



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01817

Name of petitioner

Tristan Gray, Ely Kearney, Erin Lux, Benjamin Butler, Sophie Duncan

Petition title

End Conversion Therapy

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ban the provision or promotion of LGBT+ conversion therapy in Scotland.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

We have contacted Ben Macpherson MSP and Maree Todd MSP.

Petition background information

Despite much progress around LGBT+ rights over the past decade, there is a real threat to LGBT+ people throughout their lives from conversion therapy. Conversion therapy, the forced conditioning against a person's sexuality or gender identity, has damaged generations of LGBT+ young people and adults and continues to do so. This incredibly harmful practice especially targets LGBT+ people when they are at their most vulnerable.

Stonewall's [Unhealthy Attitudes report \(2015\)](#) found 10 per cent of health and care staff had witnessed colleagues expressing that lesbian, gay and bi people can be "cured" of their sexual orientation. This leads to poor treatment of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people within health and social care services.

A [2009 survey](#) of over 1,300 accredited mental health professionals found that more than 200 had offered some form of conversion therapy, with 35 per cent of patients referred to them for treatment by GPs and 40 per cent treated inside an NHS practice.

As recently as 2018, the Catholic Diocese of Paisley's online resources included several resources developed by advocates for gay 'cure' therapy on its website. One pamphlet hosted on the church website encourages parents to consider sending homosexual children for conversion therapy.

The [2018 Faith & Sexuality Survey from the Ozanne Foundation](#) found:

Over one in five respondents (20.7%) had "been advised to consider attempts to change" their sexual orientation and just over one in seven (14.9%) had "voluntarily

considered" it.

Concerningly, 3.5% of LGBT+ respondents had "been forced to go through attempts to change" their sexual orientation. In total, 11.4% of respondents said they had actual experience of attempting to change their sexual orientation. This was most common amongst those who defined themselves as "lesbian" (25.1%), "gay" (21.4%) and "same-sex attracted" (23.2%).

However, 74% who attempted to change their sexual orientation said that "it did not work for me and I do not believe it works for others".

Of those respondents with experience of attempting to change their sexual orientation, only 30.1% said they had "gone on to live a happy and fulfilled life"; 69.9% were unhappy and unfulfilled, and 46.1% stated that "I have found it hard to accept myself for who I am".

Significantly, almost two-thirds, 58.8%, had "suffered from mental health issues" as a result of the conversion therapy, and nearly a third, 31.2%, said, "I have sought counselling to help me recover from it".

Most of those who said they had had mental health issues had suffered from anxiety and depression (a total of 252 people), with women (65.1%) more likely than men (53.8%) to state that they actually "required medication".

The most frequent response under "Other" was the fact that respondents had been diagnosed with "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder".

The most frightening statistic is that nearly a third, 32.4%, had "attempted suicide".

In addition:

- Two-thirds of those with mental health issues, 68.7%, said they had "suicidal thoughts".
- 40.2% "self-harmed"
- 24.6% suffered from "eating disorders"

Over half of respondents said that they thought sexual orientation change therapy "should be made a criminal offence" and a quarter, 24.2%, said that they thought "it should not be made a criminal offence, but should be stopped". Only 5.2% thought "it should be allowed".

These responses clearly show that there is a significant public health case for banning conversion therapy. The experiences of those who were put through this practice show that enforcing this ban should fall under criminal law. Both of these areas fall within the devolved powers of the Scottish Parliament.

Despite committing to ending this practice years ago, the British Government has not acted. Instead recently women's and equalities minister Elizabeth Truss MP has adopted, what we believe is, the anti-trans rhetoric of hate groups in a way that will only ensure the expansion of providers and efforts to pressure people with trans identities to undergo this horrific practice.

It is clear this issue isn't going away, even as a redoubled campaign against transgender identities ensures that practices such as conversion therapy are as much of a threat than ever.

Given this information, it is clear that conversion therapy is a risk to public health, especially the mental health of vulnerable young adults and children. There is broad support for its criminalisation by those who have been subjected to it, and, as healthcare and criminal justice matter, we believe it to be within the scope of the Scottish Government's powers to ensure this practice is brought to an end.

Unique web address

<https://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/EndingConversionTherapy>

Related information for petition

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/unhealthy-attitudes-2015>
<https://www.bmj.com/content/341/bmj.c3553.full.pdf+html>
<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/12/17/catholic-church-gay-cure-courage/>
<https://ozanne.foundation/faith-sexuality-survey-2018/>

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

YES

How many signatures have you collected so far?

5

Closing date for collecting signatures online

13 / 08 / 2020

Comments to stimulate online discussion

Conversion therapy, the forced conditioning against a person's sexuality or gender identity, has damaged generations of LGBT+ young people and adults and continues to do so.

Do you believe that this practice should be brought to an end?