



Banning Conversion Therapy GEO Consultation

Unite the Union Response

January 2022

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Introduction

This response is submitted by Unite the Union, the UK and Ireland's largest trade union with members across the private, public and the voluntary sectors. The union's members work in a range of industries including food, manufacturing, financial services, print, media, construction, energy generation, chemicals, transport, local government, education, health and not for profit sectors.

Unite supports the TUC's response and would also add and reaffirm the following points. You can also find Unite's postcard campaign in the appendix.

1. Although Unite welcomes this consultation the three year delay in bringing it forward has meant that many LGBT+ people continued to endure this inhuman and damaging practice with its lasting effects. Therefore we call on the government to introduce an immediate ban on LGBT+ conversion 'therapy' and practice in all medical, commercial or faith-based settings.
2. LGBT+ conversion 'therapy' or practice has no scientific or therapeutic support and its only purpose is to suppress a person's sexuality or gender identity. All too often it leads to mental and emotional damage. It is about attempting to exorcise an integral part of who a person is. This practice is inherently abusive.
3. The emphasis of legislation and government guidelines should be to **BAN** conversion 'therapy' and practice in order to **END** this practice that as Prime Minister stated is "...absolutely abhorrent. It has no place in civilised society. It has no place in this country."
4. The ban should protect all LGBT+ people and therefore it must be made absolutely explicit that it includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary and all other sexual orientations and gender identities.
5. Government should make sure that conversion 'therapy' and practice is clearly defined with a wide range of examples and included in legislation and guidance.
6. This legislation should not allow exemptions for any institution or organisation including religious and faith based organisations. This is particularly important since faith bodies are the main proponents of these unethical, inhuman and harmful so-called cures. Therefore, the ban should include counselling, prayers, Bible readings and confessional and healing sessions which are used as a form of conversion 'therapy'. The ban needs to be fully comprehensive and provide statutory support for all victims and survivors.

7. The consultation states that these proposals have been developed within the parameters of the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 3: Prohibition on torture, inhuman or degrading treatment. It is undoubtedly clear that this inhuman and degrading 'therapy' and practice is in violation of this Article. Therefore, it is imperative that Article 3 should not be overruled or undermined by using the justification of freedom of expression and religion to permit conversion 'therapy' and practice.
8. There should not be an exemption for adults on the presumption of 'consent'. Those seeking to "cure" themselves of their sexuality or gender identity are mostly vulnerable people pressurised by their peers, family or faith/religious organisations, to believe they are inferior. It is under duress, it is offensive and is the result of centuries of discrimination and non-acceptance of anything other than the gender norms.
9. Calling family and parental coercion, a private matter, only reinforces the notion that only gender norms are acceptable. Government should make it absolutely clear that **ABUSE** is not a 'private' matter. This should carry the same criminal weight as in female genital mutilation and forced marriage laws.
10. Conversion 'therapy' or practice is essentially an intentional attempt to change a person's sexuality or gender identity. Therefore the ban should encompass all medical, psychiatric, psychological, religious, cultural or any other interventions that seek to erase, repress, change, convert, cancel or suppress the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of a person. It should also include banning any attempt to pressure someone to not express or act on their true sexual orientation and/or gender identity as a form of conversion 'therapy' and abuse.
11. The government should exclude legitimate and explorative gender identity therapy, gender transition services and gender transition healthcare from this legislation. It should be made explicit that the provision of gender transition counselling and treatment to affirm a person's true gender identity is not a form a conversion 'therapy'.
12. Unite supports the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Memorandum of Understanding. The government should promote the MoU's intentions and provide support with sufficient resources to ensure:
 - the public are well informed about the risks of conversion 'therapy'
 - healthcare professionals and psychological therapists are aware of the ethical issues relating to conversion 'therapy'
 - new and existing psychological therapists are appropriately trained
 - evidence into conversion 'therapy' is kept under regular review
 - professionals from across the health, care and psychological professions work together to achieve the above goals

- 13.** As stated in the consultation protection should be provided for LGBT+ people who are sent overseas to undergo conversion 'therapy'. Conversion Therapy Protection Orders should include offences to those linked to aiding or abetting in the removal of a person from the UK for the purpose of conversion 'therapy' similar to female genital mutilation or forced marriage criminal offences. Also, providing online conversion 'therapy' and advertising, from outside the UK should be criminalised.
- 14.** Asylum rules should be very clear to ensure those fleeing this form of persecution are also identified and protected.
- 15.** Sufficient funding and resources should be provided to support enforcement action and an education programme which clearly outlines that conversion 'therapy' and practice is illegal including real examples of victims and survivors. In the same way, public sector workplaces and schools must continue to provide LGBT+ training & advocacy with sufficient government support.
- 16.** Many LGBT+ organisations provide services, tackle harassment, abuse and violence against LGBT+, and address the effects of all forms of conversion 'therapy' and practice. However, years of funding cuts has left these organisations struggling to provide a proper service. This has also been the case for the Police, Crown Prosecution Service and other statutory services. The government should sufficiently fund and resource all these public and voluntary organisations to effectively tackle this abusive 'therapy' and practice.

APPENDIX



Unite's postcard campaign addressed to Boris Johnson – Aug 2021

LGBT+ conversion 'therapy' has no scientific or therapeutic support whatsoever. It is about suppressing a person's sexuality or gender identity. All too often it leads to mental and emotional damage. It is about attempting to exorcise an integral part of who a person is. It doesn't work and is inherently abusive.

We call on the government to ban LGBT+ Conversion 'therapy' NOW.

It must not allow religious exemptions. Faith bodies are the main proponents of these unethical, harmful and ineffective so-called cures.

The ban needs to be fully comprehensive and provide statutory support for victims and survivors

 <p>Ban LGBT+ Conversion Therapy</p> <p>NOW</p>	<p>Dear Mr Johnson,</p> <p>LGBT+ conversion therapy has no scientific or therapeutic support whatsoever. It is about suppressing a person's sexuality or gender identity. All too often it leads to mental and emotional damage. It is about attempting to exorcise an integral part of who a person is. It doesn't work and is inherently abusive.</p> <p>We call on the government to ban LGBT+ Conversion Therapy NOW.</p> <p>It must not allow religious exemptions. Faith bodies are the main proponents of these unethical, harmful and ineffective so-called cures.</p> <p>The ban needs to be fully comprehensive and provide statutory support for victims and survivors.</p> <p>Signed: _____</p> <p>Postcode: _____</p> <p>Email: _____</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 45px; height: 35px; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <p>To:</p> <p>Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP Prime Minister 10 Downing Street London SW1A 2AA</p>  <p><small>(019539) 48050821</small></p>
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