

English Conversion Therapy Ban – Input from Ethnic Minority Communities

Introduction

This paper is a call from grassroots organisations working in LGBTQIA+ ethnic minority communities for the UK Government to ensure greater representation from these communities in the development of the legislation and supporting policies. And, for the UK Government to be involved in gathering data on the impact of conversion practices in these communities to support the development of the legislation and general LGBTQIA+ safety in these communities.

The issue

There is a fear in ethnic minority communities that the proposed legislation, if not appropriately designed, will further traumatise survivors of conversion practices, thus creating an unnecessary mental health burden, which must be picked up by the state. By either having too many loopholes; or unfairly affecting different ethnic minority communities; allowing conversion practices to continue; or discouraging victims of conversion practices from reporting incidents, being believed, and/or retaining ties with their chosen communities/networks.

Research commissioned by the Government so far, shows that ethnic minority people are more than twice as likely as white people to have been offered conversion therapy. *The National LGBT Survey 2017, which had responses from over 108,000 LGBT people in the UK, found that Black/African/Caribbean/black British (13%) and Asian/Asian British (14%) respondents, and respondents belonging to an 'other' ethnic group (15%), were more likely than white (7%) respondents to have undergone or been offered conversion therapy.*¹

Despite this data, no research has been done, so far to understand the depth, breath and impact of conversion practices in these communities. The work that has been done (including the National LGBT survey), has not successfully included representative data from different ethnic or religious minority communities.

The governments' position

The government's current position is that *"We have no current plans to undertake any additional research however, alongside the consultation, officials and Ministers continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure all perspectives are heard."*²

However, traditional consultation methods are often ineffective at getting victims from ethnic minority communities to speak about their experiences of conversion practices, because of a lack of understanding of what constitutes conversion practices, trauma amongst those that have experienced it, community loyalties and/or distrust in government and the establishment.

Further, grassroots organisations lack the resources to undertake appropriate research or engage with government individually without funding.

What we are asking for

We are asking the government to improve its engagement with grassroots ethnic minority organisations supporting LGBTQIA+ people, through a form of collective engagement. For example, an ethnic and religious minority committee of grassroots organisations to advise the

¹ Mike Freer: *House of Commons - Written Answers - Women and Equalities Monday 28 March 2022*

² Mike Freer: *House of Commons - Written Answers - Women and Equalities Monday 28 March 2022*

Government. To ensure there is appropriate cultural representation in developing the legislation.

We are also asking the Government to commission or participate in commissioning the independent research already proposed to, and rejected by the government on the grounds of cost and time, without having an alternative.

The importance of government support

Because of the controversy surrounding the proposed legislation, it is important that the research is thorough, deep and is seen by all sides as being independent.

The government has also got to actively seek and give due weight to representations from ethnic minority communities based on existing and future evidence presented.

BAATN said, *“Because conversion practices are disproportionately prevalent in ethnic minority communities, to ensure effective legislative development, it is essential the government includes representatives from a diverse range of LGBTQIA+ ethnic and religious communities in its team. Particularly from Black, and brown communities.*

“The Research needs to be conducted to identify the hidden burdens on LGBTQIA+ black and brown heritage people and how best to address these from a legislative and public health perspective”

Benefits of the research

Many people in the community on both sides, would like to have an open debate based on independent evidence collected in the UK context *“From our experience at Sarbat LGBT+ Sikhs. More research is required to understand the true extent of these practices within ethnic minority communities. To inform an open respectful debate in our communities”*

It would be the right thing to do, to ensure the legislative response protect rather than have adverse mental health consequences for potential victims of conversion practices. And ensure the voices of LGBTQIA+ people from ethnic minority communities are represented.

This work makes sense, because the work and engagement will create a more effective ban for all communities. By adding to the overall body of evidence, and making additional recommendations not currently being considered.

We believe this work will save government money by recommending effective community led solutions which will reduce the impacts of conversion practices. By creating government supported but not necessarily funded support policies; by reducing the burden on the criminal justice system; and mental health services

Signatories:



Sarbat LGBT+

House of Rainbow

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