



Petitions Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
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Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Minister for Women and Equalities

27 July 2020

Dear Liz,

For three Parliaments, petitioners have been pressing Parliament and Government to ban 'conversion therapy'. In 2017, it received petition [174988](#) which received 35,046 signatures and in 2018, it received petition [203202](#) which received 13,239 signatures. In its responses to both petitions, the Government said that it "has already taken the necessary steps to prevent the practice of gay conversion therapy in the UK."

However, we note that this pledge was made in 2018 and has not yet been legislated for. Our predecessor Committee wrote to the Government to seek a clearer response to the petitioners' concerns in 2018. Most recently, the Committee has received a [petition](#) (300976) calling for the practice to be made illegal that has received over 200,000 signatures.

The Committee welcomes the Government's commitment to bring forward proposals to end the practice of so-called 'conversion therapy'. We are sure that you can appreciate the urgency of the situation and the immense frustration and hurt among LGBT people that this practice has not yet been made illegal.

There is a whole body of evidence to demonstrate that 'conversion therapy' is unethical and potentially seriously harmful. The long-term impacts on victims, both mentally and physically, can be extremely serious. As you will be aware, there are clear links between conversion therapy and increased risk of suicide. The Government has made clear its determination to make the UK a country that works for LGBT people and to ensure that all are as safe and as protected from harm, however, this cannot be realised whilst this practice is allowed to continue.

In its response to the current petition, the Government said "*before any decision is made on proposals for ending conversion therapy we must understand the problem, the range of options available and the impact they would have.*" Petitioners are concerned about further delay to introduce the ban on conversion therapy now more than two years since the LGBT Action Plan introduced the pledge to do so.

We are therefore writing to ask that you provide the Committee with the following information, in order that we can continue to scrutinise these issues when the House returns in September:

- an update on when the Government's proposals to ban 'conversion therapy' will be brought forward;
- how the Government plans to understand the problems which lead to the practice of conversion therapy;
- the evidence and concerns the Government has about making 'conversion therapy' a specific criminal offence, including how it intends to ensure that "spiritual guidance" is not used as a cover for conversion therapy in all but name;
- the range of options the Government believes to be alternatives to criminalising 'conversion therapy'; and,
- information about any discussions the Government has had with other countries who have successfully managed to make the practice illegal.

Our Committee is committed to working constructively to consider how so-called 'conversion therapy' can be banned within the UK, as it already has been within other countries. We want to do this in the most constructive way possible to ensure that all LGBT people, including our petitioners, are protected without further delay.

Best wishes,



Catherine McKinnell MP
Chair of the Petitions Committee



Elliot Colburn MP
Member of the Petitions Committee