



## **Why ban talking therapy?**

How a campaign to criminalise the most effective treatment for gender-distressed children made it from the margins to the mainstream

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## Background

At different times in history, homosexuality has been seen as an aberration and attempts have been made to “cure” people of it. These often usually included forms of behavioural and aversive therapy, such as giving electric shocks or nausea-inducing drugs to homosexuals while showing them same-sex erotic images. During the late 1970s, the term “conversion therapy” began to be used for this. The term is applied now to any attempt to change someone’s sexual orientation during therapy, including talking therapy (counselling).

“Affirmation-only” therapy means therapy that does not challenge someone’s ideas about themselves or encourage them to investigate how those ideas might have developed, but simply accepts their self-diagnosis. In the context of gender, it means accepting that anyone who says they are “trans”, must be, without exploring reasons why they might have come to that conclusion, even if they are very young.

Normally, talking therapy is exploratory. Therapists aim to create a safe space where clients can explore their feelings and find their own solutions to problems.

## Introduction

On 4th April 2022, a hundred organisations – members of the LGBT+ Consortium, including Stonewall, Gendered Intelligence, Mermaids, GIRES and the LGBT Foundation – withdrew their support from a planned international conference on gay rights in protest at the UK government saying that it would not rush to criminalise talking therapy that is not trans-affirmative.

The campaigners term this “conversion therapy” and say it is an urgent and important issue. But if you search through the annual reports of these organisations, going back for the past ten years, you will find barely a mention of “conversion therapy” as an issue until just now.<sup>1</sup>

Nor can you find any research cited by the professional bodies suddenly lining up behind the campaigners.<sup>2</sup> Banning conversion therapy seems to be a solution in search of a problem. Rather than tackling serious, current abuse, it appears to be an attempt to legislate for the idea that some children are born trans, and that their gender identity must be affirmed.

Dr Hilary Cass is an eminent paediatrician undertaking a review of NHS treatment for children with gender distress. Her interim report does not mention “conversion therapy” as a concern.<sup>3</sup> Issues she highlights include the lack of evidence about how best to treat children; clinicians’ concerns about the pressure to adopt an unquestioning “gender affirmative” approach; and the role of peer and social-media influence. She writes of clinicians wary of treating children according to their mental health training:

“They are afraid of the consequences of doing so in relation to gender distress because of the pressure to take a purely affirmative approach. Some clinicians feel that they are not supported by their professional body on this matter.”

She also stresses that social transition is not a neutral act, but an active intervention that may have significant effects on the child or young person in terms of their psychological functioning.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has called for caution in legislating in this area, noting that there is a documented lack of evidence about what has been termed conversion therapy in relation to transgender identity.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast, those arguing fervently for a new criminal law present it as a simple test of moral rectitude, using language such as “abuse” and “torture”. This paper looks at how the campaign to ban conversion therapy came out of nowhere, and what is behind it.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> Davies-Arai, Stephanie (2022). *Trans activism before medical standards*

<sup>3</sup> Cass Review (2022). *Interim report*

<sup>4</sup> EHRC (2022). *Response to government consultation on banning conversion therapy*

## 2013–2019: Conversion therapy viewed as a historic practice

In the UK, where homosexuality is legal, protected and widely socially accepted, legislation to ban “gay conversion therapy” had not been seen as particularly urgent or compelling. While there was broad agreement that abusive practices to try to change someone’s sexual orientation are abhorrent, there was no evidence that such practices were currently pervasive. Where abusive practices did exist they would be covered by existing criminal law, professional regulation and child-protection policies.

This position was reflected in a Westminster Hall debate in Parliament in 2013.<sup>5</sup> Labour MP Sandra Osborne, who proposed the debate, said:

“Conversion therapy used to be a much greater and more systemic problem in Britain than it is today. In the 1950s and ’60s, LGBT patients were routinely forwarded by teachers, GPs and, as in the case of Alan Turing, criminal courts to NHS so-called specialists in sexual orientation treatment.”

Norman Lamb, then Minister of State, agreed that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is not an illness and said:

“We are not aware that the NHS commissions this type of therapy... The Department of Health does not recommend the use of conversion therapy – I have made clear today my personal view on that – and it is not a National Institute for Health and Care Excellence-recommended treatment. That is self-evident.”

