

Alicia Kearns MP  
alicia.kearns.mp@parliament.uk

7th November 2023

Dear Alicia Kearns

Sex Matters has been campaigning against the proposal to criminalise “conversion therapy” in relation to gender identity. In your interview on LBC you said that the only people who have anything to fear from a ban are “bigots”. We do not think this is true. We think that any bill which criminalises forms of talking in relation to gender identity would:

- threaten parents, teachers, therapists and youth workers with prosecution if they do not affirm that a child is “born in the wrong body”
- make it harder for children experiencing gender issues to access supportive, exploratory mental-health care and lead to more children being convinced that they must change their bodies (a modern form of conversion therapy)
- put the concept of “gender identity” into law, and outlaw doctors from disagreeing with a patient’s self-identified gender
- create an unworkable criminal offence as there is no agreed definition of “gender identity”.

Any proposed ban would, in effect, ask juries to pronounce on what is and is not acceptable clinical practice. It would do so on the basis of a criminal charge involving “gender identity”. Any prosecution would be based on the ideological contention that “gender identity” exists and that the defendant effected a conversion practice. That simultaneously politicises the prosecution and subjects the defendant to an uncertain charge.

You asked for those who want to talk about the complexities of the legislation to do so. We hope you will therefore meet with us to discuss these concerns and to consider our proposal for a banning of “modern conversion therapy” (a briefing on the proposal is attached).

Modern conversion therapy is the practice of treating gender non-conforming (often same-sex attracted or autistic) children with puberty blockers, which affect the maturation of their brain and sexuality, and their physical, cognitive, social and personality development.

It is also the practice of treating anyone with medication or surgery to modify their sexual

**Sex Matters is a human-rights organisation campaigning for clarity about sex in law, policy and language | [sex-matters.org](https://sex-matters.org) | [info@sex-matters.org](mailto:info@sex-matters.org)**

Directors: Michael Biggs, Rebecca Bull, Julia Casimo, Naomi Cunningham, Maya Forstater, Emma Hilton

characteristics when they:

- are too young or vulnerable to make a fully informed decision
- have confounding mental-health issues that have not been not addressed
- are acting due to internalised homophobia or misogyny
- have unrealistic expectations that treatment can actually change their sex
- think other people can be forced to accept them as the opposite sex, based on a misrepresentation of the law
- have not been given full information about the effects of the treatment.

We hope you will agree with us that any legislation against “conversion therapy” should protect this most vulnerable group from modern conversion therapy.

It is an abomination to undertake irreversible, sterilising medical treatment on the basis of a false promise that it is possible for a gay boy to become a straight girl by taking oestrogen and having his testicles removed and his penis inverted, or a lesbian to be made into a straight man by having her breasts, ovaries, womb and vagina removed, and taking testosterone to lower her voice and grow a beard.

Medical treatment that is carried out without fully informed consent, and which sterilises people and leaves them with impaired sexual function, is a human-rights abuse, and we hope you would join us in condemning this and seeking to have it outlawed.

Yours sincerely



Maya Forstater  
Executive Director



Helen Joyce  
Director of Advocacy