



THE CHRISTIAN
INSTITUTE
SCOTLAND

Conversion therapy update

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KEY DEVELOPMENTS

The Scottish Government 'strongly supports' the UK Government's commitment to ban conversion therapy and says if the ban does not apply to Scotland, it will act "so far as is possible within the powers of the Scottish Parliament".¹ The Christian Institute supports protecting people from dangerous medical practices. But activists want prayer, pastoral conversations, preaching and even parenting to be caught. This is a fast-moving issue. This leaflet covers key developments since our previous briefing in November 2020.



Read: Banning conversion therapy or banning the gospel?

christian.org.uk/con-therapy

Prayer and parenting to be caught by the ban

The UK Government says its ban will cover trans issues. So could a parent urging their child not to seek damaging puberty blockers be breaking the law? Meanwhile a founder of the 'Ban Conversion Therapy' campaign says: "'Spiritual guidance' is really just religious speak for conversion therapy"² and "the pernicious power of prayer must be dealt with".³ But a ban on spiritual guidance and prayer would be tyrannical and unworkable. Police and the courts would have to decide which kinds of prayer are criminal and which are not.



"While some violent practices which may be classed as conversion therapy, such as 'corrective rape', are already covered by existing criminal offences, many religious practices, such as 'group prayer', are not."⁴

BBC News, 16 December 2020

CI WARNS UK GOVT OF LEGAL ACTION

Lawyers representing The Christian Institute have written to the UK Government pledging to judicially review a conversion therapy ban if it outlaws prayer. The CI's QC, human rights expert Jason Coppel, says definitions of conversion therapy proposed by activists would criminalise the legitimate expression of religious beliefs.⁵ Another QC, Philip Havers, also warned recently that a loosely phrased conversion therapy law would be "an unlawful interference" with human rights.⁶

ACTIVISTS CONDEMN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM CONCERNS

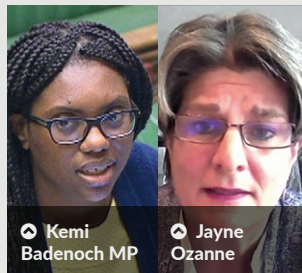
Responding to Christians' concerns, the UK Government has given limited assurances. Equalities Minister Kemi Badenoch told MPs: "It is not the place of Government to dictate what is legitimate spiritual guidance, but... we will not tolerate the use of harmful coercive practices under the guise of spiritual support."⁷

The Prime Minister said: "I do not want to see clergy and church members criminalised for normal non-coercive activity".⁸ But despite strong backing from lawyers for the human rights of Christians, activists are dismissive. Amnesty

International said: "proponents of so-called conversion therapy have tried to hide their anti-LGBT+ views by representing these practices as being about... religious liberty, often carried out in the context of pastoral care or prayer ministry."⁹

LGBT activist Jayne Ozanne accused the UK Government of "appeasing evangelicals". Elsewhere she claimed:

"Imposing mandatory celibacy on LGBT people & calling them 'same-sex attracted' causes significant harm" and demanded "prayer that focuses on ensuring someone conforms to a 'norm'" "must be banned,



and perpetrators must face the full force of the law".¹⁰ Blair Anderson of End Conversion Therapy Scotland has demanded a ban "covering prayer and not providing loopholes for religious settings".¹¹



INCLUDING TRANS IS RISK TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Westminster says the ban will cover transgender identity.¹² This could make it unlawful for a parent to try to dissuade their troubled son or daughter from taking irreversible 'sex change' drugs. Urging them to live as their biological sex could be criminalised. Young people will be put at risk of life-changing medical transition they may later regret.

Parents who complain against a school for confusing their child by teaching gender ideology could also fall foul of this law.

AUSTRALIAN STATE OUTLAWS BIBLICAL PRAYER

Pastoral advice and prayer that uphold biblical teaching on sexual ethics have been criminalised in the Australian state of Victoria. Any practice that seeks to change or suppress "sexual orientation or gender identity" is outlawed – including "prayer based practice". Offenders face up to ten years in prison and a maximum fine of over £100,000.

The state Attorney General said church ministers will be re-educated by the state to prevent them breaking the law.¹³ British Conservative MP Alicia Kearns says: "The

model that's been passed in Victoria is a good one".¹⁴



References at the.ci/con-therapy-update-ref



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