Osborne cited a 2009 survey of UK mental-health professionals, which she said showed that “nearly 300 willingly admitted to having attempted to change at least one patient’s sexuality”. But the survey (Bartlett, Smith and King, 2009) does not show a practice of active conversion. Instead it reveals a nuanced picture of therapists responding to clients distressed by their sexual orientation (for example for family or religious reasons) by taking an explorative approach. Typical descriptions given by therapists in the study were:<sup>6</sup>

“It is up to the person themselves to decide which direction to go in. I am just the sounding board for them to make their own decisions.” (UKCP).

“It is better to help people look at the problems and come to a decision for themselves. If people are homosexual/lesbian that is what they are.” (BPS).

“I would not assume I knew what direction someone should take.” (BACP).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.parliament.co.uk/debate/2013-11-20/commons/westminster-hall/gay-to-straight-conversion-therapy#13112084000076>

<sup>6</sup> Bartlett, A., Smith, G. & King, M. ‘The response of mental health professionals to clients seeking help to change or redirect same-sex sexual orientation’, *BMC Psychiatry* 9, 11 (2009).

## 2015–2020: Not a priority for LGBT organisations

Conversion therapy was not high on the agenda of Stonewall or the other LGBTQ+ organisations until very recently. A review of Stonewall’s annual reports and strategy documents shows that the issue barely gets a mention:

Figure 1: Conversion therapy in Stonewall strategic documents

Stonewall document	Mention of conversion therapy
Annual report 2015	None
Call for evidence	Webpage asking for personal experiences
Annual report 2016	“We will campaign and lobby government on issues that impact LGBT equality. These include conversion therapy...”
Acceptance Without Exception Worldwide 2016	None
The Sustainable Development Goals and LGBT Inclusion	None
Stonewall Scotland LGBT Manifesto 2016	None
Annual report 2017	None
Acceptance Without Exception for Trans People 2017-2020	None
LGBT Election Manifesto 2017	None
Annual report 2018	None
Annual report 2019	Take measures to ban the harmful practice of conversion therapy
Election Manifesto 2019	None
Annual report 2020	None

In December 2015 Stonewall launched a call for evidence on the topic, asking for people to submit personal stories.<sup>7</sup> But nothing came of it, and the issue died down until 2019.

A review of the annual reports of the LGBT Foundation, GALOP, Gendered Intelligence, Mermaids and the LGBT Consortium going back to 2016 turns up similar findings.



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<sup>7</sup> <http://web.archive.org/web/20160208123025/https://www.stonewall.org.uk/conversion-therapy>

## 2020: A campaign gathers support

In 2018 the government made a commitment to stop conversion therapy, and in 2020 Stonewall joined, and began to spearhead, the “Ban Conversion Therapy” coalition, urging the government to take action without delay.

The coalition included the Albany Trust, Amnesty International, FFLAG, GALOP, Gendered Intelligence, GIRES, Humanists UK, the LGBT Foundation, Mermaids, the Naz & Matt Foundation, the Outside Project, the Ozanne Foundation, the Peter Tatchell Foundation, Post Courage, the Rainbow Project, Sparkle, Trans Media Watch, TransActual, and Yorkshire MESMAC.

Figure 2: Members of the Conversion Therapy Coalition



Why did these organisations suddenly change course? A turning point seems to have been a finding from the government’s LGBT survey, in which 2% of respondents reported having “undergone conversion therapy” and a further 5% said they had been offered it. The survey was self-selected and does not define what conversion therapy meant in practice.

This result was surprising within the LGBTQ sector. Dr Paul Martin OBE of the LGBT Foundation, who had been working for more than 30 years to support the LGBT community, and whose organisation was seeing more than 40,000 people a year, recalled that the survey’s findings did not match his experience:

“Many of us were extremely surprised that the national survey raised such a large number of people who had experienced conversion therapy. That came as quite a big surprise to many of us, who were unaware of the extent of it.”



“Organisations like mine had come across people from faith communities or people who were older and who had been through and experienced conversion therapy, but not to the extent that the survey was indicating or that we have heard subsequently from the greater attention and focus.”<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, Baroness Williams said:

“When I first started in my role as Equalities Minister, I did not believe that conversion therapy existed. I thought that the likes of what happened to people like Alan Turing was gone, only to find that it still exists. One upshot of the survey is to highlight that it does exist.”

