



CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Responding to the Welsh Government's LGBTQ+ Action Plan on behalf of the library and information profession

22 October 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1 CILIP is the Chartered Institute for people working in knowledge, information management and libraries. We have operated under Royal Charter since 1898 with a remit that includes professional certification, training and development and advocacy.
- 1.2 CILIP Cymru Wales (CCW) represents CILIP in Wales. The elected CCW committee and CILIP staff advocate on behalf of the profession in Wales and support the professional development of CILIP members in Wales.
- 1.3 CILIP Cymru Wales represents a community of over 400 information professionals – people working in knowledge, information, data, cybersecurity and libraries across the public, health, education, and private sectors.
- 1.4 Our members support information skills, access to trusted content, ethical practice and evidence-based decision making, with an increasing remit for supporting the information needs of the communities and organisations they serve.
- 1.5 We are pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the consultation on the proposed LGBTQ+ Action Plan. Our response is submitted on behalf of the library and information professional workforce in Wales and draws on a round-table policy event convened by us on the 30 September 2021.
- 1.6 We would be glad to provide any further information or context in support of this submission.

2. Key recommendations

For ease of reference, we have pulled our key recommendations to Welsh Government into the following brief summary:

- **Recommendation 1:** to add the word and concept 'library' to the action plan alongside archives and museums. Libraries (public, health, commercial, and at all levels of education) are trusted community hubs that deliver a wide range of bilingual services to their user communities. These range from offering non-commercial welcoming spaces to providing print and electronic access to up-to-date information published by experts. This offer is vital to the success of the LGBTQ+ Action Plan.
- **Recommendation 2:** to begin a move away from celebratory stop start activities and towards an embedding of LGBTQ+ inclusion and representation in public services. This will require investment in staff training for collection management and acquisition policies and support for the development of long term good practice.
- **Recommendation 3:** to identify and make accessible LGBTQ+ information, resources and historical collections and to commission research into the information-seeking behaviour of

LGBTQ+ communities. We suggest that the Expert Panel, in consultation with library leaders, establishes a dynamic and inclusively constructed LGBTQ+ resource list for Wales.

- **Recommendation 4:** to invest in and extend successful projects such as the Reading Well Scheme. The Reading Well scheme has successfully raised awareness of and delivered information on health and wellbeing issues to all corners of Wales. We recommend that the model is adopted by the LGBTQ+ Action Plan to deliver expert recommended bilingual resources to users across the country, via all library sectors.
- **Recommendation 5:** to invest in and extend successful platforms such as People’s Collection Wales. People’s Collection Wales provides bilingual access to Wales’ cultural history digitally. These collections can be browsed, used in research, or developed into packages; for the Welsh School curriculum, via Hwb, for example. We recommend that the LGBTQ+ Action Plan embeds this platform in its work to engage and represent LGBTQ+ identities and communities.
- **Recommendation 6:** to establish a framework for organisations to audit the impact that their information systems and supplier relationships have upon LGBTQ+ communities. It is important that the LGBTQ+ Action Plan is not built upon everyday technologies that turn out to embed harm in our services and resist our professional attempts to change them. A framework to assess our automated processes will help public services and other organisations to proactively identify both problematic practice and potential solutions.

3. Summary response

- 3.1 We welcome the Welsh Government’s recognition that everyone has the right to be safe, to be themselves and to lead lives free from discrimination. We share the vision set out in the LGBTQ+ Action Plan that we want Wales to be a nation, where everyone feels safe to be themselves, to be open about their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, at home, leisure or work without feeling threatened.
- 3.2 We particularly welcome how the LGBTQ+ Action Plan recognises that disadvantage experienced by LGBTQ+ people frequently intersects with other protected characteristics such as race and disability. We would also emphasise the significant role played by geography in Wales, and the impact this has upon rural services in particular.
- 3.3 We agree that all public service staff should understand LGBTQ+ needs and that intersectional equalities training will be required to instil confidence and raise standards in our public services. We would go further, however, and suggest that this training should be profession specific and offered beyond the public sector.
- 3.4 We cautiously welcome the Welsh Government’s aim to appropriately identify and record LGBTQ+ identities and to address LGBTQ+ needs via co-produced service design. Specifically, we would recommend an assessment framework for organisations to measure their success in meeting those needs.
- 3.5 We would welcome the development and sharing of best practice for data collection, including intersectional data, particularly where this is led by LGBTQ+ communities.
- 3.6 We suggest that the Welsh Government audit the impact that systems and suppliers have on LGBTQ+ communities. Like many sectors libraries use technology in every aspect of service delivery. We need to ask if the technology and the suppliers we use allow us to buy diverse content that supports LGBTQ+ users? Can information professionals intervene in systems where terminology and classification is harmful? Do our supplier contracts mean that information professionals can intervene in automated

