



04 April 2023

Dear Constituent

Conversion Therapy Bill

Thank you for contacting me about the Conversion Therapy Bill. I take this issue very seriously and I know that my colleagues in the Equalities Office remain committed to tackling conversion therapy in the UK. I am absolutely clear that this practice has no place in civilised society. Being lesbian, gay or bisexual is not an illness to be treated or cured.

I am encouraged that this view is shared by the head of the NHS, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the UK Council for Psychotherapy, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and the British Medical Association. Each of these bodies have concluded that such therapy is unethical and potentially harmful.

The Government Equalities' Office commissioned a large-scale LGBT survey in 2017. Sadly, two per cent of respondents to the national LGBT survey said they had undergone conversion therapy in an attempt to 'cure' them of being LGBT. Unfortunately, in this survey, what conversion therapy entailed was not defined, nor were the respondents asked whether or not the conversion therapy referred to in their answer was offered in the UK.

As such, I welcome that the Government has delivered on its promise and introduced the Conversion Therapy Bill. I understand that the Bill will strengthen existing criminal law by ensuring that violent conversion therapy is recognised as a potential aggravating factor upon sentencing, as well as making sure those found guilty of conversion therapy offences have any profit obtained from those crimes removed. Further, it will protect freedom of speech, ensuring parents, clinicians and teachers can continue to have conversations with people seeking support. I have been assured that the legislation will not impact the existing professional frameworks that guide clinicians' ability to support people. As such, robust, exploratory and challenging conversations which are part of regulated care do not fall within the scope of the ban. It will protect under-18s regardless of circumstance and over-18s who do not consent and are forced or coerced to undergo conversion therapy practices.

I understand that the Government has now confirmed that transgender conversion therapy will be included in the ban. The Bill will be published shortly, and will protect everyone including those targeted on the basis of their sexuality, or being transgender. I am aware that this is a complex area and legislation must not harm the growing number of children and young adults experiencing gender-related distress, through inadvertently criminalising or chilling legitimate conversations parents or clinicians may have with their children.

I welcome that the Government has announced it is establishing a helpline for people who have had, or are at risk of, all forms of conversion therapy. I understand that it will give tailored support to transgender people, as well as those who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. The service will be run by the LGBT anti-violence charity Galop for the next three years, and will include a live-chat function and information service in addition to a phone line and email-based support. I am glad that the service will provide all victims of conversion therapy with effective and compassionate support.

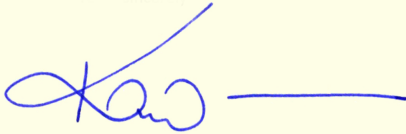
I understand that there have been concerns amongst religious leaders, who have warned that the Conversion Therapy Bill could prevent them from teaching what are seen as traditional Christian values. I am aware that the Government have said that the proposals outlined to ban conversion therapy will not impact everyday religious practice, and that there should be no doubt that individuals will still be able to access support and counsel from religious leaders.

Further, the Minister for Equalities has insisted that the Government have no intention to stop parents, clinicians, teachers, or anyone else from having open and explorative conversations

with young people or others about their sexual orientation or whether they are transgender or not.

I am positive about the steps that have been made so far in the UK to achieve LGBT equality, and am confident that this good work will continue.

Yours sincerely



Daniel Kawczynski MP
Member of Parliament for Shrewsbury & Atcham