

19th October 2024

Dear Prime Minister,

We are a group of citizens from a wide range of backgrounds and professions.

We are gravely concerned about the serious and harmful unintended consequences of your proposal for a *“trans-inclusive ban on conversion practices”*.

Medical interventions known as ‘gender-affirming transition’ have been revealed as a major medical scandal. Whistleblowers in this field have been vindicated by recent events, such as the final report of the independent Cass Review, the NHS decision to halt the prescription of puberty blockers, the closure of the GIDS gender clinic at the Tavistock, and the revelations contained within the WPATH files, amongst other things.

Many confused and vulnerable children who medically transitioned through puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones have suffered irreversible developmental issues, physiological damage (such as loss of bone density, infertility and sexual dysfunction) and significant social and relational harms. Those most at risk are children who do not conform to traditional sex stereotypes. Evidence shows that, in fact, the vast majority are sexually attracted to people of the same sex. Many have co-morbidities, including autism.

Dr Hilary Cass, in her final Report, made it clear that the primary treatment for children with gender dysphoria should be psycho-therapeutic in nature. Your proposed legislation risks criminalising ethical, explorative therapists who do not unconditionally affirm children to transition. This will rob children of the opportunity to settle into their own bodies.

You have previously defined conversion practices as anything which seeks to *“change or suppress someone’s gender identity”*. This ambiguous phrasing risks criminalising basic therapeutic techniques, such as pausing for thought and reflection, exploring causation and contributory factors, challenging unhelpful thought patterns, and exploring a range of options.

Therapists should never enter the therapy room with a pre-determined outcome. However, such legislation will effectively mandate an ‘affirmation-only’ approach towards transitioning, which is completely at odds with the Cass Review. Dr Cass herself found vilification of ethical therapists by those who attempt to paint exploration as ‘conversion’.

Many of our colleagues have said that if this legislation comes into force, they will stop working with children with gender dysphoria altogether, for fear of being criminalised. This chilling effect on the therapeutic professions cannot be underestimated.

Victoria, Australia, which has passed similar legislation, is often hailed by proponents of a ban as a major success story. However, the Victoria Human Rights Commission has stated that a parent who does not support their child taking puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones may be committing the offence of ‘conversion therapy’. This slippery slope towards criminalising parents awaits us here if your ban goes ahead.

You cannot legislate for what you cannot define. Currently, we appear as a society to be wholly unable to agree on definitions of the most basic words that had been universally accepted until recently. If we are unable to define words such as ‘sex’, ‘gender identity’ or ‘conversion’, it will be impossible to legislate properly and effectively. We have witnessed similar legislation passed abroad being incredibly ambiguous, as a result.

Serious concerns have also been raised as to whether such legislation is necessary at all. ‘Conversion practices’ in the true sense of the term (such as ‘electric shock treatment’ and ‘corrective rape’) are

undeniably abhorrent. Thankfully, these are already caught by existing legislation. This legislation does not target ‘torture’, as many proponents of a ban would have you believe. Torture is already illegal in the UK. It will simply prevent talking therapies.

Furthermore, there is no robust evidence to suggest that harmful practices are taking place throughout the UK. The most frequently cited source to support legislation is the Government Equalities Office (GEO) 2018 LGBT survey. This was a non-random, online, self-report survey, which cannot be generalised. Its methodology has also widely been criticised as having serious flaws.

In fact, after recent Freedom of Information requests were sent to the Northern Ireland Executive on their research to inform a ‘conversion therapy’ ban, researchers said they had reached “*saturation point*” after just 10 people were interviewed.

Finally, it is worth emphasising that the UK Council for Psychotherapy recently withdrew from the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy, a document that had been seen as a precursor to any legislation. It cited child safeguarding concerns as the reason for withdrawal. The fact that a primary accreditation body for therapists has such grave concerns about the impact of restricting explorative therapy under the guise of banning conversion practices, is telling.

In truth, the real ‘conversion’ taking place is that of children who are being led to believe, in schools and elsewhere, that it is possible to be born in the wrong body. We believe that your focus should be squarely on tackling that.