purchases of print and electronic resources to ensure we are fully representing our diverse communities here in Wales?

4. Home and Communities

4.1 Question 1

Do you think the Action Plan will increase equality for LGBTQ+ people and what do you think the priorities should be?

We would like to see the Welsh Government prioritise existing successful programmes and platforms and envisage ways to challenge them to embrace LGBTQ+ perspectives. One such platform is [People's Collection Wales](#), a digital platform for uploading and sharing Welsh digital culture. Providing professional assistance with issues that often limit a project's long term impact such as technology and copyright, People's Collection Wales offers communities the opportunity to curate collections with their own material, but also with that from across Wales, leading to new activities and projects, such as school curriculum content via Hwb.

We recommend that the Welsh Government invest in People's Collection Wales and its relationship building across the country with libraries, museums and archives, as well as with community groups.

Similarly we suggest that the Welsh Government explore the expansion of successful collaborations with [EmpathyLab](#) who work to build children's empathy, literacy and social activism through a systematic use of high-quality literature. Through its work with libraries and schools, EmpathyLab builds on the latest scientific evidence showing the power of reading to build real-life empathy skills, and is currently expanding its work in Wales including ensuring a bilingual offer, and supporting schools to deliver the empathy elements in the new Curriculum for Wales in partnership with their local library service.

The programme is science led and supported by the publishing sector and it is directly addressing the need to create more tolerant and empathetic communities. See Swansea Library produced content for examples:

<https://www.facebook.com/swansealibraries/videos/227268188922877/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSoQi4NdUBo>

The National Library of Wales is working with consultant, Norena Shopland, on a number of LGBTQ+ resource lists designed to combat the lack of texts, visual and audio material both known by and available to the general public. We suggest that the Expert Panel develops this into a dynamic list that can be shared with and built upon by public, health and education libraries, as well as museums and archives.

4.2 Question 3 Do you agree with the proposed actions? What would you add or take away in relation to the actions?

We welcome the focus on representation and the role of culture and sport in the LGBTQ+ Action Plan. We would add that in working with LGBTQ+ communities to collate and donate collections to local archives, special collections and museums, the sector should explore and develop shared ownership models of the collections to foster long term responsible and responsive curatorship.

The great omission in the Home and Communities focus on representation is the provision of access to expert information to all communities. Libraries offer a rare, non-commercial, trusted public space where user communities should be able to source published information authored by experts in any field, in print and electronic form. They should be able to safely access expert help in finding this information.

At present most rural libraries only stock a small sample of LGBTQ+ publications and these centre on certain themes such as coming out and celebrities. Expert and academic texts are generally too expensive for the average member of the public and are generally not available in public libraries or via inter-library loans without a cost. Ideally, the Welsh Government should fund a central collection of expert texts which can be loaned out to any library in Wales.

In a time of heightened concern about misinformation, LGBTQ+ communities in Wales – and their family members, friends, teachers, and political representatives – should be able to access a diverse range of up-to-date LGBTQ+ voices and information.

The most equitable way to provide this is through Wales' existing library networks.

To do this effectively the Welsh Government will need to continue to invest in the public library network and support effective collaboration across the public, education, health and private sectors, especially in staff training and collection development.

4.3 **Question 4** What are the key challenges that could stop the aims and actions being achieved?

As professionals working directly with all Welsh communities we feel that a move away from periodic events that celebrate LGBTQ+ communities and towards an embedding of LGBTQ+ perspectives in public services will instil confidence in both staff and our services.

One way to provide Pride with longevity may be to suggest that Pride 'lives on in libraries' as both spaces for engagement and information services where long term collaborations with groups organising celebratory activities and awards can find a permanent home.

