

Government extends consultation to help shape future Conversion Therapy legislation

- Consultation on legislation to ban Conversion Therapy is extended by eight weeks
- The step has been taken to ensure the widest possible views are taken into account.
- Minister for Equalities Mike Freer says: “I am confident that our proposals strike the correct balance to stamp out coercive conversion therapy, whilst protecting free speech.”

Building upon extensive engagement that has laid the foundations for proposals to ban conversion therapy and protect vulnerable individuals, Ministers have extended the deadline so that those who have not yet had the chance to respond can do so. Extending the consultation does not change our intent: as announced in the Queen’s speech in May, the Government will ban conversion therapy, and that ban will protect everyone. This has been our policy since 2018. The consultation will help ensure any legislation is proportionate and effective while protecting freedoms.

Minister for Women and Equalities Liz Truss, said:

“We are absolutely determined to stamp out conversion therapy, and want to hear all views on the best ways to do that.

“The consultation on our proposals has been extended by eight weeks, to ensure anyone who has not yet responded has the opportunity to do so.

“We are absolutely committed to a ban which will make sure LGBT people can live their lives free from the threat of harm or abuse, whilst protecting free speech as well as protecting under-18s from being channelled into a irreversible decisions about their future.”

Minister for Equalities Mike Freer said:

“We have listened and we have acted, to ensure that the full range of opinions are represented, and that everyone who wants to has a chance to comment on our proposals.

“The focus for the ban will be on those who actively seek to change someone’s sexuality or transgender status, with protection for young people a particular priority.

“We have already consulted extensively with faith leaders, clinicians, LGBT stakeholders, and other stakeholder groups, and I am confident that our proposals strike the correct balance to stamp out coercive conversion therapy, whilst protecting free speech.

“I urge everyone who has not yet done so to make their views known, so we can work together to stamp out this abhorrent practice for good.”

The consultation proposes to:

- target physical acts conducted in the name of conversion therapy by legislating to ensure this sinister motivation for violence is considered by the judge as a potential aggravating factor upon sentencing
- target talking conversion therapy with a new criminal offence where it is committed against under 18s under any circumstance, or committed against those aged 18 or over who have not given their informed consent, or due to their circumstances or vulnerability are unable to do so
- produce a holistic package of measures, such as Conversion Therapy Protection Orders, new support for victims, restricting promotion, removing profit streams, and strengthening the case for disqualification from holding a senior role in a charity.

Key Facts:

- Casual conversations and supportive conversations which do not pressure someone down one path or another, will not be in scope of our proposed legislation.
- Our legislation will not affect parents’ ability to raise their children with the values of their faith.
- Simply expressing the teachings of a religion or private prayer, will not constitute conversion therapy in our proposals – and we will continue to work with faith groups on the proposals.
- Clinical practitioners working in line with their professional obligations and within existing regulatory frameworks will not be affected by this legislation.

Further information:

The consultation will close 4 February 2022, in order to allow ample opportunity for those who are yet to respond to be able to do so and to take account of Christmas and New Year. It can be responded to here – <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/banning-conversion-therapy>

Concerns have been raised that the initial six week consultation period was not long enough for everyone with an interest to express their views on this important issue, particularly those who wished to access an Easy Read version of the consultation. Ministers have extended the deadline by eight weeks so those who have not yet had the chance to respond can do so.

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 allows for change of legal sex and we will not be amending this. The legislation we will put forward after this consultation will address conversion therapy only and will not in any way change the process by which people are able to change their legal sex.

The Government has a manifesto commitment to better combat harassment and violence against LGBT people and we remain committed to preparing legislation

for Spring 2022 and introducing this as soon as Parliamentary time allows.