For the reasons detailed above, it is impossible to legislate without significant, harmful unintended consequences. If you care about the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and adults, we ask that you do not press forward with your proposed ban on conversion practices.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Stringer MP	Labour MP
Lord Frost of Allenton	Conservative Peer and Former Minister of State
Lord Jackson of Peterborough	Conservative Peer and Former MP
Lord Moonie	Former Labour MP and Peer, and Psychiatrist
Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee	Peer and Former First Minister of Northern Ireland
Baroness Ludford	Liberal Democrat Peer
Baroness Thornhill MBE	Liberal Democrat Peer
Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park	Conservative Peer and Former Minister of State
Suella Braverman KC MP	Conservative MP and Former Home Secretary
Dame Andrea Jenkyns	Former Conservative MP
Brian Monteith	Former Member of Scottish Parliament/European Parliament
William Clouston	Leader of Social Democratic Party
Dr Shahrar Ali	Former Deputy Leader of the Green Party
Neale Hanvey	Former Alba Party Westminster Leader and MP
Toby Young	General Secretary of the Free Speech Union
Sharron Davies MBE	Olympian and Author
Victoria Keilthy	Director of Service Transformation (NHS Foundation Trust)

Kate Barker	Chief Executive Officer of LGB Alliance
Stephanie Davies-Arai BEM	Director of Transgender Trend
Dr David Bell	Psychiatrist
Marcus Evans	Former Governor of Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust
Dr Stephen Westgarth	Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist
Dr Az Hakeem	Consultant Psychiatrist
Dr Daiva Barzdaitiene	Consultant Psychiatrist
Dr Sarah Sullivan	CAMHS Speciality Doctor
Professor Roger Watson	Honorary Professor of Nursing at University of Hull
Dr Carole Sherwood	Clinical Psychologist and Founder of Save Mental Health
Dr Claire McGuiggan	Educational and Child Psychologist
Dr David Critchley	Clinical Pharmacologist
Dr Carmen Wheatley	Medical Researcher and Head of Orthomolecular Oncology
Professor David Livermore	Professorial Fellow of Medical Microbiology at UEA
Alifia Chakera	Pharmacist
Dr Mark A. Bell	Consultant in Emergency Medicine
Mr T. James Royle	Consultant General and Colorectal Surgeon
Dr Renée Hoenderkamp	General Practitioner, Writer and Presenter
Dr Pam Spurr	Chartered Psychologist and Author
Dr David Halpin	Retired Orthopaedic and Trauma Surgeon
Professor Angus Dalglish	Professor of Oncology at St George's, University of London
Dr Ruth Livingstone	Retired GP/Clinical Governance Lead for Lincolnshire
Dr Greta Mushet	Retired Consultant Psychiatrist in Psychotherapy
Dr Alan Mordue	Retired Consultant in Public Health Medicine/Epidemiology
Dr John Higgon	Retired Clinical Neuropsychologist
Dr Tony Hinton	Consultant Surgeon
Carolyn Brown	Retired Psychologist
Dr James A. Dyson	Retired GP and Schools Medical Advisor
Dr Stephen Ting	Consultant Haematologist
James Esses	Founder of the Declaration for Biological Reality
Dr Anna Loutfi	Human Rights Barrister and Co-Director of DL Law
Professor James Elander	Professor of Health Psychology
Dr James Orr	Associate Professor at University of Cambridge
Professor Matt Goodwin	Senior Visiting Professor at University of Buckingham
Professor Eric Kaufmann	Professor of Politics at University of Buckingham
Dr Gary Clapton	Fellow at the University of Edinburgh
Professor Dennis Hayes	Visiting Professor at University of Buckingham