The Welsh Government must also ensure its Equality and Inclusion Fund is accessible to all and take steps to ensure that small, particularly rural, organisations have a stake in applying for this funding.

4.4 **Question 5** What resources (this could include funding, staff time, training, access to support or advocacy services among other things) do you think will be necessary in achieving the aims and actions outlined?

Provision of access to up to date, LGBTQ+ bilingual representations and information will require a commitment to purchase appropriate resources recommended by a national resource list.

We welcome the Welsh Government's recently commissioned series of training sessions for libraries, museums, and archives in Wales on LGBTQ+ understanding and inclusivity. This will greatly increase the knowledge of staff members who will be able to transfer those skills to other staff and volunteers. We would also recommend extending the LGBTQ+ Action Plan's commitment to training for staff, to include content and methodology that can be shared beyond the public sector.

We also recommend that the Welsh Government continues to engage with relevant professional organisations such as CILIP on commissioning and developing specialised staff training, on cataloguing, searching, and indexing, for example, to help provide access to LGBTQ+ information and references. This training raises awareness not just about LGBTQ+ subjects but also about the power and responsibility information professionals have when representing Welsh communities.

Additionally, we recommend that investment should be made to audit the impact that library systems and suppliers have upon LGBTQ+ communities. We believe that public sector staff should be professionally empowered to use their skills to develop better, less harmful services.

4.5 **Question 6**

Do you feel the LGBTQ+ Action Plan adequately covers the intersection of LGBTQ+ with other protected characteristics, such as race, religion or belief, disability, age, sex, and marriage and civil partnership? If not, how can we improve this?

We support the LGBTQ+ Action Plan's intersectional focus. We suggest that this be extended to encompass our rural and urban identities too. Librarians witness first-hand the empowering impact libraries have in villages, towns and cities across Wales. They also see the strain borne by libraries as they attempt to offer these services to all communities, wherever they live. We recommend that the Welsh Government seeks opportunities to improve these networks and to maximise their potential to implement the LGBTQ+ Action Plan.

5. Improving Health Outcomes

5.1 **Question 1** Do you think the Action Plan will increase equality for LGBTQ+ people and what do you think the priorities should be?

As above in 4.1 we recommend that one of the key priorities in implementing the LGBTQ+ Action Plan is to foster and expand upon successful programmes and projects.

This might involve an audit and sharing of current activity such as this recent NHS Wales Staff event [NHS Wales e-Library for Health Expo \(20 May 2021\): Exploring Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in the National e-resources for NHS Wales. - e-Library for Health](#), for example.

By working nationally to share information about resources (see below) the Welsh Government can provide context for and confidence in these activities.

The Reading Well scheme has successfully delivered excellent information and recognition of health and wellbeing issues to all corners of Wales – Reading Well for dementia in 2018, Reading Well for mental health in 2019 and most recently [Reading Well for children](#) which will be bilingual. We recommend that the model is adopted by the LGBTQ+ Action Plan to deliver supportive, recommended resources to users across the country, and across library sectors.

5.2 **Question 3** Do you agree with the proposed actions? What would you add or take away in relation to the actions?

As in 4.2 above, the great omission in the Improving Health Outcomes focus is the provision of access to expert information. Particularly given heightened concern about health misinformation, patients and

medical professionals should be able to safely access expert help in finding quality, up-to-date LGBTQ+ information. The most efficient and equitable way to provide this is through Wales' existing library networks, and particularly through the NHS Wales Library and Knowledge Service.

Many libraries across all sectors, including NHS Libraries, stock LGBTQ+ health related print and electronic books but there is little oversight or sharing of good acquisitions practice. In addition to collectively constructing resource lists we suggest that the Expert Panel develops a health specific list and explores dynamic methods of sharing this across Welsh libraries.

5.3 Question 5 What resources (this could include funding, staff time, training, access to support or advocacy services among other things) do you think will be necessary in achieving the aims and actions outlined?

Ensuring provision of access to up to date accurate health information, particularly for the NHS Wales Library and Knowledge Service, will require a commitment to purchase appropriate resources recommended by a national resource list.

To implement the LGBTQ+ Action Plan effectively across Wales, librarians and information professionals will need to ensure that libraries have the right resources, that they are able to search literature appropriately on this topic, and that they understand the needs of LGBTQ+ users and patients.