Paul Martin told the Women and Equalities Committee that it was a combination of the survey, the establishment of the government’s LGBT advisory panel and the involvement of ministers that saw “ban conversion therapy” become a campaign target.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/2217/pdf/>

## 2021: The shift to gender identity

When the government announced its plan to legislate in the Queen’s Speech in 2021, it was in general terms<sup>9</sup>. MPs responded by welcoming this as a plan to ban “gay conversion therapy”. As *Hansard* shows:

- Hannah Bardell MP welcomed “the plans to ban gay conversion therapy”.
- Ben Bradshaw MP said: “I warmly welcome the right hon. Lady’s announcements today. I thank her for the announcement on gay conversion therapy”.
- Chris Elmore MP said: “The Minister’s announcement today on the banning of so-called gay conversion therapies is obviously enormously welcome,” and asked whether the government was making representations to other countries that “There is no need for a cure for being gay.”
- Dan Carden MP highlighted a report about “gay cure therapies” in Liverpool.

In 2021, at a Westminster Hall debate, the idea of including gender identity was introduced. Eliot Colburn MP said:

“The ban cannot be just on gay conversion therapy. It must cover degrading and inhumane interventions aimed at changing anyone’s sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.”

This is an odd stretching of the concept. Gender expression means clothing and hairstyle, something that people change all the time. Gender identity is the idea that everyone has an innate feeling of being male or female, both or neither, or indeed something else entirely, which may be fixed or fluid, binary or non-binary.

The idea that “conversion” could be lifted wholesale from sexual orientation to gender identity (or expression) had no evidential backing. It appears to be a purely political move aligned to an attempt to demedicalise transsexualism.

Crispin Blunt MP argued that the law must include gender identity because trans people “are by far and away the most vulnerable group among the LGBT community”. He specifically linked the call for reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to self-ID being “abandoned”:

“The law must include trans people, and not only because they are the group who need it the most. In 2018, it appeared that trans people were on a trajectory to achieve their rights and protections to live their lives as they wished, supported by the Government’s comprehensive LGBT action plan, but all that now seems to have changed.”

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/queens-speech-2021>

The reason he gave for banning conversion therapy was that “trans people are a community under siege”. He cited articles critical of gender self-ID in the *Times*, and the existence of groups such as the Conservative Women’s Pledge and LGB Alliance, as reasons to include gender identity in any conversion-therapy law.

Hywel Williams MP also explicitly linked banning conversion therapy with policy reform regarding gender self-ID:

“Banning conversion therapy is an important step towards creating a truly equal society, as is the Plaid Cymru policy of ensuring that trans people have legal recognition of their gender through a streamlined and de-medicalised process based on self-declaration.”

There was no discussion in the Westminster Hall debate about whether it really made sense to make it harder to provide therapy that “questions their identity” to people, particularly children, who are suffering grave distress and considering major social and medical interventions.

These same arguments can be seen in a video of a discussion led by Pink Therapy founder Dominic Davies in the summer of 2020. Davies encourages a group of gender therapists to become activists to work with Stonewall (and against “the TERFs”, or trans-exclusionary radical feminists – a slur used to dismiss women arguing for sex-based rights) to lobby the government to ban “conversion therapy” in relation to gender identity. He states that when his group initially heard about conversion therapy, the members did not think it was a big issue as it was mainly confined to the fringes of religions. But then he saw that it had political potential and could be used as a counterweight to “TERFs”. He states that while there was no formal evidence or motivation from the professional bodies there was pressure from the grassroots to include gender identity in a ban. The discussion between therapists in the video does not highlight any experience of abusive or coercive “conversion” practices that might be termed “torture”, but focuses on doctors and therapists reluctant to prescribe puberty-blocking drugs or to encourage social transition.<sup>10</sup>

What many clinicians, parents and doctors would understand as medical prudence was being rebranded as akin to the abhorrent historic practices of gay conversion therapy.



