

UK Govt conversion therapy consultation

HOW TO RESPOND

Respond online – bit.ly/ctrespond21

The consultation document can be found at bit.ly/ctconsult21

The consultation closes on Friday 4 February.

GUIDE TO THE ONLINE FORM

Introduction

The first link above will take you to a page titled 'Introduction'. Click 'Continue' to start your response.

Individual or organisation

You must specify whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. **If you are a church leader and you are responding on behalf of your church, please select "Organisation" here.** Click 'Continue'.

If you are responding as an **Individual**, continue to the 'INDIVIDUALS' section. If you are responding as an **Organisation**, skip to the 'ORGANISATIONS' section.

INDIVIDUALS

About you – On the next screen, you are asked about relevant experiences. *You do not have to respond.* Click 'Continue'.

You must answer the questions on where you live, your age group, your sex and the occupation of your main household earner when you were 14. 'Prefer not to say' options are available for the latter two. Other questions on this page are optional. Click 'Continue'.


Gender – This question is optional. A 'Prefer not to say' option is available. Click 'Continue'.

Sexual orientation – This question is optional. A 'Prefer not to say' option is available. Click 'Continue'.

Health – This question is compulsory. (This is an intrusive question, so you should feel free to say 'No' whatever your circumstances. If you select 'Yes', there will be a further question about the impact on your day-to-day activities.) Click 'Continue'.

Personal experience of conversion therapy – This page introduces questions about experiences of conversion therapy. Click 'Continue'.

The next page has two compulsory questions on whether you have been offered or had conversion therapy. If you select 'Yes' to the second question, there will be further questions about this. Click 'Continue'.

Continue to 'Views on banning conversion therapy' below 

ORGANISATIONS

About your organisation – On the next screen, there are a number of questions about your organisation. The only compulsory question is on how many people it employs. Click 'Continue'.

Continue below 

Views on banning conversion therapy

"Do you agree or disagree that the Government should intervene to end conversion therapy in principle?"

We suggest selecting '**Prefer not to say**' or '**Neither agree or disagree**' because of how answers to this question might be used. Disagreeing with a ban in principle could be misrepresented as defending coercive or controlling behaviour, which Christians do not defend. On the other hand, activists could misrepresent agreement with a ban in principle as support for the attack they want to make on the ordinary work of churches.

*You could make two or three of the following points to explain your answer **in your own words**:*

- As Christians we condemn abuse of every kind and believe everyone should be protected. But some activists confuse conversion therapy with Christian conversion. Given that they want a new criminal offence, this confusion is very serious.
- The Government must keep its promise that any ban will not prevent parents raising their children in their faith.
- Activists are openly calling for the ban to include praying with people who ask for prayer about sexuality. This could make ordinary church activity illegal where the person being prayed with is same-sex attracted. But praying with friends is not therapy. And it certainly doesn't deserve to be criminal.
- Not being trans-affirming could be caught by the ban. This would push many more young people down the route of life-changing drugs and surgery which they may later come to regret.
- The Australian state of Victoria has a conversion therapy ban which criminalises churches that pray or give pastoral advice which is not LGBT-affirming

when dealing with those issues. The UK must not go down the same route.

- Anti-religious activists object to biblical teaching about sexual ethics. They are free to do that. But it is not the job of the State to dictate Church doctrine. Repentance from sin of all kinds, including sexual sin, is a basic part of Christian belief. A conversion therapy law must not criminalise Christian beliefs.
- Churches that teach the biblical sexual ethic also teach that we must love our neighbour. We are not a threat to LGBT people and do not deserve to be criminalised.

Click **'Continue'**.

Targeting physical conversion therapy

"To what extent do you support, or not support, the Government's proposal for addressing physical acts of conversion therapy?"

This relates to the first part of the Government's proposal: encouraging tougher sentences for criminal offences, like assault, if motivated by conversion therapy. It clearly would not create problems for the ordinary work of churches since we condemn violence. A response to this question is required. **Please answer it as you see fit.** A 'Prefer not to say' option is available. Click **'Continue'**.

Targeting talking conversion therapy

"The Government considers that delivering talking therapy with the intention of changing a person's sexual orientation or changing them from being transgender or to being transgender either to someone who is under 18, or to someone who is 18 or over and who has not consented or lacks the capacity to do so should be considered a criminal offence. The consultation document describes proposals to introduce new criminal law that will capture this. How far do you agree or disagree with this?"

This relates to the second part of the Government's proposal: creating a new criminal offence based on the coercive or controlling behaviour offence. A response to this question is required. **Please answer it as you see fit.** A 'Prefer not to say' option is available.

"How far do you agree or disagree with the penalties being proposed?"

A response to this question is required. **Please answer it as you see fit.** A 'Prefer not to say' option is available.

"Do you think that these proposals miss anything? If yes, can you tell us what you think we have missed?"

Activists will use this question to call on the Government to go much further. It is important for Christians to argue that the proposals must not be expanded. Instead, they must be tightly targeted and clearly defined.

A response to this question is required. We suggest answering **'Don't know'**. ('Yes' suggests going further than the proposals, while 'No' implies the plans are perfect.)

You could make two or three of the following points to explain your answer **in your own words**:

- Christians oppose coercion and control but this plan is disappointingly short on detail. There is a serious lack of clarity about how the new offence will work.
- The paper says young people should be supported in "exploring their identity without being encouraged towards one particular path". The Government must ensure that parents will not be prosecuted merely for trying to direct their children to the path they believe is best for them.
- What evidence will be required to demonstrate informed consent? We must not have a situation where a church minister has to ask a person to sign a consent form before agreeing to pray with him about issues of sexuality.
- It seems the new criminal offence of 'talking conversion therapy' against someone under-18 would only assess motivation, with no evidence needed that the behaviour was in any way harmful. This would create a broad and dangerous offence.
- Outlawing ordinary prayer, preaching, pastoral care or parenting would breach human rights.
- The consultation document does not contain clear legal definitions of coercion or conversion therapy. How can the Government be sure its proposals will match its stated intention of protecting people from abuse whilst protecting freedom of religion?

Click **'Continue'**.

We have skipped the next five pages. Responses are required. **Please answer as you see fit.** 'Prefer not to say' options are usually available. Click **'Continue'** at the end of each page.

Equalities impacts appraisal

This question is a further opportunity to reiterate the points above about the potential implications for religious liberty of the proposed ban, particularly if the Government was to cave in to activists' demands. **You could make two or three of those points again, in your own words.** Click **'Continue'**.

Confidentiality

You must indicate whether you are happy for your free text comments to be quoted anonymously or would prefer your response to remain completely confidential. Click **'Continue'**.

Almost done...

Enter an email address if you would like to get a copy of your response. Click **'Submit Response'**.