

MOTIONS TO STUC LGBTI CONFERENCE 2024

Hate speech – changing the narrative

Conference notes with increasing concern the prevalence of hate speech on social media and beyond, seemingly with impunity.

Conference is appalled to see the language of the far right and right-wing extremist influencers permeating and becoming normalised within some pupil cohorts.

Conference notes that NASUWT research found that 93% of teachers in Scotland said the number of pupils exhibiting physically violent and abusive behaviours has increased in the last 12 months.

Conference is concerned that LGBTI teachers are being disproportionately targeted with increased challenges to their authority as well as homophobic abuse.

Conference agrees that, if such behaviours go unchallenged, this creates a corrosive working and learning environment which can have a devastating impact on the health and welfare of LGBTI teachers as well as the young people witnessing it.

Conference is concerned that current behaviour approaches in schools take little cognizance of prejudice-based abuse, in particular the impact of restorative approaches on staff who have been abused.

Conference asserts that it is incumbent on all affiliates to work collaboratively to challenge hate speech at all levels and calls on the STUC to help change the narrative by:

- (i) promoting positive stories of LGBTI union activists, including within the STUC Unions into Schools work, to ensure LGBTI people are not solely viewed through the lens of Pride, but rather are understood simply as members of the community;

- (ii) providing/facilitating training for affiliates on difficult/challenging conversations;
- (iii) offering updates, training and webinars on LGBTI equality issues, promoting and empowering allies to stand up for LGBTI rights and
- (iv) campaigning for earlier support and education on LGBTI issues and hate speech at primary school, recognising that, by secondary school, many pupils may already have been exposed to far right narratives.

(293 words)

Vexatious Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

Conference notes that there are both individuals and groups online who oppose work to support LGBTI people.

Conference acknowledges that schools, and other public bodies, are facing increased requests by such groups for information relating to engagement with charities and third sector organisations supporting and advocating for LGBT Inclusive Education.

Conference notes that vexatious uses of FOI legislation to target schools and individual teachers can have a deleterious impact on those teachers and headteachers, oftentimes being exposed to vitriol online and in the press as a result, as well as negatively impacting LGBTI children and young people in the school and community who are witnessing this discourse.

Conference notes that a Bill to reform Freedom of Information legislation in Scotland is currently being considered in the Scottish Parliament and calls on the STUC to advocate for:

- (i) increased accountability for, and protection against, vexatious FOI complaints and
- (ii) governmental awareness, and acknowledgement, of the impact of such vexatious complaints on teachers and other public sector workers, many of whom have felt publicly outed and their privacy breached.

(179 words)