<sup>10</sup> [Pink Therapists Discussion on a Legal Ban](#)

## The Coventry University study – no evidence

In 2018 the government commissioned research from Coventry University on the nature of conversion therapy in the UK. It was slow going, and through most of 2021 the research report still had not been released. Matt Hyndman, co-founder of the Ban Conversion Therapy group, told the *Gay Times* that he was concerned that it was being withheld and would show that thousands of vulnerable LGBTQ+ people were at risk:

“If they’ve commissioned a study which says conversion therapy is happening and it’s quite severe and they’ve been delaying to ban it, it’s not a good look.”

In fact, when the study was finally published in November 2021, what it showed was that the Coventry University team had uncovered no new studies on conversion therapy in the UK, and no evidence of abusive practices. The research team identified 46 studies, but the vast majority were from the US.

The one study that related to the UK was the Bartlett, Smith and King survey of therapists which had already been referenced in Parliament in the earlier discussions of gay conversion therapy.<sup>11</sup> Any reasonable reading of that study is that it uncovers not abusive practice or torture, but exploratory therapy. There was no UK evidence regarding efforts to change gender identity – in fact, there was very little evidence in relation to gender identity at all.

On gender identity, the evidence identified by the Coventry University team consisted of three studies. One was a US survey lead by activist doctor Jack Turban, which has been strongly criticised for poor methodology in an academic journal, *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*.<sup>12</sup> One was a study that involved showing subjects a video of actors demonstrating different therapeutic approaches. The last one was a systematic study of ten individual case studies found in the academic literature, which concludes: “We found limited published evidence on use, nature, structure and/or health consequences of conversion therapies.”<sup>13</sup>

The case studies included in the Coventry University study could also be seen as examples of exploratory therapeutic practices:

- A seven-year-old boy who thought he was a girl, through the course of psychoanalysis resolved cross-gender feelings and continued life as male.
- A six-year-old girl who thought she was a boy explored her identity through a course of psychoanalysis which involved role play and storytelling. The “fantasy of being a boy” resolved.

<sup>11</sup> <https://sex-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Coventry-University-research-on-conversion-therapy.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10508-020-01844-2>

<sup>13</sup> <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/8/12/e022425.full.pdf>

- A case involving a 42-year-old male cross-dresser referred for clinical treatment of obsessive compulsive disorder underwent therapy that also explored gender identity, which resolved for some time and then returned.
- Seven children aged under ten seen by Dr Kenneth Zucker at Toronto's gender-identity clinic were treated through open-ended play psychotherapy, in which "the clinician explores gender through dolls and other toys in order to allow a gender-diverse child to talk through their gender".

These case studies do not match with the rhetoric of torture and abuse.

The inclusion of the example of Dr Kenneth Zucker is particularly telling. Dr Zucker lost his job in Toronto after being accused of conversion therapy by gender-identity activists. He was later exonerated by the hospital and paid substantial compensation. In the UK, LGBTQ+ lobby organisations such as Mermaids label as "conversion therapy" Dr Zucker's approach of exploring the range of psychological issues that can manifest themselves in a child's desire to change sex. When Zucker was featured in a BBC documentary, Mermaids criticised the BBC for featuring a doctor questioning "whether young children's trans experiences are legitimate".<sup>14</sup>

### **Doctor accused of conversion therapy**

Kenneth J Zucker is an American psychologist who led Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Family Gender Identity Clinic for more than 30 years. His practice, which involved not immediately pushing for transition, was described by trans activists as "child abuse".

Zucker has said that the goal of his approach is "lowering the odds that as such a kid gets older he or she will move into adolescence feeling so uncomfortable about their gender identity that they think that it would be better to live as the other gender and require treatment with hormones and sex-reassignment surgery". He was ousted in 2015, after accusations that his clinic had been practising conversion therapy.

In 2018 the clinic issued an unreserved apology to Dr Zucker for his removal and for "the flaws in the process that led to errors in the report not being discovered". It paid him C\$586,000 in damages, legal fees and interest.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/jan/11/bbc-film-on-child-transgender-issues-worries-activists>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/camh-settlement-former-head-gender-identity-clinic-1.4854015>

## Horror stories and fairy tales

To prop up the argument for a new criminal law, advocacy groups marshalled a handful of individual stories, largely from family and religious settings. Some of these are harrowing, but they do not suggest a widespread contemporary practice, nor necessarily one that could be banned.