To ensure provision of this expert librarian support when searching for cutting edge LGBTQ+ health information, investment in developing training for staff, and in staff time, will be essential.

As in 4.4 we recommend that investment is made to audit the impact that library systems and suppliers have on LGBTQ+ patients. Are health information specialists able to intervene in automated purchases of print and electronic resources to ensure we are serving the health needs of our diverse communities here in Wales?

6. Education

6.1 Question 3 Do you agree with the proposed actions? What would you add or take away in relation to the actions?

We particularly support the emphasis placed on training staff. We would encourage the Welsh Government to develop the 'sharing of best practice' across colleges and higher education into a more proactive collaborative approach to providing young people, often in a position to question and assert their identities for the first time, with an excellent range of resources and support.

As in 4.2 and 5.2 above, the great omission in the Education focus is the provision of access to expert information to all learner communities. Particularly given current concerns about misinformation, students, pupils, teachers and support staff, should be able to safely access expert help in finding a range of quality, up-to-date, LGBTQ+ representations and information.

Libraries provide pupils and students with spaces and resources outside of formal classrooms and reading lists and they do so via staff trained to support self-led information seeking. We recommend that the Welsh Government encourages schools, colleges and universities to value and develop these services.

Many libraries across all sectors stock LGBTQ+ related print and electronic books but there is little oversight or sharing of good acquisitions practice. In addition to collectively constructing resource lists we

suggest that the Expert Panel explores dynamic methods of sharing these across Welsh libraries, including school, further and higher Education libraries.

6.2 **Question 3** Do you agree with the proposed actions? What would you add or take away in relation the actions?

Anecdotally we know that members of LGBTQ+ communities have had to devise alternative information seeking behaviours to avoid 'outing'. We recommend that the Welsh Government commission research into the information seeking behaviours of LGBTQ+ communities across Wales (encompassing intersectional identity and geographic location).

This research can help public and third sector services understand where LGBTQ+ people are going for information and why. Are they using the increasing click-and-post services rather than walk into a bookshop, health surgery, or museum, for example? How can we work together to make our services more welcoming? Can we learn new ways of working from our LGBTQ+ users?

6.3

Question 5 What resources (this could include funding, staff time, training, access to support or advocacy services among other things) do you think will be necessary in achieving the aims and actions outlined?

Ensuring provision of access to up to date, bilingual, information and multi-voiced representations will require a commitment to purchase appropriate resources recommended by a national resource list.

We would also echo and extend the LGBTQ+ Action Plan's commitment to training for staff, to include professional support staff who can often be the first point of contact for pupils and students.

We recommend that the Welsh Government uses the current concerns about misinformation, health and intersectional identities, to address the lack of a national approach to school libraries. Books Council Wales is currently working on a project funded by CILIP Cymru Wales to create a network of school library stakeholders. We urge the Welsh Government to use existing initiatives like this to invest in expert provision of information to children across Wales.

As in 4.4 and 5.3, we recommend that investment is made to audit the impact that library systems and suppliers have on LGBTQ+ learners. Are information professionals able to intervene in automated purchases of print and electronic resources to ensure we are representing and informing our diverse communities here in Wales?

7. Workforce

7.1 **Question 2:** Do you think the Action Plan will increase equality for LGBTQ+ people and what do you think the priorities should be?

We support the LGBTQ+ Action Plan's proposal to work with Trade Unions on workplace training and would encourage the Welsh Government to extend this collaboration to other professional bodies such as CILIP, whose members have established the [CILIP LGBTQ+ Network](#).

We also cautiously support the collection of workforce diversity data and would welcome the development and sharing of best practice for data collection, particularly where this is led by LGBTQ+ communities.

7.2 **Question 3** Do you agree with the proposed actions? What would you add or take away in relation the actions?

We support the clarification of employment protections and employer responsibilities. We also recommend that the Welsh Government sees the workplace as an opportunity to encourage LGBTQ+ participation and representation.

It is important that the information profession in Wales includes and represents LGBTQ+ perspectives because of its role in classifying and providing access to information. We would like to see guidance for employers on how to ensure professions offer welcoming and realistic career opportunities to all Welsh communities.