

Petition PE1817: End Conversion Therapy

Joint submission of 8 January 2021 from Stonewall Scotland, Equality Network, Scottish Trans Alliance, and LGBT Youth Scotland

As national LGBTI organisations, we strongly support the principles of petition PE1817, to urge the Scottish Government to end the harmful practice of conversion therapy. The UK Government's National LGBT Survey highlighted that seven per cent of LGBT people have been offered or undergone conversion therapy, including 13 per cent of trans people.

We therefore warmly welcome that this petition has been referred on from the Public Petitions Committee to the Equalities and Human Rights Committee for further, more detailed consideration, including of what action the Scottish Government should take within its competence. Our joint [briefing](#), submitted to the Public Petitions Committee in advance of their initial consideration of the petition, details our initial proposals for a legislative ban, and for this to be supplemented by non-legislative measures to end the practice, in addition to banning it.

The UK Government committed to ending conversion therapy in their [LGBT Action Plan \(2018\)](#), and reaffirmed this commitment in 2020, although have not yet brought forward any proposals. The Minister for Equalities and Older People, Christina McKelvie MSP, has previously stated that the Scottish Government “are continuing to engage with officials in the UK Government on their thinking as it develops, and this will include consideration of devolved and reserved responsibilities as they relate to this practice.” We believe the Scottish Government must take measures in the next parliament to end this practice in Scotland, including through the introduction of a legal ban, working with the UK Government where necessary. We, of course, recognise that due to the legislative timetable, it will not be possible to legislate to end conversion therapy in this parliamentary session.

Scotland would not be the first nation to end conversion therapy practices. Six countries have now implemented national legal bans on conversion therapy, including Germany, as well as several states in the United States and Australia. Legislative bans have also been proposed in Canada and France. The [UN Independent Expert](#) on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity called for a global ban in June 2020, reporting that conversion therapy practices are “deeply harmful interventions...inflicting severe pain and suffering, and resulting in long-lasting psychological and physical damage”. More recently, hundreds of religious leaders across the world signed a [declaration](#) calling for “all attempts to change, suppress or erase a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression – commonly known as ‘conversion therapy’ – to end, and for these harmful practices to be banned.”

In advance of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee’s meeting on 14 January 2021 to consider public petitions, we call on the Committee to keep petition PE1817

open for further consideration. As it will not likely be possible to resolve this matter fully prior to the 2021 Scottish Parliament election, we ask the Committee, in addition to considering the petition now, to pass it on to its successor session 6 Committee, as part of its ongoing work legacy. We would hope that the successor Committee would undertake detailed consideration and evidence-gathering on conversion therapy early in the next parliamentary session, including engagement with the new Scottish Government. It is important that this petition, which has been supported by over 5,500 signatories, remains firmly on the agenda of the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government.

Ad interim, we would request that the Committee ask the current Scottish Government what action it is taking forward on this issue at present, and to commit to taking measures to end, including banning, sexual orientation and gender identity conversion therapy.

We look forward to continuing to engage with the Committee as it takes forward its consideration of petition PE1817 on ending conversion therapy.