They also used drama. In 2015 Mike Freer MP had cited outlandish practices such as exorcism and testicular transplants in a Westminster Hall debate<sup>16</sup>.

“Dr Christian Jessen, for a television programme in only 2014, underwent treatment for homosexuality, including one of the most extreme cures, aversion therapy, which looks to teach patients to associate same-sex attraction with pain or nausea. Patients are given a drug that makes them extremely ill and they are then played pornographic images and sound recordings while they vomit violently. That is not counselling. Usually patients experience a session every two hours, night and day, for three whole days.”

The experience that Jessen went through was certainly abusive. However, what Freer did not explain was that it was not an actual example of aversion therapy being offered in the UK, but a simulation undertaken for “reality TV”, with an actor playing the “doctor”.<sup>17</sup>



<sup>16</sup> <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/debate/2015-11-03/commons/westminster-hall/gay-conversion-therapies#15110343000353>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6PI1aUhRA>

Other stories used to support the campaign are historic. For example, in Parliament in March 2021<sup>18</sup>, Elliot Colburn MP told “Carolyn’s story”:

“At 17, Carolyn confided in her local vicar her feelings of self-hatred and depression, and her suicidal thoughts, because she did not feel like a boy. Her vicar took her to a doctor and a psychiatric hospital, where Carolyn was strapped to a wooden chair in a dark room. As images of women’s clothing were projected onto the wall in front of her, doctors would deliver painful electric shocks, hoping to associate the feelings of being a woman with memories of intense pain.”

What Colburn did not say was that this happened in the 1960s<sup>19</sup>, is already illegal and would not be done by the NHS or any regulated professional.

Yet in April 2022 Kay Burley asked the Health Secretary Sajid Javid: “Is it acceptable to administer an electric shock to someone who feels they are in the wrong body?” There is no evidence that anyone in the UK is administering electric shocks to people who identify as transgender. It would be illegal if they did, and it is a practice of “gay conversion therapy” that has long since died out.

Most people with more recent stories speak of the personal impact of struggling with strongly held religious convictions which conflict with their sexual orientation. Jayne Ozanne speaks of fighting against her sexual orientation for 20 years based on her belief that it was sinful. Matt Hyndman talks of being cast out by his community and family when he came out:

“For many, refusing conversion therapy means losing your family, faith, community, career, friends – your entire life.”<sup>20</sup>

The experiences of people such as Ozanne and Hyndman are undoubtedly personally upsetting. But it is hard to see how the government could step in to dictate a person’s religious beliefs about the nature of sin, or the attitude of their family towards sexual ethics or their gender identity.

These are personal stories of spiritual turmoil, not evidence of abusive practices.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-03-08/debates/552D6176-C4D5-47F1-A8C1-C900B58AEB7C/LGBTConversionTherapy>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49344152>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/lgbt-conversion-therapy-ban-mental-health-b1805080.html>

## The consultation: still no evidence

In 2021 the government opened a consultation on the plan to outlaw conversion therapy. Jane Ozanne had voiced her opposition to the very act of consulting the public:

“I have no idea why we are delaying yet more. We all know that, even when we see a bill, it is going to take time. What people truly do not understand is that, whilst we delay, lives are being impacted and even lost... I am beyond angry now.”<sup>21</sup>

Several professional bodies were supportive of the ban, repeating the same arguments as the activists, but none cited evidence from practice.

Figure 3: Evidence on conversion therapy referred to by expert organisations in the consultation

Organisation	Evidence of prevalence and nature of conversion therapy
British Medical Association	2018 National LGBT Survey
British Psychological Society	Coventry University Research Jack Turban study 2018 National LGBT Survey
General Medical Council	None
General Pharmaceutical Council	None
Health and Care Professions Council	None
NASUWT	None
The Pharmacists’ Defence Association (PDA) LGBT+ Association	2018 National LGBT Survey
Psychotherapy and Counselling Union (PCU)	2018 National LGBT Survey Coventry University Research
Scottish Association of Social Work and Social Workers Union	None

<sup>21</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/2217/pdf/>



Galop offers some anecdotal evidence. It started a conversion-therapy helpline in response to the consultation, and reports that “at any given time 25–50% of service users in our young people’s service tell us that they are undergoing or are at risk of so-called conversion therapy”. This is surprising, since conversion therapy does not appear as an issue in any of Galop’s annual reports.

