly in relation to young people are being applied. Trans organisations are perceived as forcing young people into gender re-assignment.

Recently there was a Trans Pride march in Leeds which was very successful but there was complete lack of union presence on the march. It is important for unions to make links with young trans activists.

There is a lot of attack on the principles of self-identification and non-binary identities.

At present there is political polarisation, and the rights trans people have gained in the last 30 years are under threat as seen in USA. Alt right want to undermine any identification with oppressed groups and any resistance based on the oppression of race, nationality or sexual orientation. Some of the arguments coming up against trans rights, come from small minority who are on the left. Some feminists argue that gender identity does not exist, which is an argument that should be challenged as this can be used by the alt right.

Irish Gender Recognition Act of 2015 includes self-identification for gender recognition certificate which is positive and UK’s Gender Recognition Act has to be updated. Ireland has also passed the Same Sex Marriage Act 2015. Also a campaign which was won by the pro-abortion lobby was fought by women, trade unionists and trans organisations. However some trans activists were actually asked by the women’s rights not to speak at rallies. The argument that trans rights will undermine women’s rights is divisive. To fight for all rights we need to be united.

If the GRA consultation does not allow self-identification, then as trade unionists we need to campaign, as trans rights is no threat to women’s rights as the present process is exclusionary and pathologising. However even self-identification is not going to end the attacks on trans people and the far-right
will use trans people as a threat as well as Muslims and LGBI people.

7.13 Comments/questions included:

- A critical position about some of the proposals in the GRA was expressed. It was suggested that there be space to explore arguments about the nature of gender identity without being lumped in with extremists. The importance of solidarity whilst discussing different views was acknowledged.

- A: Laura Miles was in favour of debate but there are some organisations which have been set up to solely counter the self-identification argument

- There is transphobia in the left and what should we do about that?

- Trans self-identification should be accepted as a human right.

- There is an anomaly in that trans critical people support women to control their reproductive rights but are against trans rights to have control of their bodies.

7.14 Laura Miles was thanked.

8 To commemorate the World Aids Day Seth Atkin read out the message from the National Aids Trust.

9 Steve Boyce was thanked for all his hard work and wished well in his retirement.

10 Steve Boyce thanked all the delegates for attending.

The conference finished at 1.00pm.