



Government
Equalities Office

Mike Freer MP
Minister for Equalities

Christian Institute
Wilberforce House
4 Park Road
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Newcastle upon Tyne
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29 October 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

Consulting the public on proposals to ban conversion therapy

Today, the Government is launching a public consultation on how we plan to ban practices of so-called 'conversion therapy'. This consultation will be open for 6 weeks, closing on Friday 10th December.

You can find the link to the consultation, here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/banning-conversion-therapy>

This consultation invites views on the Government's proposals from members of the public, victims of conversion therapy, LGBT organisations, faith groups, psychiatric and counselling bodies, charities and other interested stakeholders to ensure we hear from all voices in shaping the ban on conversion therapy.

Conversion therapy does not work and can cause long lasting damage including negative mental health outcomes, homelessness, and isolation. It is vital that a ban on conversion therapy is comprehensive and effective.

I also want to reassure those who may have concerns about the impact of this ban on clinicians' independence as well as on freedom of speech. Core freedoms, such as freedom of choice, speech and belief, are central to these proposals. We will continue to protect under-18s from being channelled into irreversible decisions. These proposals do not alter the existing clinical regulatory framework or the independence of regulated clinicians working within their professional obligations.

The Government is committed to introducing a legislative ban on the practice of conversion therapy. Our proposals include the creation of a new criminal offence and

we will also ensure that conversion therapy is considered by judges as a potential aggravating factor upon sentencing for existing violent criminal offences. We further propose a range of other supportive measures including the introduction of statutory Conversion Therapy Protection Orders to protect individuals facing imminent risk, such as forced travel abroad to receive conversion therapy.

After the consultation has closed, results will be analysed, for publication in due course, and will inform the Government's next steps in preparing legislation for Spring 2022.

It is also vital that those who have been subject to or are at risk of these abhorrent practices receive the support they need. This administration is the first UK Government to commit to providing such support. We will therefore be launching a competitive tendering process in November for a new government-funded support service for victims and those at risk of conversion therapy.

Proposed ban in more detail

All forms of conversion therapy will be banned for under-18s regardless of circumstances.

When violent offences are motivated by conversion therapy, this will be considered as a potential aggravating factor by the judge upon sentencing by a court. This will strengthen the criminal legal framework and acknowledge the harm of physical acts that are committed as part of a conversion therapy practice.

In addition to the above, talking conversion therapies will be banned for all aged 18 and over who do not or cannot give consent. Consent requirements for adults seeking out talking conversion therapy will be robust and stringent. For consent to be valid in the context of an 18+ year old entering talking therapy, it must be:

- Voluntary – the decision to either consent or not to consent to an act must be made by the person, and must not be influenced by others.
- Informed – the person must be given all of the information about what the therapy involves, including the risks.
- Capacity – the person must be capable of giving consent, which means they understand the information given to them and can use it to make an informed decision.

Our proposed package of measures will not impact everyday religious practice and we are clear that private prayer of course could not be considered to be conversion therapy. The freedom to express the teachings of any religion will not be affected by the ban, and there should be no doubt that individuals will still be able to access support and counsel from religious leaders.

I hope you find this information useful, and that you are able to take the time and review our proposals and submit your response via the consultation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom & Lisa". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "T" and "L".

Mike Freer MP
Minister for Equalities