Dr Robert Laverick	Teaching Fellow at University of Leeds
Amelia Jeans	Associate Lecturer at Regent's University and Psychotherapist
Maggie Mellon	Co-Founder of the Evidence-Based Social Work Alliance
Heather Binning	Founder of Women's Rights Network
Alka Sehgal Cuthbert	Academic and Director of Don't Divide Us
Carrie Clark	Director of Genspect UK
Keith Jordan	Director of Our Duty
Richard Kirker	Secretary (Acting) of LGB Christians
The Mt Revd Dr Jerome Lloyd	Titular Archbishop of Selsey
Peter Williams	Director of the Family Education Trust
Ermine Amies	Co-Founder of Parents for Education
Dr Philip Kiszely	Cultural Historian and Academic
Rosie Kay	Co-Founder of Freedom in the Arts
Mary Howden	Former Head of Education at Scottish Social Services Council
Dr Stuart Waiton	Chairman of the Scottish Union for Education
Dr Heather Brunsell-Evans	Academic/Co-Founder of Women's Declaration International
Colin Wynter KC	Barrister
Keira Bell	Detransitioner
Dr Val Thomas	Psychotherapist and Founder of Critical Therapy Antidote
Jaco van Zyl	Clinical Psychologist
Dr Jude Adcock	Psychotherapist
Stella O'Malley	Psychotherapist
Michael Dewan-Herrick	Psychotherapist
Daniel Kelsall	Psychotherapist
Peter Rigg	Psychotherapist
Sarah Waters	Psychotherapist
Nalini Persaud	Psychotherapist
Jane Henderson	Psychotherapist
Richard Evans-Lacey	Psychotherapist
Tim Toon	Psychotherapist
Nick Karr	Psychotherapist
Lindsey Robinson	Psychotherapist
Paul Dunne	Psychotherapist
Jim Holloway	Psychotherapist
Deborah Short	Psychotherapist
Louisa Jones	Psychotherapist
Antoine Bowes	Psychotherapist

John Landaw	Psychotherapist
Alasdair Stockeld	Psychotherapist
Anne Glynn	Psychotherapist
Wendy Durell	Psychotherapist
Sue Evans	Psychotherapist
Sue Parker Hall	Psychotherapist
Helen Runciman	Retired Psychotherapist
Bob Withers	Psychotherapist and Co-Founder of Thoughtful Therapists
Terry Patterson	Counsellor and Co-Founder of Thoughtful Therapists
Mary Garner	Counsellor and Co-Founder of Thoughtful Therapists
Peter Jenkins	Retired Senior Lecturer in Counselling
Tricia Voute	Teacher
Jennie Cummings-Knight	Counsellor/Lecturer
Ashley Collins	Counsellor/Author
Ben Sears	Counsellor
Anne Murphy	Counsellor
Graeme Armstrong	Counsellor
Phyllis Joyce	Counsellor
Lucy Beney	Counsellor
Deborah Evans	Counsellor
Becky Seale	Counsellor
John Creigan	Counsellor
Vanessa Haynes	Counsellor
Stephen Madill	Senior Social Worker in Criminal Justice Services
Charles Plummer	Social Worker
Emma Darling	Social Worker
Amy Smith	Social Worker
Barbara Anna Marshall	Social Worker
Christine Doherty	Retired Safeguarding Social Worker
Shirley Wishart	Retired Social Worker
Maggie Siviter	Retired Social Worker
Jane Mclenachan	Retired Child Protection Social Worker
Deirdre Hoyle	Retired Biology and Sex Education Teacher
Graham Linehan	Writer and Director
Alex Phillips	Broadcaster
Marion Calder	Director of For Women Scotland
Mariana Yarnold	Deputy Leader of the Scottish Liberal Party

Allison Pearson	Columnist and Author
Sarah Harding	Retired Editor
Andrew Gold	Journalist
Jo Bartosch	Journalist
Gareth Roberts	Writer
Gillian Philip	Writer
Jane Harris	Writer
Michelle Styles	Writer
Amanda Craig	Writer
Rachel Rooney	Writer
James Dreyfus	Actor
Paul Embery	Author and Trade Unionist
Christina Jordan	Former Member of the European Parliament
Nick Buckley MBE	Independent Politician
Professor David Paton	Professor at University of Nottingham
Jane Symons	Health Journalist
Damien Kelly	Trainee Psychotherapist
Claire Napier	Trainee Psychotherapist