

## Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab)

I begin by thanking my colleague Mary Fee for bringing such an important topic to the Scottish Parliament this evening.

Homophobia certainly has no place in public life in Scotland and no place in Scottish sport. The continuing existence of homophobia in sport, as evidenced by Stonewall Scotland's findings that 60 per cent of sports fans have witnessed homophobic behaviour in the past five years, is a sad and unacceptable state of affairs.

As a nation that is so passionate about football, it is a damning indictment of how far we still have to travel in tackling homophobia in all aspects of Scottish society that a majority of football fans are likely to have witnessed prejudiced behaviour towards the LGBT community, with 82 per cent of football fans admitting that they have heard homophobic abuse or language at a sports event. That is an alarming number of people.

Although Scotland has made great strides towards achieving legal equality for the LGBT community during the past few years with the commencement of equal marriage laws, it is clear that we still have so much more to do to combat prejudice and inequality.

Last week, most members of the Scottish Parliament were able to join with the show racism the red card campaign just outside the chamber in the garden lobby to show our support for combating racism in football. I am proud to support that campaign, and, just as there is no place for racism of any kind in Scottish sport, there being any homophobic prejudice towards the LGBT community in Scottish football should be equally repulsive to us. I would love to see the recommendations of the Equality Network's report and Stonewall's rainbow laces campaign to tackle anti-LGBT prejudice in sport gain similar traction among colleagues and the wider public. I look forward to the opportunity later this year to support the campaign. It is my hope that we will also see football clubs and fans across the country using that opportunity to engage with and embrace this important campaign. Mary Fee read out an impressive list of football clubs, but many more names could be added.

In the evidence gathered by Stonewall Scotland about homophobia in sport, the most troubling and striking statistics were those that show how negative experiences of sport for LGBT people can often start as early as their school years: one in seven LGBT young people say they have experienced bullying during school sport, and almost one in five say that they have experienced bullying in school changing rooms—yet more worrying statistics that underline why it is so important that we ensure that we get inclusive education in our schools.

Many colleagues on their way into the chamber this evening will have noticed that the TIE campaign is in Parliament today, with an exhibition of its progress so far and the aim of signing up even more MSPs to the pledge. It has been my privilege to sponsor the campaign's time in Parliament this week, and I hope that as many colleagues as possible will have the chance to speak to Jordan and Liam about their work. I saw on Twitter that more MSPs have signed the pledge today, so it is really good that we have the TIE campaign with us in Parliament.

It has been only a few months since I led my members' business debate on the TIE campaign, and I am pleased that the Scottish Government working group on inclusive education is continuing to make progress. As ever, I look forward to seeing the group's eventual outcomes and recommendations when its work concludes.

We need to make inclusive education a reality so that we can eradicate homophobic attitudes in the next generation of young people—those who are growing up in Scotland today. Homophobia has no place in our society and the route to tackling that begins with education.

Lennon, M. (2017). Homophobia in Sport. Available at: <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-19-09-2017?meeting=11089&iob=101197>