



Equality Hub

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Dame Meg Hillier MP
House of Commons
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Our reference: MC2022/06253
Your reference: MH76611

By email: meghilliermp@parliament.uk

19 May 2022

Dear Dame Meg

Thank you for your email of 31 March, on behalf of your constituent [REDACTED], regarding the Government's commitment to ban conversion therapy. I am responding as Minister for Equalities, with responsibility for LGBT. I apologise for the time taken to respond.

The Government is clear that there is no justification for these damaging practices. We want to ensure people are protected from the extensive harm that conversion therapy causes victims. Responses to the consultation, which closed on 4 February, will inform final policy developments and contribute to the preparation of legislation to be introduced as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Your letter focuses on ensuring all members of the community are protected from conversion practices. Whilst nobody should be subjected to conversion therapy, there are different considerations to be made between conversion therapy that seeks to change sexual orientation compared to changing a person to or from being transgender. We will bring forward a ban that protects everyone from attempts to change their sexual orientation as soon as parliamentary time allows. We remain committed to exploring how best to protect people from all these practices and will provide further updates in due course.

You raise the question of consent; people's personal freedoms are key to the health and functioning of a democratic society. There are adults who seek counselling to help them live a life that they feel is more in line with their personal beliefs. We do not intend to ban adults from seeking such counselling freely, but we will ensure consent requirements are suitably robust and stringent.

Your letter also raises concerns about whether using 'informed consent' will have legal implications for other forms of abuse. Legislating to ban conversion therapy will not impact

the wider criminal justice framework or the existing offences within it. We envisage that the concept of informed consent would be confined specifically to the offence of talking conversion therapy practices that we will establish, with no change to how other existing offences consider consent. We are working with key stakeholders and experts in the criminal justice space, to ensure that our approach aligns and does not negatively impact any existing definition of consent in criminal law.

It is our proposal that no setting will be exempt from our ban. Conversion therapy is conversion therapy anywhere, whether that is in public, private or a specific setting.

The Government recognises that legislating will only go some way to truly ending conversion therapy practices. Given the cross-cutting nature of conversion therapy, victims of these practices may be engaging a range of public services including helplines and support relating to domestic abuse, homelessness and hate crime. The Government is putting in place a package of support specifically for victims of conversion therapy that will ensure they can find and access the help that they need.

Thank you for your letter on such an important issue, I hope you and your constituent found this information useful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Freer', written in a cursive style.

MIKE FREER MP
Minister for Equalities