LGB ALLIANCE

07/24

POLICY BULLETIN
CONVERSION PRACTICES

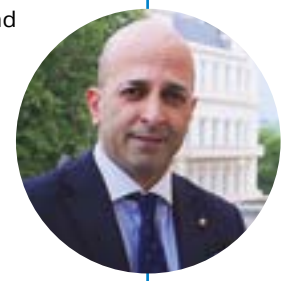
The act of attempting to convert a person from being gay to being straight is an abhorrent practice that is, thankfully, extremely rare in the UK. So why are so many lesbians, gay men and bisexuals worried about a proposed ban on conversion practices that would also include trans people?

Therapists who work with children know that the majority of young people claiming to be trans and seeking to access gender services are actually those beginning to come to terms with a sense that they may be lesbian, gay or bi.

This was confirmed by the Cass Review which, citing figures from GIDS, showed that 89% of girls and 81% of boys who were referred to them were same-sex attracted.

LGB people are worried that new legislation may mean more young same-sex attracted young people embarking onto a pathway of irreversible drugs, and even surgery, because that legislation will make it illegal for a therapist to ask a young person to consider why they want to change their body.

CASE STUDY



In 2022, LGB Alliance Patron, Dr Az Hakeem, (MBBS MSca FRCPsych) consultant psychiatrist and medical psychotherapist, was contacted by a young woman. She told him that she was 17 and that she wanted to become a man.

Dr Hakeem is a recognised expert in the field of gender dysphoria and agreed to an initial consultation with the girl. At the appointment, Dr Hakeem asked her why she believed that she should be a boy and what she didn't like about being a girl. He also enquired as to her understanding of the long-term psychological and medical consequences of any surgical modifications of her body.

Some years after assessment the young woman reported Dr Hakeem to the General Medical Council for "attempting to practice transgender conversion therapy".

The case was dismissed, but it was a difficult and stressful process for Dr Hakeem to be subjected to. If a Conversion Practices Ban had been in place, he might have faced criminal charges.

It is not surprising that many experienced clinicians, who are unwilling to automatically affirm a child's declaration that they are trans, now say they will avoid working with young people at all if conversion practices legislation is introduced. At a time when more mental health support for young people is urgently needed, this is a worrying prospect.

We say that any conversion practices legislation must include specific, iron-clad protections for therapists who seek only to help young people in need.

For more information or to arrange a meeting, please email
contact@lgballiance.org.uk