## Why the sudden fervour?

The fervour of the campaign to criminalise “conversion therapy”, a purported problem for which there is no definition and no evidence, is best explained as a new tactic in the witch-hunt against those speaking up about the harm of transitioning children (the “TERFs” as they are pejoratively described in the Pink Therapy video).

The focus on conversion therapy and the shift to redefine it to cover gender self-identification follows a shift in the debate on gender identity in four areas:

- the proposal to enshrine gender self-id in law being rejected
- the increased focus on concerns about transitioning children (whistle-blowers at the Tavistock clinic; Keira Bell’s judicial review)
- the Forstater ruling that gender-critical viewpoints are “worthy of respect in a democratic society” and protected by equality law
- growing public understanding of a conflict of rights between women and trans-identified males in areas such as single-sex services and sport.

The ramping up of pressure to criminalise “conversion therapy” comes just at the moment when the indiscriminate charge of “transphobia”, which had been so effective at closing down debate, is losing some of its sting.

In 2021 the Women and Equalities Select Committee reopened the question of reforming the gender recognition act. Those lobbying for gender self-ID map closely to those lobbying to criminalise therapy. Their demands in terms of gender self-ID were to demedicalise and remove the age limit of the process of legal sex change. They say that children of any age should be able to change their legal sex as long as their parents consent, and that everyone should be obliged to treat such children as if they really are the opposite sex.<sup>22</sup> These proposals were again rejected by the government.<sup>23</sup>

The push to ban so-called conversion therapy appears to be a direct response to the failure of the campaign for legal self-ID, and the increasing debate among both experts and the public

<sup>22</sup> <https://sex-matters.org/wesc/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/9415/documents/161226/default/>

generally about the rising number of young people presenting with gender dysphoria. In particular, concerns are now well established about the thousands of young girls reporting a sudden gender crisis for the first time, and clinicians have been stepping forward to warn that complex histories and adolescent confusion over possible homosexuality are being ignored in the rush to celebrate every young person's new transgender identity.

## Rebranding questioning as torture

While questions about how to treat gender-distressed children are complex, attitudes to "conversion therapy" are more likely to be negative as the term brings to mind barbaric practices of torture and abuse (which are already illegal).

Rebranding opposition to self-ID and child transitioning as "conversion therapy" enables the stigmatisation of all those urging caution. It offers a simple narrative of good and evil that is difficult to resist.

Stonewall argues for an expansive ban:

"Conversion practices are abuse. They must be banned. In every setting and for everyone subjected to it. We demand a ban which is inclusive of all LGBTQA+ people."

Phillip Pullman, the children's author, weighed in:

"To ban conversion therapy, so-called, is good. To make a deliberate exception for trans people is pure, cold-eyed evil. No justification, no reason, no excuse: just to appease the transphobes. Evil."<sup>24</sup>

Religious leaders have opined:

"To be trans is to enter a sacred journey of becoming whole: precious, honoured and loved, by yourself, by others and by God... Every church should be a safe space that affirms people in being who they are, without fear of judgement."<sup>25</sup>

But there has been no evidence of torture or abuse: just therapists questioning the drive to affirm children as "born in the wrong body".

As the interim report of the Cass Review highlights, the question of how best to treat and support children experiencing gender-related distress requires evidence and caution, not declarations of good and evil, or vague declarations about torture or sacred journeys.

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<sup>24</sup> [https://twitter.com/PhilipPullman/status/1511396477674864640?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw](https://twitter.com/PhilipPullman/status/1511396477674864640?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/ban-trans-conversion-therapy>

The government is right to continue with the approach of Dr Hilary Cass and to resist the call to criminalise talking therapy for children experiencing gender distress.



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Sex Matters is a not-for-profit company registered by guarantee.

Company number: 12974690

Registered office: 63/66 Hatton Garden, Fifth Floor Suite 23, London, EC1N 8LE

*Published 3rd May 2022; republished with footnote 19 added, 5th May 2022; republished with minor corrections, 11th May 2022*